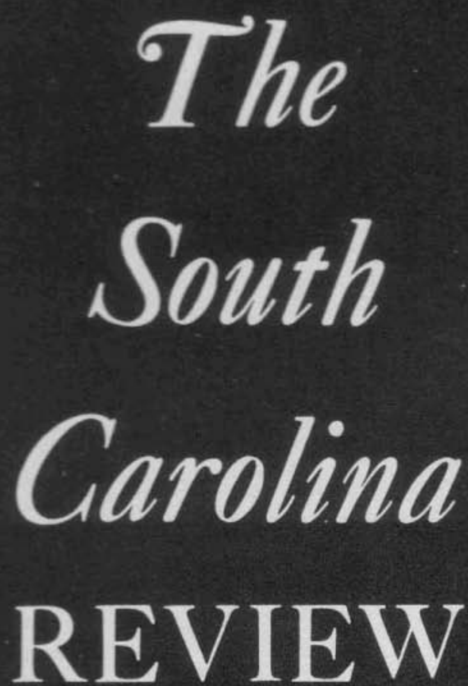


APRIL, 1977 VOL. 9 NO. 2 $1.50

The South Carolina Review

EDITORS

RICHARD J. CALHOUN ROBERT W. HILL

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

BRUCE FIRESTONE WILLIAM KOON

MANAGING EDITOR

FRANK L. DAY

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

SUE INMAN

CRITICAL ESSAYS ON JAMES DICKEY ARE INVITED FOR THE SPRING, 1978 ISSUE

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 addessed 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

APRIL, NINETEEN HUNDRED SEVENTY-SEVEN

COPYRIGHT © 1977 BY CLEMSON UNIVERSITY
CLEMSON, S. C. 29631

The South Carolina Review

Volume 9, Number 2 April, 1977

CONTENTS

ESSAYS

De Senectute; or, Paradise Lost; or, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner: Conversations with a Little Old Man, *William Harmon* 22

The Love and Marriage of William Morris: A New Interpretation, *John LeBourgeois* 43

POETRY

Rubbing the Faces of Angels, *David Bottoms* 20

Nightwalk, *Eileen Stratidakis* 38

Eulogy: An Old-West Piece, *C. Trent Busch* 41

Another Explanation, *Marlene Youmans* 42

Three Poems by *Andrew Hudgins* 56

Two Poems by *Lucky Jacobs* 58

FICTION

Sentimental Journey, *Joyce Carol Oates* 3

Dixieland, *Franklin Ashley* 39

CONTENTS—Continued

REVIEWS

The Letters of Emily Lady Tennyson ed. by James O. Hoge,
Paul Connolly 60

The Reflective Journey Toward Order: Essays on Dante, Wordsworth, Eliot, and Others by Marion Montgomery,
Robert W. Hill 61

Antebellum Charleston Dramatists by Charles S. Watson,
Louis Henry 63

Thomas Wolfe: The Critical Reception by Paschal Reeves;
Thomas Wolfe: Beyond the Romantic Ego by Leo Gurko,
John Idol 64

The Loneliness at the Core: Studies in Thomas Wolfe
by C. Hugh Holman, *Leslie Field* 67

Hemingway and Faulkner: inventors/masters by Linda Welshimer Wagner, *Joseph Blotner* 70

CONTRIBUTORS 72

SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

Joyce Carol Oates

Dear Warren, wrote Annie Quirt on the eve of her thirty-first birthday, *I wonder if you remember me. . .? I don't really care, I think I am writing to you because I can't sleep tonight, because I have been thinking of you, almost obsessed with memories of you. . . .* Obsessed? Annie wondered if that did not sound too extreme; even pathological. But it was true. She crushed out her cigarette and wrote: *I remember you so vividly . . . the khaki jacket from Army Surplus, worn at the elbows . . . those tennis shoes of yours that came to your ankles and were sometimes unlaced, or was it that the laces had broken and you'd knotted them . . .? I remember you hunched over your desk, taking notes in a big loose-leaf notebook like the kind high school students use. . . . You were so earnest, so serious, so hard-working, unlike the others, unlike certain friends of yours who didn't deserve your friendship and who took advantage of you.* Annie was writing on plain sheets of paper, hurriedly, almost feverishly, not stopping to read what she had written. She felt rather sick but such feelings did not count: she had vowed, in this new phase of her life, to transcend and to obliterate the merely physical. *You were so good, Warren. I think that was it. So good. Innocent . . . loyal . . . sweet . . . funny. . . . You had a temper, I remember that, I remember how angry you got with Tony, once, when he was drunk and arguing stupidly about . . . about what? . . . how the great philosophers were only expressing the prejudices of their eras? . . . and you rejected what he said, you were truly angry, and passionate, and I realized for the first time the depth of your character. . .* How crude, how pathetic! Annie lit another cigarette and turned over the page and continued the letter. She knew her words were absurd, grotesquely sentimental; she knew that Warren, even sweet little Warren Breck, would probably laugh at them; she knew, even as she wrote, her hand aching, that she would not dare mail the letter. Nevertheless she wrote, as quickly as possible, not allowing herself time to think. The emotion that was coursing through her was too powerful to contain. It was like grief, somehow concentrated in her eyes and throat and upper chest. She felt like crying. She had been crying, earlier. Ugly wracking sobs, dry sobs, that were incomprehensible. *I knew so little about life then, about the value of a genuine friendship . . . I didn't have time for such things . . . I was always in a hurry, in a rush, it took me a long time to see how shallow a person Tony was, and how I had wasted. . . .* Ten years ago! A decade! Could it be possible, a decade had passed and Annie Quirt, who had always imagined herself so tough and sly and independent, who had been enormously

self-confident because of her looks, and the great good luck of her girlhood, was writing to a boy she hardly remembered, a friend of the boy she had loved in college, or had deluded herself into believing she loved. . .? Annie laughed aloud. She was bent over the kitchen table, a cigarette burning in her left hand, her hair falling into her eyes. The light was poor; she hadn't wanted to put the over-head light on, for fear of attracting her sister's attention; as she wrote a fluid, dancing blur followed her words. *It's 2 A.M. and I've given up trying to sleep. Earlier tonight I was leafing through some of my college books, paperbacks I hadn't looked at for a decade, and I came across something you had written . . . at the back of The Republic . . . you couldn't remember, couldn't possibly remember . . . we must have been joking around. . . . That 8 A.M. class on the top floor of Brennan Hall, us in the back row, Dr. Hotchkiss with his yellow-white hair like a wig and his stammer when he got excited . . . remember, you and he argued, you were the only person in the class he respected, I think. I know. I was too ignorant to appreciate. . . .* She looked up, startled. A footstep? A soft thudding sound of some kind? She made a gesture to crush out the cigarette; it would put her at a disadvantage, if Jean saw her smoking when she had stated her intention to quit. But the kitchen was smoky anyway. . . . *I remember a day in early spring, at that ugly Victorian mansion you and the others rented rooms in, remember? . . . it was four stories high, painted a ghastly red-orange, the brick was crumbling, most of the windows in the basement were broken. . . . Tony and Dave and that girl with the braids, the nursing student, and I, do you remember? . . . knocked on your door and disturbed you studying . . . you had an exam in organic chemistry the next morning, you were sitting at your desk bare-chested . . . so pale! . . . I remember how pale you were! it was hot in the room, the radiators couldn't be turned off. We wanted you to come with us out to, what was that place, Erlich's, for a beer. . . . You seemed so lonely then, so alone. I knew you wanted to come with us but at the same time you had to study, I could see how torn you were, I told Tony to leave you alone, to stop bullying you. . . . And then it was the end of the semester: then it was graduation: everything was over and we never saw each other again.* What if Warren were married? It was entirely possible. It was even rather likely. He had been shy, almost to the point of pain; but he had been quite normal. At one of the rare parties he'd attended, once, he had danced with Annie and had engaged her in a long earnest confused conversation, and his feeling for her had been plain, almost embarrassingly obvious. She had liked him well enough, as a minor personage in the exciting drama of her life; but she had not felt, really,

any affection for him at the time. All her energies had gone into love: into that relationship with Tony. She had not even valued her friendship with girls she had known for years, during that time. How she disliked herself, that earlier self!—how richly she deserved the various disappointments that had followed! *I think I am writing, Warren, just to reach out to you, to say hello, I don't expect you to reply, I want only . . . I would like . . . what do I want? . . . just to know if you're alive, and happy, and if your plans for medical school worked out . . . . I assume they did. Of course they did. You are probably established now and practicing medicine and probably you are married also, and your wife will resent this letter; I advise you just to scan it and think of me, of Annie Quirt, the red-head, remember? . . . Tony Engel's girl? . . . and then rip the letter up, throw it away. . . .*

"Annie?"

She looked around, startled. It was Jean in her night-gown, barefooted; her older sister Jean blinking at her. Annie saw, but chose not to interpret, her sister's look of apprehension.

"What are you—? Are you writing something? I saw the light on, I noticed your bed was empty—"

"I'm writing a letter," Annie said quietly.

"A letter?"

"Yes, a letter. To a friend. I have friends, I write letters to them occasionally; do you mind? I didn't think I was disturbing you."

Jean relaxed visibly. She tried to smile.

"Of course you weren't disturbing me, Annie, I just woke up and wondered and for a moment . . . for a moment I was, you know, a little worried."

"You were worried," Annie repeated. She and Jean stared at each other for a long moment. At such times Annie kept her expression stiff and neutral: she was Jean's baby sister, she and Jean had always liked each other, it was not Jean she disliked. In fact, in a way, she rather liked Jean's sisterliness—she liked being fussed over, worried over, grieved over, to a certain extent. She did appreciate Jean's generosity, leaving her husband and three children for more than a week, just to stay with Annie in Annie's small, crowded, depressing apartment. But if she thought of Jean and of Jean's love, if she thought of Jean's undisguised sorrow that first day, she might break down; she might succumb to those dry wracking sobs. And this would distress her sister all the more. "But why should you be worried?" she said calmly. "We've been over this already. I am perfectly well now . . . I've regained my old sense of, what was it? . . . not humor but skepticism, cynicism . . . or

sin? My sense of sin," she said, smiling broadly. "Yes. I've regained it. So you can stop worrying. You can go back home to your loving husband and your beautiful children, you can dismiss the babysitter, you can move back into your enviable life . . . right? Because Annie has regained her sense of sin and knows right from wrong now and has learned her lesson well."

"Who are you writing to, Annie?" Jean asked. She stepped forward though she must have known Annie would cover the sheets of paper with her arms, to hide them; Annie did this without really thinking, as a reflex. It was an insulting gesture but Jean did not appear to mind. ". . . To him?"

"No," Annie said quickly, curtly.

"Well, I. . . . As long as. . . . I'm glad, I mean, that. . . ."

"Of course I'm not writing to *him*," Annie said angrily. Her voice was trembling. "He's gone, he's forgotten. He's dead. To me he's dead. *Dead.* . . . No, I'm writing to a friend, an old friend. I'm writing to someone you don't know. A friend. From college. One of the few worthwhile . . . one of the. . . . He doesn't know about my life now but if he did he wouldn't judge, he liked me for myself, for . . . for myself . . . he wouldn't judge. . . . Just a friend, Jean, nobody you know or have to concern yourself with. All right?"

"Yes. All right," Jean said softly.

Priscilla Ann Quirt, she was: in her innermost heart did she love herself too dearly, or despise herself? An urbane, courteous young doctor at the Mental Health Clinic of the university where Annie had done graduate work, some years ago, had spoken of her poor *self-image*. She did not value herself enough, he believed. Wasn't it a pity, he said, covertly eying her, or pretending to covertly eye her in order to flatter her, when she was obviously very intelligent?—and very attractive as well. Wasn't it a pity, he said, that she could not adjust her inner vision of herself, to bring it more in line with reality?

". . . bring it more in line with reality," Annie repeated. She frowned. She was not playing the role of a near-mute, disingenuous girl; she was consciously playing at playing a role, in order to show this wise bastard what she thought of him. "Yes. I will try. *Bring my inner vision more in line with reality.*"

"You don't approve of yourself," he said, reddening. "There's nothing wrong with you—with your mind. The drugs scared you and that's quite natural, in fact that's a good thing—you're too sensitive for anything so crude. Your system can't take it. But there's nothing wrong with your mind, with your sanity; with what we call sanity. Do you under-

stand? It's almost as if you have a problem of vision, of measurement . . . from the inside you see one image of yourself, but no one else sees that image. You have to work hard, don't you?—to make other people see that image."

"Yes," Annie said. "All right."

"All right what?"

"I agree, I see your point, I'm impressed with your insight and kindliness and wisdom. I'm very grateful," Annie said.

He stared at her. For a while he said nothing.

"I'm very grateful but I have to leave now," Annie said. "I have a class. I'm teaching a class. If you won't give me another prescription for those pills—"

"No. I won't."

"—then I have nothing more to say, or to ask of you."

As she opened the door she heard him say something. But when she turned, smiling anxiously, for an instant almost vulnerable—when she turned, he was merely staring at her, blank-faced, assessing. His eye dropped to her hips, to the long stretch of thigh outlined by the tight jeans she wore, then to her legs, her leather boots, to the floor. And that was that.

Yet others told her she was egotistical: she valued herself too much, could never love anyone as she loved herself. Her image of herself was exaggerated, magnified. Jean would never have accused her of such self-love, nor would her mother—who loved Annie best, in that desperate, hopeless, rather exotic way in which mothers love certain children, knowing their love is misplaced; but her father had told her, several times. Her father was an unusual man—the owner of a small but fairly profitable dairy farm who was also a lay-minister and also a part-time music instructor in the county public schools. He was abrupt, outspoken, with a temper as bad as Annie's; she supposed she had inherited it from him, along with his tall athletic frame and his too-bright red hair and pale, creamy-pale complexion. "You love yourself too much," he had said. Twelve years old at the time, Annie had been weeping because she was so tall. Five feet eight and a half. And growing, always growing. Growing! She wept because she was the tallest student in her class and because she was the smartest student, because she had no friends, because she felt superior to the friends she had, and could not resist making wise remarks about them; she wept because her skin had broken out and her fantasies of cold, hard, careless beauty were being mocked. She locked herself in the bathroom and stared at her image, weeping

angrily, hopelessly. She hated her body, her small hard breasts!—hated them. She hated her red hair, which drew all eyes to it. Even on the street, even on the Greyhound bus, she felt people look at her—adults, not her classmates, grown men and women who should have ignored her, since she was still a child. Men stared, especially. Men stared. And she hated them, hated their watchfulness—though at times she courted it—at times she hated them for watching her and then, as she drew closer, losing interest in her. *Too young,* they might have thought. *Not pretty enough,* they might have thought. She ran home filled with an inexplicable, senseless rage—locked herself in the bathroom and wept. Her father shouted at her to unlock the door. "You love yourself too much, it's a kind of sickness," he said in distaste. "What does it matter how tall you are?—or if you have pimples? What does it matter to anyone except you? The world exists, you know, apart from you." For several years they had battled—she had hated him, had really hated him; now, an adult, she recalled her hatred with amazement and almost with a kind of pride, that she had been capable of such passion. She had not understood her father, really. She had thought it unjust that he should accuse her of loving herself when she despised herself, wished to be anyone except Annie Quirt, anyone, any other girl; wasn't that proof of her innocence? She had thought that contentment was an indication of self-esteem, not knowing that discontent, of the kind that raged in her, was far more egotistical.

"Who should I love, then?" she said, sneering. "You?—Mother? Jean? Billy? —God?"

"You might begin with any of us," he said, mildly, "and work your way up to God."

She had not understood him then when he spoke like that, nor did she understand him now. Her father's faith embarrassed her. It was so calm, so effortless, it so lacked the kind of combative spirit she had witnessed in others—in other "believers"—that she could not relate to it at all. So she never referred to it, and she tried not to think of it. About the self-love, though, she believed he might be right. Someday she must write a letter home, a spare ascetic letter, and tell him he was right after all—that should please him.

"What does it matter, whether we love or hate ourselves," she said, talking to herself as she sometimes did, making dinner one evening a few days after her sister had left. ". . . if the results are identical. . . ."

Her thirty-first birthday had come and gone. Now she was into her thirty-second year. She would have liked to feel something—a sense of panic, of loss. Instead she felt only that queer suspension, which

she had begun to feel some years earlier, past the highest point of her adolescent spirit, her rather ruthless idealism—a queer numb suspension, as if she were waiting for something to happen without any faith that it would happen. Still, she must wait.

The doorbell rang. When she went to open it, rather timidly, she saw that it was no one she knew—it was Warren Breck.

"Of course I didn't forget you. Never. How could I forget you . . ." he said, smiling. He shook his head as if with the absurdity of the idea. "And your letter, your lovely marvelous letter . . . your letter came at a crucial time in my life, how did you know? . . . how could you have known what it would mean to me?"

They had been holding hands, almost gripping each other's hands. Annie knew she had gone white, deathly pale. In this man's presence she no longer felt familiar to herself, she felt estranged, unpleasantly excited, she could not help staring and staring at him. She loved him. She *loved* him. He was the Warren Breck of ten years ago, his brown hair cut, still, in the same styleless fashion; the lenses of his glasses thick, so that his pale brown eyes were enlarged, and looked appealing, like a child's eyes; his clothes not quite the same clothes but just as ill-fitting—a dark brown plaid sports coat and dark brown trousers, a white cotton shirt of the kind boys wore, for play, the neck stretched from having been pulled over his head many times. He had a wrist-watch that was rather fashionable, however—a thick leather band with more than one buckle, like something a motorcyclist might wear. It gave his long, slender, rather bony hands a look of dramatic strength.

They held hands and talked. They talked for hours. She offered him dinner—he tried to eat but was too excited—she was too excited—so she offered him wine and he drank several glasses, distractedly, all the while staring at her. His voice was high, child-like, absolutely the voice of a decade ago, when he had raised it to question Dr. Hotchkiss or Tony or one of the others, frail in texture and yet quite fearless, in a way superbly confident. She remembered him, she remembered him so clearly! She kept interrupting him to laugh, to kiss him on the cheek, to squeeze his hand and his arm gaily, with an almost frantic triumph. He had come to her—he had actually come to her. To *her*. He must have half-loved her, as she had sensed. But he had been too timid to approach her. Too shy, beside his friend Tony. Still, he must have sensed how she had liked him . . . how very fond she'd been of him . . . perhaps in a way she had loved him, had loved him all along. . . . Hadn't she kissed him once, at a party? Drunk, all of them, and noisy,

and completely happy—hadn't she kissed poor Warren Breck goodnight, despite his obvious embarrassment and the alarm and resentment of the poor plain girl he was with? She had loved him all along, she believed. All those years.

"Maybe you really did sense that I'd come to a crisis in my life," Warren said. "I know it's ridiculous, but . . . but why not? There are mystical connections between people sometimes . . . between people who are, you know, sympathetic with each other. There are these connections, I'm sure. As a scientist and a rationalist I'm opposed to such things, even to entertaining them," he said, grinning, "but as a human being . . . as one who has experienced certain coincidences, certain small miracles. . . . Do you think it might be possible, Annie?"

"Yes? What? That I sensed—?"

"That I communicated with you somehow—"

"Yes, I think it's true," Annie said passionately. "I know it's true."

They kissed. Both were trembling. Annie caught her breath, suddenly frightened, awkward as a young girl; for an instant she seemed not to know how to kiss, where to place her lips. She was so intensely aware of him. He was warm, nervous, giddy from the wine, as she was, tense, extremely self-conscious. *She loved him. And she was kissing him.*

"I know it's true," Annie whispered.

"Nothing much has happened to me," Annie said slowly, as if she were telling the truth; as if the truth rather astonished her. "I'm the same person I was at the age of twenty-one. Really, I'm the same as I was at the age of . . . of fifteen or twelve. Aren't you? Yes? I thought so. Nothing much has happened, it's as if I've been running in place for years," she said dreamily.

"You look exactly the same," Warren said. His voice was not so shrill now; he sounded loving. "You're even more beautiful, maybe. I used to stare at your hair, watch the sunlight in it, it was hypnotic, so many angles of light . . . hypnotic. *He* didn't appreciate you enough, didn't value you enough."

Annie chose not to pursue that subject.

They lay together in Annie's narrow bed. Without his glasses Warren looked even younger. There was something ethereal about his face: the large solemn eyes, the thin lips which did not quite close over his front teeth, the slightly receding chin. Strange, that she should have thought him homely, once—he was sweet-faced, appealing, utterly delightful. She took his face in her hands and kissed him. She could not resist kissing him, like that; could not resist touching him. He was

grateful for affection, like a puppy. As a lover he was rather nervous, at times frantic—but Annie did not care, she understood his anxiety and his excitement—they must become better acquainted with each other, with each other's bodies—and hadn't he been almost monastic for years? —so she did not care, it really did not matter to her. Love forgave such things. Love did not even notice such things. They lay together, in each other's arms, delighted as children, giggling, whispering, sharing secrets, reminiscing. Was it a dream?—it was so lovely! It was so perfect. Annie slept, and woke, and moved into his arms; and slept again; and, waking, they tried to make love, self-consciously; and then they lay together like conspirators, in a kind of dream, contained within the dream, not wishing to wake. Again and again one of them would exclaim: "It's incredible—seeing you again. I can hardly believe it. A miracle, isn't it? A miracle?"

He had brought a single large suitcase that contained all his "meaningful" belongings. Books and notebooks, mainly, but some clothes as well. He left Lake City, Florida, on the very day that Annie's letter had arrived: she had looked up his parents' address in the Rochester, New York telephone book at the main library, had sent it there, asking them to forward it. Though the letter had been written in a feverish haste she had, the next morning, calmly put it into an envelope without rereading it, drove to the library, calmly and deliberately addressed the envelope, and mailed it within the hour. And Warren's parents had forwarded it to him in Lake City . . . and so he had come to her, making the long trip in two days. "I didn't even want to take time to write back," he said. "I just had to get here. To you."

"I love you," Annie whispered, starting to cry.

Like newlyweds, they were, those first several days. There was no question of Warren staying elsewhere—she had insisted he move in with her. And he had seemed to expect that. Annie's apartment was on the sixth floor of an undistinguished stucco building on the very border of an excellent residential neighborhood, and not far from one of the city's larger parks. Advertised as a "luxury" apartment, it was really quite ordinary, even shabby; and it was very small. A narrow bedroom looking out upon a wall some fifteen feet away, a living room with a tiny "dining area," a kitchen so small that Annie could make meals standing in one place, merely bending and stretching; a windowless, depressing bathroom that was also used for the cats' litter. When Jean had stayed with her it had been claustrophobic, but with Warren it seemed rather cozy. If they bumped into each other, if they got in each other's way, they merely hugged and kissed and laughed greedily.

The second evening, Warren made dinner: he'd gone out to buy the very best fresh fish available in the city, and some vegetables at an open-air market, and two bottles of French wine, and some crusty rolls at a French bakery. Annie was troubled, that he should spend so much money—she gathered he was rather poor, temporarily unemployed. But he merely laughed, saying that this was their honeymoon, wasn't it?—and they must celebrate.

The dinner was excellent. Annie believed it was excellent—she said so, repeatedly—but in fact she hardly tasted it. She was watching her lover, studying him; she could not help but wonder at the miracle that had come into her life. *He was exactly as she remembered.* Perhaps his hair was a little thinner. She noticed that, now. And his manner was at times highly excitable, almost frantic. He perspired easily. The cats made him nervous, so Annie put them both in the bathroom, where they yowled and scratched against the door. "I've never understood pets, the politics of owning pets," Warren said, smiling self-consciously. "I just can't see it, you know—living intimately with animals—even if it's to combat loneliness. But your cats are beautiful creatures," he said quickly. "The long-haired one especially—beautiful, like you. Like you." The sweet gravity with which he spoke reminded Annie sharply of the Warren of ten years ago, who had discussed philosophical and political subjects with such earnestness, and at such length, refusing to acknowledge his listeners' wandering attention. He had done them all the honor, Annie saw now, of presuming them to be his equals.

Dinner began at 7 and lasted until after 10. They finished both bottles of wine and opened another, a gift bottle someone had brought Annie last fall; they held hands, talked and talked and talked, always circling back to their undergraduate years, to their friends and acquaintances and professors, to the rooms they had rented, the places they had frequented, the old, enormous, drafty library—which had been replaced by a new one, Annie told Warren, all glass and steel; did he know? He didn't know. He hadn't been back, he said, since the day of commencement.

And then there were the ten years to be accounted for.

Well, her life was—it was a fairly ordinary life, she believed. Rich, varied, adventurous—though not too adventurous—not *too* adventurous, like the lives of certain people she had known; young men and a few young women who had cracked up, died of overdoses or by more deliberate means—but—but she hadn't known many such people, of course. Hadn't known them well. "My own life has been rather conventional," she said. Warren stared at her lovingly. He did not blink,

did not register any emotion at all, when she said this. Perhaps he was not even listening.

Annie went on to say, haltingly, that she hadn't married—hadn't wanted to marry—had had no interest in marriage at all. Her relationship with Tony had not lasted; Tony was too shallow, didn't know what he wanted to do with his life, they had quarrelled over some trivial subject and parted and lost contact with each other . . . the last she had heard, he was in California. Doing what?—she didn't know.

Warren shook his head slowly. He didn't know either, and didn't care. "That son of a bitch never appreciated you," he said softly.

But Tony no longer mattered, Annie said. She never thought of him. Never. Nine years had passed—a small lifetime—so much had happened to her—so many people had drifted into her life, had become temporarily entangled with her—though not *too* entangled, she said quickly; she had always been, well, rather detached—like Warren himself, she had always kept a certain intellectual distance between herself and the world. . . . After graduation she had gone to England and Europe for a year, had wandered around, with Tony, and then they had quarrelled and there had been other friends—did he remember Janice?—yes, he would remember her, they had been in some of the same classes—one of Annie's closest, dearest friends—and then Annie had returned to the States, had studied for a Master's degree in art history at the University of Michigan—had liked—loved—Ann Arbor; had kept herself detached, though, from some of the more extreme, desperate people there—really stupid, stupid behavior—B.A.'s in English trying to deal in drugs, competing with professionals—their first toddling steps into capitalism!—the fools, stupid fools, Annie muttered, her mouth twisting as she recalled certain incidents and then dismissed them. Yes, she kept herself detached. Aloof. She had been a serious student: had done a lengthy study of the art of Isabel Bishop—was Warren familiar with—?—no?—a fine American artist, an "urban realist"—the Thirties—not so well known as she should be, Annie believed—of course not a *great* artist, that could not be claimed, but an excellent one. At the same time, Annie said, as if anticipating a query from Warren—who was, in fact, simply smiling at her—her aesthetic principles were really more international, more "modernist"—she sympathized with the American Scene painters and their loving, meticulous work—their noble attempt to create a distinctly American tradition—but imaginatively she was more deeply engaged, perhaps, by—by the others—by Abstract Expressionism, still—though it was now denounced, and though people liked to say they were now bored by Pollock, she still felt a genuine excitement standing before his canvases— And— And, well, she said with

a slightly annoyed smile, since Warren was not responding at all, after Ann Arbor she had tried to paint for a while without luck and had done a little part-time teaching—at a small college—and—and that hadn't worked out, the administration was terribly intolerant—narrow-minded—so she had quit and come here and had been working at a gallery downtown—a promising job, it had seemed—the Hunter Gallery dealt with some fine work—a promising job that had turned sour, since Annie had been used simply as a receptionist and clerk and secretary and clean-up girl—bossed around, treated patronizingly—and paid very little for the surprisingly long hours she worked. So she had quit. Had quit a few weeks ago. And—

Warren touched her forearm with his finger. Annie had been sitting with her elbows on the table and her left sleeve had fallen back, "What's this?" Warren said. He had moved so quickly that Annie hadn't had a chance to flinch. "Did you hurt yourself?"

Annie glanced at the scar and then away. "It's nothing. An accident."

"An accident? How?"

"I said an accident," Annie snapped.

Warren blinked rapidly. He was drunk, but it was an innocent, child-like drunkenness. He tried to smile; Annie smiled; they finished the third bottle of wine and now there was nothing to do but go to bed.

In the morning they made love again, and again it was not quite right. Warren muttered through his teeth, squirming in her arms, gasping hotly. "Love you, love you, love you. . . ."

"I love *you,*" Annie wept.

Afterward she showered and he remained in bed, dozing, and she felt the first touches of panic, that he was out there in the bedroom, in her bed, and would always be there; she would never be alone again.

That day she was oddly exhausted. It tired her to talk to Warren, as if they had been laboring together to comprehend something for hours, for days, and had failed, and yet could not stop. He was sweet—she adored him—and yet why didn't he shave, why didn't he shower?—why did he stay so close? He showed no inclination to leave the apartment. He turned on the radio and moved the dial slowly from side to side, listening to a station for a few minutes, then moving on. At all times there was a guileless half-smile on his face like something crudely sketched on a blank sheet of paper.

The telephone rang and Annie spoke hurriedly and apologetically, explaining she was busy. Warren's eyebrows rose; he listened closely to what she said, but never asked her, afterward, who had called.

When she asked him if he would like to go out—to the Art Institute, to a movie, to visit friends of hers, he did not seem very interested.

"I'm content here," he said, smiling. "It's paradise, here."

"But—wouldn't you like some fresh air?"

"I'm perfectly content here, Annie."

She went out to buy groceries. She had to get out of the apartment.

Walking along Annie rehearsed a conversation: *Aren't you a doctor, Warren? What has happened? Didn't you go to medical school?—aren't you a genius? What is happening—? Why are you here?* Her legs felt long and awkward as stilts. Her head rang with words. It was raining and she had rushed out with no umbrella or raincoat, wearing only a thin cotton shirt and blue jeans and sneakers so worn that her smallest toes peeped through. She began to cry again and her tears mixed with the rain.

"I love him," she said. "I do love him. . . . I must love him."

She walked a half-mile to the park. Something was wrong, gravely wrong, but it must be articulated before she could deal with it. From the few vague things Warren had said about his present life, she judged that he had no work—hadn't finished medical school—perhaps he hadn't even gone to medical school?—she didn't dare ask. She didn't want to hurt his feelings; and she had the idea that he wasn't quite the Warren she recalled—his thinking processes had atrophied somewhat. But probably that was her imagination. He had always been shy, clumsy, not very good with conversation, at times almost mute: poor Warren!

"Love, love, love. . . ."

She struck her hands together, half-fisted, prayerlike.

Skirting the playground area, which was deserted this afternoon, Annie happened to see a figure across the way—a man moving slowly and sluggishly in the direction of the woods. In a streaked trenchcoat, head bowed. He did not turn, did not notice her. She strode by. On an ordinary day the park was filled with young mothers and hordes of children, white and black, and a few couples, and straggling indeterminate figures, mostly male, who walked along the wide gravelled paths in utter isolation, like creatures blundering through a single, singular dream, which could not be shared with anyone else. In poor weather there were no young mothers, no children, but often the solitary people showed up—often, Annie was one of them—head bowed, heart pumping, mind racing with perpetual unanswerable shouts: *What do I do now? What now? Now? I had wanted a life so different—* Six feet tall, slender but not slight, sharp-eyed, quick, her red hair falling straight to her shoulders, Annie must have seemed intimidating to

anyone who saw her; at any rate, none of the other solitary wanderers ever approached her.

That day she went to a neighborhood library and, sitting on the floor by the shelves of art books, spent an hour or more looking through books–turning pages quickly, desperately–studying Van Gogh's drawings and Cezanne's landscapes and crude, touching woodcuts by anonymous Germans of the late medieval period–then paging quickly again, as if she were looking for something specific, though she could not have said what it was. Her legs ached; she must leave; Warren was waiting for her; she had not yet done the grocery shopping. . . . Then, by accident, she discovered what she must have been seeking: her breath was drawn sharply inward when she came upon the watercolors of Nolde, beautiful, indefinable, utterly perfect. *Here,* she thought simply.

At six the library closed and she returned to the apartment and saw that there was no one there–no one. "Warren?" she called. Her voice lifted in astonishment. "Warren?"

She set the bag of groceries down. "Warren . . . ?"

The apartment was empty. Even the cats were gone. She called them–called them in a voice that wailed absurdly. The bathroom window was open, and there was no screen; Warren must have opened the window deliberately so that the cats could get out, along the ledge, down the fire escape. They had both been strays, at times she had disliked the nuisance of having them in so small a place, but she had been very fond of them.

Annie was leaning out the window, calling the cats, when she felt a hand on her back.

"I thought maybe, you know, they stopped you on the street . . . made you come to the station for questioning. I thought maybe something had gone wrong. Something serious."

"No. No, Warren."

"–because you were gone so long."

"No."

"You were gone for hours," he said accusingly. "You must not love me, you must have been lying."

"I love you, Warren."

"They didn't arrest you? They didn't trace the car and take you to the station and interrogate you and force you to betray me? –Because they can do anything they want, anything. And you're a woman. They could have hurt you and forced you to betray me and then let you come back here–to put me off my guard."

Annie shook her head. "I didn't—there was no one— Nothing happened."

"But you must not love me," he said. "Otherwise you wouldn't have stayed away so long."

He took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes and made a tired, exasperated noise. Annie had to go to him, had to put her arms around him and kiss him. Still he was hurt, sullen; he did not respond.

"You're not much different from *her*," he muttered.

"Who do you mean, Warren?" Annie asked carefully.

He shrugged his shoulders. ". . . leave the house to go shopping, stay away for hours . . . days . . . invent all kinds of insulting excuses . . . any fool could interpret their true meaning. What if I get hungry? I'm normal, a normal human being, I need to eat like anyone else . . . what if there's no food in the house and I get hungry? She stayed away for days. She thought she could hide. Pathetic bitch," he said softly.

Annie stood beside him, unable to move. She wanted to walk away but could not. If she embraced him more enthusiastically, if she brushed the messy strands of hair out of his eyes, and kissed him, everything might be restored; but she could not move.

"Who are you talking about, Warren?" she said.

"My son would have been three years old," he said suddenly. "What day is this? Where's a calendar? —Yes, see, it's the 14th today, he would have been three years old on the 15th, I have an excellent memory for dates and he was born on the 15th of May—but— But—"

He began to cry. His glasses fell into his lap, then to the floor. He cried, his face screwed up like a baby's, and Annie stood above him staring, blank, frozen.

"—my son—she tried to—they all tried to—sneaking behind my back, planting evidence against me—eavesdropping—spying—at the police station she uncovered herself—the slut—they saw her for what she was—and the burns on the baby—*she* did it—she lied—her family lied—Is she in touch with you, Annie, was she someone we both knew?—from college? Were you talking on the telephone with her, Annie, is that why you were gone so long?"

"No, no."

"Are you telling the truth, Annie, or—"

"I'm telling the truth, Warren."

He looked up at her. Not so young now, and yet curiously childlike: his skin was grayish, drawn, his brown eyes were bloodshot and opaque as marbles. Annie wondered if he could see her. He was nearly blind without his glasses.

"Annie," he whispered, taking her cold hand, "Annie . . . you're so beautiful, so beautiful. . . . I remember from years ago, how beautiful you were, you are, I love you so much and I need you, you won't betray me, will you? . . . So beautiful," he said, blinking up at her. "Tony didn't appreciate you. The bastard. That one week, you thought you were pregnant, do you remember? . . . and he was drunk for three days straight and wouldn't leave my room, said he was holing up there, wouldn't come to the telephone when you called, the bastard . . . wouldn't let me study in peace . . . none of you let me study in peace . . . but I didn't mind, I liked you all . . . envied you. . . . I loved *you*, Annie Quirt," he said dramatically, gazing up at her with those glistening myopic eyes, "and I will love you the rest of my life."

"I'm in trouble. I'm in bad trouble."

"But I can't talk now, Annie. You know that."

"Is anyone in the office with you?"

"I said I can't talk now. —Do you want money?"

"I'm in trouble, I don't know what to do—I don't know what to do—"

There was no reply. Annie wondered, in a panic, if he had already hung up.

"Look," she said, "I haven't bothered you, have I?—I haven't telephoned you—it's been a long time, hasn't it? You told me to call you, practically begged me to call—"

"I didn't *beg* you to call, Annie, you or anyone else."

"—there's someone here with me, he's sleeping now, he sleeps all day, he's been here two weeks now and—and I can't—I'm afraid—I don't know what—"

"Do you want money? I can't hear you very well."

"—I don't want to call the police, I don't want to turn him in—I'm afraid—I can't think what to do— I—"

"Do you want money? I'll send you a money order. All right? All right?"

"—money? I—"

"I'll send you a money order, Annie. Goodbye."

"But—"

"Last time it was $500 and this time, dear, it's going to be only $250. That should about end it, Annie, right? Goodbye."

"Wait— I need—"

"Goodbye."

The playground was deserted; since morning rain had fallen steadily and there were puddles beneath the swings, beneath the monkey bars, at the bottom of the slide. Annie crossed the playground, hands in the pockets of her rain-coat. She was bare-headed. She thought her plastic scarf was in the pocket of her coat, but it wasn't there. so she was bare-headed in the rain and, after a while, she did not notice.

There was no wind. The rain fell quietly, steadily. From time to time Annie shivered. Her feet were wet; the cheap canvas tennis shoes had soaked through.

I can stay here as long as I want, she thought. *There's no one here.*

Impulsively she climbed the slide, taking the steps two at a time. She was a big powerful handsome girl. Well-loved. Enviable. People glanced at her, and then looked again. Stared. She could handle her life as she wished. She was capable of anything. At the top of the slide she paused, hands on the railings. She surveyed the shabby little playground with its asphalt paving, and as much of the park as she could see—the duck pond riddled with rain, the trash containers filled to the very top, overflowing, the paths in all directions empty. A memory of Warren flashed to her, not the Warren who slept open-mouthed in her bed—at this very moment he was sleeping—but the Warren of a decade ago. He had been walking quickly along Salina Street one day, shoulders hunched slightly, head bowed, a rather ludicrous figure in his khaki jacket, his ill-fitting cheap trousers, his tattered shoes—walking along without watching where he went, so that he bumped into Annie as she came out of a store: bumped into her, mumbled something, and hurried away without seeming to recognize her. She had turned to watch him, sneering. He had half-run away, not looking back.

Now she stood at the top of the slide, gripping the wet railings. She could not recall having climbed the slide, and she did not know why she had climbed it. But it seemed as good a place as any on this rainy May afternoon.

RUBBING THE FACES OF ANGELS

for Lynn

1

On the balcony of the Golden Eagle Motor Inn
a Black maid pushes a linen cart.
Businessmen pass on the sidewalk below,
suits glowing in the sun like gull's wings,
heels clicking like nickels on the pavement.
As she takes a key from her waist chain
and enters a darkened room,

a gray-haired man in a green turtleneck
ambles down the steps of the Gibbes Art Gallery
fighting the wind for his copy of the *Post*.
Reaching the street
he turns toward the Mills Hyatt House
where a Black doorman in top hat and tails
carries luggage across a red carpet and into the lobby.

Up and down Meeting Street people are resuming routines,
but for me this is a new city and year,
a few hours to gather fresh images
while you labor across the street
in the graveyard of the Circular Congregational Church
writing in your notebook small records of the dead,
with charcoal and rice paper
rubbing the faces of angels from stones.

2

At Western Sizzler you tell me death
on the oldest stones
is a hollow-eyed skull,
sometimes over crossbones, othertimes wings
(later skulls grew detail,
evolved into the faces of angels),

and describe how the skull
cradled in bones
above the grave of David Stoddard
became the skull and wings of Desire Peronneau,

became the angel frowning over Elizabeth Mathews,
the angel rejoicing over John Gerley's grave.

After all this time, you say,
we are coming to judge death less critically.

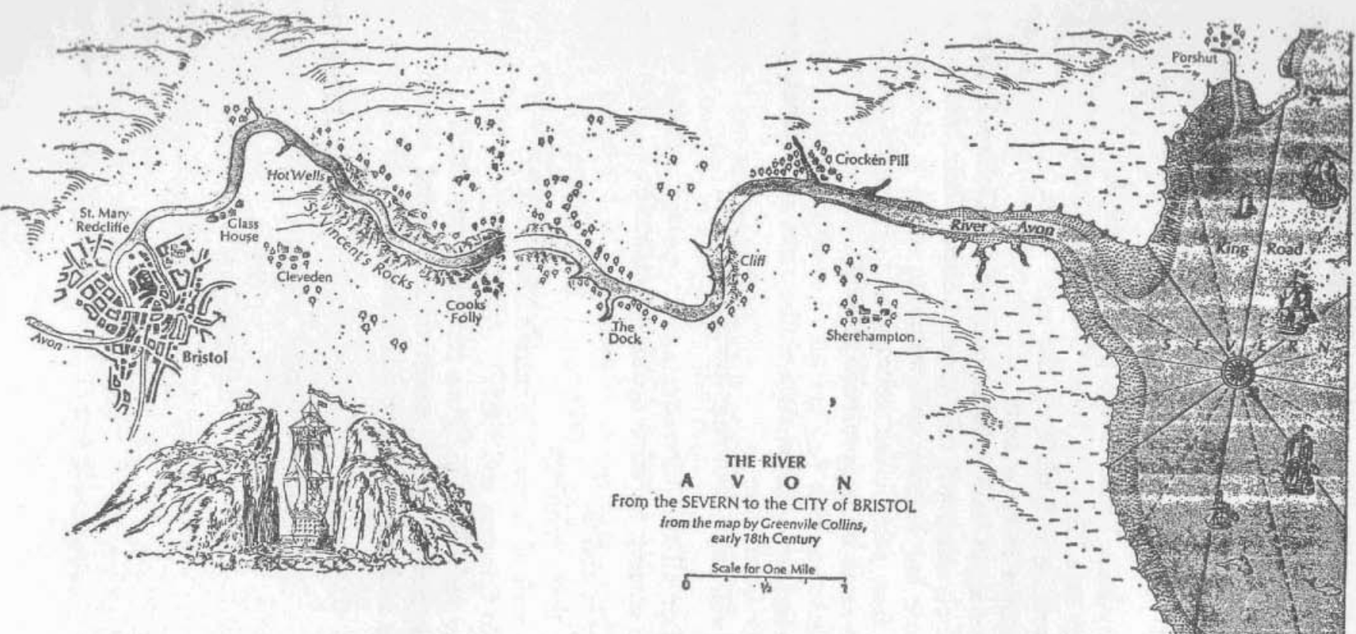
3

The gray-haired man in the green turtleneck
is asleep in a house on some Charleston street.
Tomorrow he will walk up the same steps.
Businessmen in shiny suits
will pass again under the balcony of the Golden Eagle.
The Black maid will roll her cart above their heads,
look from her balcony and watch
people from other cities, countries,
rub the same stones you rubbed today,
take photographs
record the same sparse data of the same spent lives.
All over Charleston
things will move routinely toward one fact.

Yes, after all this time
we are coming to judge death less critically.

Even you and I
taping these rubbings
to the wall of Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge
point to this one and that
and say we'd like the figure carved on our stone,
you the smiling angel, wings curled toward heaven,
me the reclining skeleton of Thomas Pool.

David Bottoms



"The River Avon" is from pp. 162-163 of *The European Discovery of America: Vol. I* by Samuel Eliot Morison and is reprinted here by kind permission of Oxford University Press.

DE SENECTUTE; OR, PARADISE LOST; OR, THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER: CONVERSATIONS WITH A LITTLE OLD MAN

WILLIAM HARMON

(These imaginary dialogues take place in a modest rented room in a rather old house located on the inner edge of a no longer smart district of an immemorial seaport, known for commerce, banking, shipping, shipbuilding, tanning, a few residual military activities, and therapeutic waters that attract a heterogeneous clientele of international hypochondriacs. The room is uncommonly bare and bright, with white sheets on the cot and white slip-covers on the two old easy chairs. There is a small three-shelf bookcase and, left and right on the wall above the bookcase, two ill-matched items in plain frames: a somewhat faded reproduction of Paul Klee's Senecio [1922] *and a fairly sharp reproduction of Greenvile Collins' eighteenth-century map of the area of the River Avon from the Severn to the City of Bristol, showing the salt marsh, the Hot Wells, and St. Vincent's Rocks flanking the narrow channel. An inset sketch shows another view of the Rocks, with a sailing ship making its way through the channel; a number of goats can be seen on the rocky hills overhead.)*

FIRST EVENING

Little Old Man: Come in, come in, come in.

Visitor: Sir.

Little Old Man: Blast that draft! Well, sit down. Welcome. Your note says you want to ask some specific questions.

Visitor: Yes, sir. You see, I admire T. S. Eliot's "Gerontion" very much indeed, and I have devotedly studied the commentaries of the greatest scholiasts—Mr. Ransom, Mr. Smith, Mr. Williamson, Mr. Kenner—

Little Old Man: I keep up.

Visitor: Well then you must recognize that, while we have a wealth of general commentary along with a few odds and ends of echoes and allusions, we still lack any very precise guidance, and I just thought—

Little Old Man: You'd take the bull by the horns and go right to the horse's mouth.

Visitor: In a manner of speaking.

Little Old Man: Here I am, the star and sole speaker of the most extraordinarily concentrated poem of the century. Indulge me now: mind and body grow feeble; my memory comes and goes. I have no ghosts. But I'll do what I can. Help yourself and me to a bit of that wine and ask your questions.

Visitor: Forgive me if my questions seem simple-minded—

Little Old Man: Not at all, not at all, not at all. Fire away.

Visitor: Well, to begin with, how do you pronounce the title of your poem?

Little Old Man: Magnificent! That's really beginning at the beginning! Isn't that just like my creator? He introduces that keynote of uncertainty with the very first letter of the title of the poem. He wastes no time in confusing and fascinating the reader.

Visitor: Ah. . . .

Little Old Man: What?

Visitor: The . . . title?

Little Old Man: My word, yes, yes, yes, the title, the immortal title. Take your choice: *g* as in *get*, *g* as in *gem*. Speaking for myself, *personally*, since I am old-fashioned as well as old, I prefer the *g* as in *get*, the so-called "hard" sound. Hand me that scrapbook on top of the bookcase.

Visitor: This? It's heavy.

Little Old Man: Many thanks, many thanks. Think I can find it. . . . A passage copied from Mr. Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage:* "There is something to be said for retaining the hard sound of *g* even before e, i, and y, in such Greek-derived words as are not in popular but only in learned, technical, or literary use." Now my title is not a Greek-derived word but a Greek word outright. A sound you probably can't pronounce, a word you probably can't define.

Visitor: I'm convinced.

Little Old Man: I'm becoming worn out. Take that old book on the top shelf there—yes, that one—read it, and come back tomorrow evening.

Visitor: I will, sir. Thank you.

Little Old Man: So long.

SECOND EVENING

Little Old Man: Sit down. All that chatter about how to pronounce my title got me stirred up. Been looking forward to your visit. Now: What do you think of the book?

Visitor: F. M. Cornford's *The Origin of Attic Comedy?*

Little Old Man: What do you think of it?

Visitor: Well, of course, it's out of date now. . . .

Little Old Man: It came out in 1914. You'd be out of date, too.

Visitor: And it offers some generalizations that would have to be altered in the light of subsequent research. . . .

Little Old Man: That's true of all of us.

Visitor: But, even so, it remains altogether intriguing, simply for what it can tell us about "Gerontion."

Little Old Man: Quite. As a learned scholar, you will recall that during the 1930's Mr. Eliot regarded Cornford's book as required reading for those interested in producing *Sweeney Agonistes?*

Visitor: I have read Hallie Flanagan's *Dynamo,* if that's what you mean.

Little Old Man: That's what I mean. But you are aware, of course, that Mr. Eliot knew Cornford's book well before the 1930's?

Visitor: He mentioned Cornford in 1920 in "Euripides and Professor Murray," as I recall.

Little Old Man: Bang on. Then you recognize that the radical of my character is the conventional personality of the Aristophanic *gerontion.* And, at least according to Cornford, that mask assumes the features of the great Comedian himself.

Visitor: Then the basic mask is comic?

Little Old Man: Farcical, with Dionysiac roots.

Visitor: But your poem isn't comic.

Little Old Man: I suppose not. . . . Well, the rhyme of "Titians" and "ambitions" *could* be funny.

Visitor: Maybe so, but the poem is not really a lot of laughs.

Little Old Man: No, no, no. Mr. Eliot's genius in his earlier poems was to rescue the essential dignity and tragedy from the effigies of ritual burlesque, the dismal arena of us old guys.

Visitor: Let me ask about the epigraph—

Little Old Man: Please, later. This old guy is tired.

THIRD EVENING

Little Old Man: Sit down. Wine. I've been musing. Cornford's speculation about Aristophanes-as-*gerontion* was at one time, I thought, worth copying out in my scrapbook. Read.

Visitor: Gladly. "The Old Man's part is the one which Aristophanes has written for himself, no matter whether he acted it or not. Hence it breaks through the traditional mask, and flowers with much of the charm and genius of its creator, like the parts that Molière wrote for himself in his lighter plays. In the same way, Falstaff and Mr. Pickwick, who were originally cast for the mask of the Bald Fool, and designed to be no more than the cause that wit is in other men, became witty in themselves, lovable, and even wise. Instances like these are the best measure we have for creative genius. The stock mask can be defined in half-a-dozen adjectives, which no more make a living character than half-a-dozen clothes make a man. Any dullard can put a dummy inside

them and make it walk and talk upon the stage. In Aristophanes we can see the dummy touched into life, and the features behind the mask working with a play of expression very different from the traditional angry glare of the morose Old Man."

Little Old Man: And naturally you are familiar with Horace's unkind formula for the character of the old man. . . . But you had a question about the epigraph.

Visitor: It seems odd, in a poem obsessed with age, to lead off with such a seeming denial as "Thou hast nor youth nor age."

Little Old Man: Do you recall to whom those words are addressed?

Visitor: The Duke, disguised as a friar, is talking to Claudio.

Little Old Man: But the antecedent of "thou" is *not* Claudio. The antecedent is Life. The pseudo-friar advises the condemned man to "be absolute for death" and to say *to Life* something that, transparently, is a lot of nonsense. It's in the scrapbook. Read.

Visitor: Reason thus with life:

If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
That none but fools would keep. A breath thou art,
Servile to all the skyey influences,
That dost this habitation where thou keep'st
Hourly afflict. Merely, thou art Death's fool;
For him thou labour'st by thy flight to shun
And yet runn'st toward him still. Thou art not noble;
For all the accommodations that thou bear'st
Are nursed by baseness. Thou'rt by no means valiant;
For thou dost fear the soft and tender fork
Of a poor worm. Thy best of rest is sleep—

Little Old Man: That's real poetry. . . .

Visitor: Thy best of rest is sleep,

And that thou oft provok'st; yet grossly fear'st
Thy death, which is no more. Thou art not thyself;
For thou exist'st on many a thousand grains
That issue out of dust. Happy thou art not;
For what thou hast not, still thou striv'st to get,
And what thou hast, forget'st. Thou art not certain,
For thy complexion shifts to strange effects
After the moon.

Little Old Man: What a long speech. A drop more of wine. Can't fly on one wing.

Visitor: If thou art rich, thou'rt poor,
For, like an ass whose back with ingots bows—

Little Old Man: I regard, as the most impressive rhetorical feature of my poem, the utter lack of similes. Simile, aided and abetted by rhyme, murders poetry. . . .

Visitor: Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,
And Death unloads thee. Friend hast thou none;
For thine own bowels, which do call thee sire,
The mere effusion of thy proper loins—

Little Old Man: That's better, that's better.

Visitor: Do curse the gout, serpigo, and the rheum.
For ending thee no sooner. Thou hast nor youth nor age,
But, as it were, an after-dinner's sleep,
Dreaming on both; for all thy blessed youth
Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms
Of palsied Eld—

Little Old Man: The passage is very likely corrupt, very likely corrupt. . . .

Visitor: . . . and when thou art old and rich,
Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb, nor beauty,
To make thy riches pleasant.

Little Old Man: Enough, enough. Title and epigraph *both* come from comic drama. A long, silly speech. But you may extend its scope to make life the antecedent of every "you" in my poem. (Only as a rhetorical set piece, in the play. Within five minutes of Duke-friar's stoic absurdities, Claudio is saying to Isabel the one true sentence: "Death is a fearful thing.") Come back tomorrow. Can't fly on two wings. Alas. Come back tomorrow.

FOURTH EVENING

> *When the Messiah of American literature comes he will be singing, so far as may be, in words of a single syllable.*
>
> —*Joaquin Miller, 1897*

Visitor: I've been studying. Life can be construed as the antecedent of "thou" in the epigraph and "you" in the poem—

Little Old Man: Forgive me, but I'm very tired: ask your question.

Visitor: To whom are the imperatives addressed?

Little Old Man: My poem contains no imperatives.

Visitor: But what about "Think now / History has many cunning passages"? What about "Think now / she gives when our attention is distracted"?

Little Old Man: That form of "think" is not imperative but declarative; it abridges "I think."

Visitor: Why abridge?

Little Old Man: For the same reason my near neighbor, Mr. Browning's Caliban, in *his* meditation on divinity and history, says not "I think" but " 'Thinketh,' " to camouflage himself in the third person and then suppress the pronoun, lest he vex his God and get punished.

Visitor: How about the other characters in the poem?

Little Old Man: "Figures" or "personages" would be a more precise word. I sense or remember them in the same fragmentary way that my poem presents them. The point is that I have been close to no one and recall only blurred snapshots of some types. The woman merely sneezes, just as the goat coughs; there's the recurrent strait-gate image of constriction.

Visitor: Who is the Jew?

Little Old Man: A landlord, a wanderer, a decayed *soter*. I had planned to show you a text later on, if you ever got around to asking about *Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season*, because such thoughts *in* season may recall Nietzsche's *Thoughts out of Season*, as one translation has it. But no matter. Oscar Levy's "Nietzsche in England" (1909), which appears as an introductory essay in Part I of Ludovici's translation of *Thoughts out of Season*, speaks of the House of Israel. The scrapbook. Read.

Visitor: "The venerable Owner of this old house is still standing on its threshold: his face is pale, his expression careworn, his eyes apparently scanning something far in the distance. The wind—for there is a terrible wind blowing just now—is playing havoc with his long white Jew-beard, but this white Jew-beard of his is growing black again at the end, and even the sad eyes are still capable of quite youthful flashes, as might be noticed at this very moment."

Little Old Man: And so forth. That calls for a scruple of wine. Ten years later, my creator turned all that upside down.

Visitor: Go on.

Little Old Man: I must praise him. Think of it. At the time of my creation, Mr. Eliot had reached a depth of despair. About himself, about others, about Europe, about the world. But the descent into that terrible state of mind was carried out with no sacrifice of boldness or originality of invention. Somehow, from that mephitic atmosphere, he drew in the most potent sustenance of his writing life. And he breathed out—in one sustained effort, as it were—his most extraordinary poem. It is a poem seemingly without center, without circumference, without context, with-

out idiom. And yet it manages—by a miracle of control and reach—to achieve a measure of eloquence and charm (yes: *charm*) unmatched by any other poem of the century. One cannot deny that the poem possesses terrific unity. But unity of *what,* that one cannot say.

Visitor: You sound like your creator.

Little Old Man: Any character sounds like part of his creator. The part I must sound like is the part that was aware of the cures, trials, and passages necessary for maturity. Looked at through the monocle of anthropology, my poem is about passages.

Visitor: Rites of passage?

Little Old Man: No, not so narrow. But including rites. The gates and straits stand for difficult passages—hot in the one case, windy in the other. The goat's cough and the woman's sneeze issue through blocked passages. For the rites of passage, the figure of Christ the Tiger is the vividest.

Visitor: Explain, please.

Little Old Man: I invite your attention to the passage "The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours" and then to Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane.* Read.

Visitor: "In some places it is believed that a tiger comes and carries the candidates into the jungle on his back; the feline incarnates the mythical Ancestor, the master of the initiation, who conducts the boys to the underworld. Elsewhere the novice is believed to be swallowed by a monster. . . . Physical sufferings correspond to the situation of one who is 'eaten' by the feline demon, is cut to pieces in the maw of the initiatory monster, is digested in its belly."

Little Old Man: You may also see how "concitation / Of the backward devils" can refer to such mythical ancestors, "backward" because, for one thing, they come from the past. I am what I am because I have missed certain initiatory steps and can now look forward to only one other, the passage represented by the Gulf, the monster of death.

Visitor: I cannot quite understand that sentence that begins "Gull against the wind."

Little Old Man: You must recognize that, of all the world's poets, the one whom my creator most resembles is that master-mason of syntax, John Milton. The subject of the sentence is "Gulf," the verb is "claims," and "Gull" and "man" are both direct objects. Inverted like "Us he devours."

Visitor: Well. . . .

Little Old Man: Well what? There it is; take it or leave it. (Notice my gift for chains of ten words of one syllable.)

FIFTH EVENING

Little Old Man: What's that, what's that? Wine. You brought wine.

Visitor: A modest burgundy. Let's.

Little Old Man: Splendid, splendid. And thanks. . . . You know, I think I know how I was begotten. Imagine my creator, a thirty-year-old self-exiled genius, distressed by the Great War and its immediate aftermath of futility and anarchy. Probably distressed by his own uncertain status in the world—an overworked but underemployed polymath, toiling at a rather important but rather ridiculous job for a big bank. Probably distressed by his marriage to a fascinating hysteric. Probably distressed by a difficult situation with his family—this dismay deepened by the death of his father.

Visitor: Who died in January, 1919.

Little Old Man: So, in that year, the mind of my creator deepened into an uncommonly sensitized vortex of thoughts, feelings, memories, horrors. His recent poems were perhaps unsatisfactory—seven fantastic experiments in mannered quatrains drowned by their own erudition and hardly redeemed by wit; and—"The awful daring of a moment's surrender" indeed!—one mean and nasty counter-epithalamium called "Ode," to be withdrawn as soon as published. Into this whirlpool of headache and heartache flowed the usual swollen stream of experiences—including his fabulously broad reading. Much of this reading began to crystallize into the complex contours of a single prismatic but enigmatic figure: the Aristophanic *gerontion*. But the laughable *gerontion* is given a serious history. Aristophanes is full of old men of various sorts, most of them acting silly, but Euripides offers old men as well: the most compelling are Cadmus and Tiresias in *The Bacchae*, two codgers bemused by the havoc created by the overwhelming presence of the great god Dionysus.

As early as "Prufrock," my creator had specialized in various presbyters and pseudo-presbyters. The lifeless young and middle-aged men see themselves as old. Old age becomes one of his great themes. A *gerontion*-Tiresias personage begins to emerge darkly—one manifestation in my poem, another in *The Waste Land*, yet another in *After Strange Gods* (the epigraph of which is some chilling lines spoken by Sophocles' Tiresias). This vortical figure attracted other characteristics from here and there: the senior H. W. Eliot, the pitifully thwarted Edward FitzGerald, the ridiculously stunted Henry Adams, my creator himself, who had been "growing old." (Turning thirty does that to some.)

Visitor: You've said that already.

Little Old Man: Do I repeat myself? I'll repeat myself again. This effigy of *gerontion*-Tiresias (who Pausanias said had lived for either

seven or nine generations and by other accounts was given a thousand years of life) was patched with oddments of verse and prose from all over. It may even be that Mr. Eliot drew something—some scope of historical thinking, some attitude toward the Incarnation, some contempt for Jews and the supposedly "mixed" races of the Mediterranean basin, some combination of obsession and paralysis—from a still living man: Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927), *echt* Britisher, son of an admiral, husband of Wagner's daughter Eva, renouncer of British citizenship, recipient of German citizenship in 1916, madman, fanatic, racist, polyglot. (Hitler, whom Chamberlain would hail as a Savior as early as 1923, would attend his funeral.)

Visitor: Tell me more.

Little Old Man: One of my creator's jobs in Lloyds Bank was sorting out the impounded estate of this Chamberlain—the number-one proto-Fascist of the postwar age. Imagine being steeped in that kind of brew all day long. Those two red books on the bottom shelf there are Chamberlain's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century.* Imagine. . . .

Visitor: Well, that makes sense in an anecdotal way—in a fashion sufficient but not necessary. I mean, all of those things could have happened to your creator and been on his mind, and he still could have done any of a million other things than write "Gerontion," couldn't he?

Little Old Man: He could have done, but I'm glad he didn't. . . . Now, while you have one drop more of this godly wine, I'll attempt a less anecdotal account of my begetting.

Send your mind back and down, to the probable origins of poetry, back and down to the *beginnings* of the origins of poetry, some archaic age before history. The original purposes and forms of poetry are sacramental, so that the materials and agents are themselves sacred. Imagine poetry, magic, and religion as one office, gathering into its powerful domain the subordinate functions of education, warfare, government, and love. Then imagine history itself as a succession of fragmentations, with a division of labor among people and a departmentalization of sensibility in each person. Old religious functions become progressively secularized, profaned, parodied, demythologized, desacralized, blasphemed. The old poetic vessels are being emptied of their proper content, which is religion, and filled with improper secular matters. You ought to observe that my creator was consistently drawn to certain writers—Aristophanes, Petronius, Marlowe, Baudelaire, Joyce, Pound—who evacuated the matrices of religious literature and put something else in: farce, parody, fantastic learning, ironically revised history.

SCR 9.2 Digital Facsimile

Visitor: More?

Little Old Man: Many thanks, many thanks. . . . My creator's own history as a poet began with a *partial* emptying of contents and a *partial* deformation of the vessel. Up through 1918, the subject matter of his poetry was religious, in one way or another; and the form remained, more or less, recognizably conventional. Free verse, of a sort, but still assuming, at various points, old sacerdotal habits of rhyme and meter. (The *Bay State Hymn Book*, Mr. Pound has told us, is one of the formal ancestors of Eliot's seven poems in churchly quatrains.) Later, after 1920, the contagion of the sacramental is again felt in the titles, forms, and subjects: the poems concern various rituals, and they take the form of homily, polemic, benediction, confession, supplication, and so forth. Now and then, the utterance can surprise: "That corpse you planted last year" caricatures the solemn burial of the dead; "Not with a bang but a whimper" travesties the solemn observance of the passing of the old and the birth of the new. But, despite the ironic reversals, the form remains religious. Such potential or explicit religiosity, I might add, is a function of the formal regularity and musicality of the verse.

But between 1918 and 1920 my creator attempted, once in his life, a poem thoroughly evacuated. "Gerontion" is as far as a poem can be from the roots of poetry. "Gerontion" is secular, profane, unmusical, desiccated, out of touch with any hierophantic sense of time, place, or person. But I'm worn out. Come back tomorrow.

SIXTH EVENING

Visitor: What about time? What is the setting of the poem in time?

Little Old Man: Many odd things happen when you try to take the "poetry" out of poetry. In the accomplishment of that emptied shell, you relinquish name, time, and place—normally the *first* things you know about a character. As to time, my poem faintly suggests the modern age of fractured atoms and contrived corridors, both of which suggest events that can be dated precisely. But my poem is set only in some May—a "depraved" May from the history of Henry Adams, a "dry" May (specifically, that of 1881) from the history of Edward FitzGerald: not Maia's month or Mary's or Marx's but an empty calendaric matrix.

And, in England, May of 1919 was so dry the *Times* for 2 June carried a report headed "The Drought—An Almost Rainless May," and three days later (the clippings are in the scrapbook: I've just been reading them), under the heading "The Drought Broken," announced that England had suffered twenty-four days of "absolute drought." There was also a shortage of whiskey. It was dry, dry, dry.

Visitor: And place: what may be the setting of the poem in space?

Clemson University Digital Press

Little Old Man: Europe, clearly. Not London. With my maritime background, I would guess that I am in a city much like Bristol.

Visitor: Why Bristol?

Little Old Man: An old seaport, a paradigm of Western adventure (with Hot Wells like the springs that gave Thermopylae its name of "hot gates," a salt marsh nearby like the salt marshes all over the world where the seagoing explorers fought the coastal natives, with goats in the hilly fields overhead, with a symptomatic narrow channel, with a hundred stories of reckless men who went north towards Belle Isle and south towards the Horn, with a mixed international population). But I did not *say* Bristol outright; I said "a city much like Bristol." An effigy like me is better off without a local habitation and a name. To say 1919 is to say A.D. 1919 and admit, willy-nilly, the presence of a *Dominus* for a certain number of years; to say a place is almost always to call up old rituals and religions. Many place names, with a god hidden in them somewhere, suggest both theological and geographical centers and circumferences. To be no place at no time with no name is to suggest the absence of any god.

Visitor: How does a personal name do that kind of thing?

Little Old Man: Don't you know? Don't you know that a genuinely personal name would be a deep and inscrutable singular ineffable secret? The names by which we know (or think we know) people are conventions that arbitrarily or biologically connect them to other people. Most personal names, like most place names, contain old sacraments, habitations, occupations, lineages, characteristics. And those features of names point back to archaic powers of conjuration and commemoration. "Eliot," according to some accounts, is a French-derived diminutive of "Eli" (as "Pierrot" comes from "Pierre"), and "Eli" contains one of the attributive names of the Hebrew God. To have no such name, accordingly, puts one in the category of Lot's wife, a conventional figure kept in the files of Central Casting. "Send over one *miles gloriosus,* one *ingénue,* and one *gerontion,* for three hours' work in an uproarious farce. Yours truly, Aristophanes." (Note that "Eliot" may mean "little old prophet," *mutatis mutandis;* and the first part of "Eliot" means in Hebrew what the first part of "Aristophanes" means in Greek.)

Visitor: But "Gerontion" contains some named characters.

Little Old Man: "Gerontion" contains a few burlesque figurines—a boy, a Jew, a woman—and a few *partial names,* but the idiom is one of no contextual radiations. They're just names in anybody's memory. Remember that we are removed from normal settings here: the poem is dry, and usual expectations are vain. The resonances of the epigraph—a disguised duke telling a young man to be "absolute for death" and

say to Life itself "Thou hast nor youth nor age"—even weaken the ordinary associations of Life versus Death and Youth versus Age. "Gerontion" experiments with the cubistic-atonal destruction of perspective.

Visitor: What about the names? Silvero?

Little Old Man: Precious metal plus sacramental vegetation—woods in general with possible specific echo of Portuguese "brier."

Visitor: Hakagawa?

Little Old Man: Sacramental places: "grave" plus "river." It isn't a real Japanese name. *Nakagawa* ("middle river") is common, but *Hakagawa* is probably either a mistake or a coinage.

Visitor: De Tornquist?

Little Old Man: Vegetation: a French-Swedish thorn-garland.

Visitor: Von Kulp? That suggests *culpa*. . . .

Little Old Man: It also suggests a sacramental calf.

Visitor: De Bailhache?

Little Old Man: The juiciest. Some local antiquarian, mocked in *Notes and Queries*, once suggested the presence of *Baal* in the name. But it's an old French name designating a perversion of a sacramental occupation. *Bailhache* means "Axe-man, executioner," like Jack Ketch. Read from the scrapbook.

Visitor: "The *Pall Mall Gazette* of December 2, 1889, contains the following, which deserves a niche in 'N. & Q.,' if only to show that this marvellously mild autumn produced big gooseberries in more ways than one:—'The London correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* writes:—An interesting discovery regarding the presence of the Phoenicians in the south-west counties has just been made by Mr. W. B. Thorpe, F.S.A. In the village of Ipplepen, three miles from Newton Abbot, Devon, there has for many centuries resided a family named Ballhatchet, the surviving male representative of which is Mr. Thomas Ballhatchet. This man is now seventy-four years of age, and the facial type is quite distinct from that of the natives of Cornwall and Devon, and distinctly of a Levantine character. The farm, which has been from time immemorial in the possession of the family, is called Ballford, or Baal's Ford, and in the centre of the group of buildings is a large square tank of ancient artificial construction. The farm evidently stands upon the site of an old Baal temple, of which the Ballhatchets—whose ancient name was evidently Baal-Akhed, corrupted into Baal-Achet, &c. —held the office of Baal-Kamar, or Baal's priest. Immediately above the farm rises a hill, which is known as Baaltown—the rock or hill of Baal. The discovery of this curious survival is very interesting, as it is in

harmony with the survival of those ancient names in the yeoman classes of the south-western counties.'

"The surname in question is simply a corruption of *Bailhache,* a family which has existed in Jersey from time immemorial, members of which, like those of so many of their compatriots, have doubtless settled on the opposite coast.—J. B. Payen-Payne"

Little Old Man: Notes and Queries isn't what it used to be.

Visitor: Fresca?

Little Old Man: A fresh young woman, similar and maybe even identical to the "Grishkin" in "Whispers of Immortality." (In the original drafts of *The Waste Land,* there was a dissolute urban woman likewise named Fresca.)

Visitor: Mrs. Cammel?

Little Old Man: She seems to complete a pattern. I am a little old man, De Bailhache has been a strong young man, Fresca is a feline young woman. Mrs. Cammel would seem to have been an older woman, with a name suggesting animality, Near Eastern Orientality, theatricality (via Mrs. Campbell and Mrs. Kemble), and a sinister kinship with such madams as Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Porter. But all these are real names somewhere in the world. In my poem they mostly mock the *echt* sacramental qualities of names, just as my rhetoric mocks the *echt* orthodoxies of conventional verse forms.

Visitor: Tell me about your rhetoric.

Little Old Man: Tomorrow.

SEVENTH EVENING

Visitor: Tell me about your verse.

Little Old Man: A poem of no poetry, its verse a verse of no verse. In the first place, the poem is astonishingly devoid of rhymes. The first line tells the hearer right off that his ear cannot anticipate being comforted by repeated sounds.

Visitor: Explain that.

Little Old Man: The line "Here I am, an old man in a dry month" ends with a word that has no rhymes in English. From the beginning, it's baffled, swaddled, thwarted, choked.

Visitor: But isn't that general effect true of any blank verse?

Little Old Man: No, no, no, no, no. In regularly measured blank verse there's always the possibility of rhyme at almost any point; this is the precinct of "Prufrock." But my verse, unique in English poetry, is deliberately designed *not* to rhyme and not even to hold out much promise of rhyme. Many of my lines end with words that are difficult or even impossible to rhyme: *month, cutlass, Antwerp, London, tiger,*

judas, virtues. My poem probably contains *fewer* rhymes than a random passage of prose. This is the blankest of blank verse, the freest of free verse. The first opportunity for a line-end rhyme comes with "rain," but that is answered only by "rain" again two lines later. The next opportunity comes with "gates," a simple word to rhyme, but it's not exploited until almost seventy lines later, with "straits"; but by that time it's no rhyme at all. A curious sort of limerick-style rhyme, as I said the other evening, may be suggested by "Titians" and "ambitions," but, ten lines apart, they hardly register as a rhyme. Another curiosity is the presence of "weevil" and "whirled" at the ends of two consecutive lines, perhaps calling up in a jaded reader's ear the expectation of conventional linking with "evil" and "world"; but the expectation remains unfulfilled. You're left with a handful of loose ends. You may try to connect "merds" and "word," but that's a disappointing enterprise. The prosodic form of "Gerontion" is a living model of ironic frustration. Down the hatch.

Visitor: But basically blank verse?

Little Old Man: No. Flirtations with blank verse, teasings with blank verse, but really no rhythm except the rhythm of febrile speech or prose, held together and given rhetorical coherence by repeated words and phrases. Even the decasyllabic lines do not yield a skeleton of iambic pentameter. "Here I am, an old man in a dry month" cannot be scanned as iambic pentameter. Or consider the decasyllabic "I would meet you upon this honestly"; that sounds like pretty conventional Jacobean blank verse, but you cannot know how to scan it until you know what it means, and hardly a word in it means anything definite. Cheers.

Visitor: I know what all those words mean.

Little Old Man: You do not. Who is "I"?

Visitor: You.

Little Old Man: Maybe, maybe not. It may be something remembered, something said to me and not by me. Who is "you"?

Visitor: I don't know. Is the "you" like the "thou" of the epigraph?

Little Old Man: Ha. The antecedent of "thou" in the epigraph is—

Visitor: Life.

Little Old Man: Right. And "would meet"; what is that? A vacant modal hedge and a scarcely honest metaphor for what?

Visitor: I don't know. What is "this"?

Little Old Man: I don't know. (You see, I am meeting you upon this honestly.)

Visitor: Honestly?

Little Old Man: Honestly. Have you seen *Othello* lately? Be ***honest***.

Visitor: Ha.

Little Old Man: Ha indeed. Another round.

Visitor: I've got a few more questions.

Little Old Man: Lay on, Macduff.

Visitor: Let's get back to Bristol and Thermopylae.

Little Old Man: The prototypic place—a large projection of maternal anatomy and physiology—conjoins hot spring, narrow gate, warm rain, and salt marsh.

Visitor: Thermopylae satisfies all those conditions?

Little Old Man: I have copied out some passages from Herodotus and Pausanias. Here, in *The Persian Wars* you get the battle of Thermopylae in Book VII, and Book VIII begins with an account of the sea battle of Artemisium, which was fought at about the same time: "Evening had barely closed in when a heavy rain, it was about midsummer, began to fall. . . ." And, from Book VII of *Description of Greece* (translated by J. G. Frazer), a later battle in the same area. Read.

Visitor: "When Critolaus learned from his scouts that the Romans under Metellus had crossed the Spercheus, he fled to Scarphea in Locris, without daring to offer Metellus battle in the pass between Heraclea and Thermopylae. Not even the spot where the Lacedaemonians had fought for Greece against the Medes, and the Athenians had fought as gloriously against the Gauls, could fire with bright hope that craven heart.

"A little way outside of Scarphea the Roman general came up with the fugitives. The carnage was great, and about a thousand prisoners fell into his hands. Critolaus was not seen alive after the battle, nor was he found among the dead. If he ventured to plunge into the salt marsh at the foot of Mount Oeta, he must infallibly have sunk into the depths unnoticed and unknown."

Little Old Man: Last, consider the words of Cicero's anti-*gerontion*, the Marcus Cato who is the chief speaker in *De senectute*.

Visitor: "I am in my eighty-fourth year and would that I myself could boast as Cyrus did; but still I can say this much: that while I am not now, indeed, possessed of that physical strength which I had as a private soldier in the Punic War, or as a quaestor in the same war, or as commander-in-chief in Spain, or when as military tribune four years later I fought the war out at Thermopylae under the command of M. Acilius Glabrio; yet, as you see, old age has not quite unnerved or shattered me." He *was* at the hot gates.

Little Old Man: Indeed. Notice that *my* sentence on that theme is Ciceronian.

Visitor: I must go. Thank you very much, sir.

Little Old Man: For nothing. So long, so long, so long.

NIGHTWALK

Night scrubs
against the floor,
prying sleep

away from me.
In the next room
my child breathes

like a brown husk,
dry to my touch.
Who am I

to love? They all
want something
that carry their manhood

around in bottles,
looking for any
opening.

I smell my own
wetness like a cave:
hungry, gaping

wide as a lung.
They will have all of me
strung like horsemeat

before they are through.
And I shall be glad
to be rid

of my usefulness;
passed over
like so much slag

in the beaten heap.
And sleep. Sleep.

EILEEN STRATIDAKIS

DIXIELAND

Franklin Ashley

"Hum a few bars, I think I can get the hang of it." Scott Joplin

The Little Boy looked through the organza curtains. He had waited to watch "Wild Kingdom," but there was no television, for this was a time of innocence, somewhere between 1902 and 1917; there was barely electricity. The Little Boy had just eaten strawberries off some hand-painted SPODE china. The pictures were of rust and forest green peacocks. The back of the plate said "Waring and Gillory, Oxford Street, London, England."

Father had known Mr. Waring. They had built a balloon together in Nova Scotia. The object of the flight was to land the Explorer's Club flag on a large chunk of ice. "I suspect," Mr. Waring declared, "that in Greenland we will find only the tip of the iceberg." The balloon left with the two men and the huskies sometime before 1902. The huskies wore cerise and green uniforms.

But instead of arriving at Greenland, Father and Mr. Waring were blown south to Nag's Head Beach in North Carolina. The waves were treacherous and insatiable and the men were delighted to be on shore. Drifting and gasping they were greeted by two solicitous lads from Indiana.

The young men took them to a shed where they marvelled at a curious contraption—a flying machine.

"I'm Wilbur," one said.

"I'm Orville," the other lad remarked.

"Let's have some lemonade," Wilbur said. Father and Mr. Waring seemed grateful to have it.

"This tastes good," Father said.

"I like this," Mr. Waring said.

The young men smiled, quiet and confident. Wilbur nodded. "Mr. Freud likes lemonade, also," he said.

"Was Freud here, too?" Father asked.

"Yes," said Orville taking a long sip of the lemonade. "He and King Oliver arrived by boat. Mr. Freud had been to the Mardi Gras."

"I've been to the Mardi Gras," Father said.

Father had told the Little Boy about the adventure also. By chance, a nice, pleasant, elegantly rotund gentleman connected with rails had asked Father to ride in his private car to New Orleans. "I want to see some of the enigmatic, yet pleasurable city, New Orleans," Mr. Carnegie

said. "And," he added, "I also want to meet that mysterious entrepreneur, Mr. Jazz".

New Orleans was colorful and hot and full of dark-skinned men. "These are negroes," Mr. Carnegie told Father. Oddly enough, everyone said that Mr. Jazz could be found in various places. Parading among the gaslights Father and Mr. Carnegie asked many pleasant piano players in various bistros if they knew Mr. Jazz.

"Sure," the piano players all nodded and smiled and began to play with heavy syncopated rhythm.

"I have a feeling there's more here than meets the eye," Mr. Carnegie said. Finally the men followed a pleasant tinkle up an especially dark alley. Inside was a piano player, a piano and a printing press.

"Excuse me, Sir," Mr. Carnegie said. "Do you know where we might find Mr. Jazz?"

"You're lookin' at him, sir." The piano player beamed.

"You"–Mr. Carnegie said, "You're Mr. Jazz?"

The pianist shook his head, –"Jazz is the name I use in burlesque and baseball and other sport. My real name is Nick Lenin."

The men shook hands and had some lemonade.

"There doesn't seem to be much business here," Father said.

"Oh," Nick smiled. "I'm not much of a piano player."

"What else do you do?" Mr. Carnegie asked.

"I play the–" and Nick paused –" I play the – the History."

"I've never heard of that instrument," Father said.

"It is quite difficult to master," Nick smiled. He was an engaging man. "When it breaks down I have to fix it myself. No one seems to know how to work it."

"This lemonade tastes strange," said Mr. Carnegie, "but very good."

"That's pronounced Leninade," Nick said gently."

"Hmm!" Father smacked his lips, "Tastes like lemonade to me."

"No, Mr. Father. It's Leninade. I invented it." Nick continued.

"Tell me, Mr. Father, I'm quite curious about a Mr. Baseball. Do you know anything about such a person?" asked Nick.

"Yes, I met Mr. Baseball last year. He's very pleasant," said Mr. Father. "And quite industrious," Mr. Carnegie added.

Father had indeed met Mr. Baseball on a trip. The attempt to cross Iowa with Paul Gauguin and Admiral Perry. "Many people" the Admiral began, "confuse me with the other gentleman, Mr. Perry (P-E-R-R-Y). He likes the ocean. I like land. But I never seem to get credit for my crossings. When I did New Hampshire and West Virginia very little was said."

Admiral Perry was a fine man and Father was quite discomfited over his never receiving credit. "Perhaps Idaho," he suggested.

"Mr. Father," the admiral snapped. For the Admiral was proud, "Idaho has gone to the dogs. By the way, say hello to Ed Baseball."

The men shook hands. Mr. Baseball had worked for years on inventing the carrot. With some flair he produced a package of small beads. "You just place these beads in the ground and up they'll pop, and—I call them carrots." Father was impressed and so was the Little Boy who received a letter on Yakskin recounting the event. He also received a package of the wonderful beads. While Mother fixed the lemonade, the Little Boy ran into the yard. As he finished he stared at the sky to check for rain, but at the same time he also felt the eyes of a stranger who had stopped to watch the scene.

"It's curved, you know," the stranger said.

EULOGY: AN OLD-WEST PIECE

Dropping crosslegged on the museum floor
was just the start of your fateful fancy
to please; surprise was all I asked you for,
and catching fire with what surprise to me

should be, you burned beyond the folded fall
before the case where Davy Crockett's hat
was enclosed in glass—to a fortress wall
from which you leapt, as would an acrobat

in ghost-west fashion, onto my outlaw
back. As surprise I suppose I had cast
you waiting naked at some urban door.
But you knew better, that ambush was past

if that is what I thought it ought to mean.
Telling me so with a Comanche scream

was nearly the greatest surprise of all,
though you kept one more for an autumn noon
when you quietly slipped away through bright leaf-fall
to go face up to bed with Daniel Boone.

C. TRENT BUSCH

ANOTHER EXPLANATION

Last summer when mother and I
were trapped, alone in the dusty house
without a man (slowly the sun porch
was filled with dead leaves and light)
we imagined our bodies marred
by the growth of children. We became
two old-fashioned sisters, two roses
out of *Little Women*. I was Beth
before she died; that girl who laid
gentle arms around a neck,
then kissed until the blood came.

This autumn I'm smaller than ever,
trying to believe in your words,
in the stories of me I find
in your pocket journal, then,
pretending they're for some
other woman. How much does it take
to become just landscape,
an accepted door at the end
of woods and the alerted animals.
We've claimed the house
on your corner: its towers, one octagonal,
bells and stained glass—a leaded
Mary, a picture of our Coat of Arms.

You're only blocks away
and I lose nerve. I let her
dress me in crinolines and green velvet,
with a necklace of huge shells and pearls
that were threaded a hundred years ago.
Should I let them break, burst *into*
larger and larger fragments, cut
my face and hands? She won't tell
though she's smiling. There's a secret
somewhere in this room, in my
little museum of shells and stones;
there's a whisper, a hidden voice
which for the first time
begins with your name.

MARLENE YOUMANS

THE LOVE AND MARRIAGE OF WILLIAM MORRIS: A NEW INTERPRETATION

JOHN LEBOURGEOIS

The friendship of William Morris and Dante Rossetti ended after Morris's wife became Rossetti's mistress; so the leading biographers of both Morris and Rossetti have argued for some time. The most recent full length treatment of either men, a biography of Morris by Jack Lindsay (*William Morris, His Life and Work*: London, 1975) is no exception. Mr. Lindsay, following the path cut by his predecessors, believes that Jane Morris, responding to the overtures of Rossetti, turned from her husband, and thus destroyed her marriage and ruined the friendship of Morris and Rossetti. In one respect, however, Lindsay's book is important. Drawing on material first presented in a paper delivered in London by John LeBourgeois in 1972, Lindsay shows that as a child Morris formed a strong emotional attachment to his sister Emma. The question that arises is how significant was this for Morris's subsequent development. In his paper LeBourgeois argued that Morris never completely outgrew his infatuation for his sister and that this, rather than anything that occurred between Rossetti and Mrs. Morris, explains the failure of the Morris marriage. Lindsay, while willing to accept the importance of Morris's love for his sister to his early development, contends in effect that Morris's emotion had largely subsided by the time of his marriage. Lindsay rejects as "untenable" the LeBourgeois interpretation and adheres without argument to the standard view of the Morris-Rossetti triangle (pp. 180-193). Since the original paper, from which Lindsay drew his observations of Morris's relation to his sister and with which he disagrees in important respects, has not been published, it is presented here in the interest of Morris and Rossetti scholarship. Ed.

I would like to take issue with the current interpretation of Morris's unfortunate marriage, his relationship with his wife Jane Morris. Almost a quarter of a century ago—back in 1949—Oswald Doughty, in writing his biography of Rossetti, argued that sometime in the late 1860's the friendship between Jane Morris and Rossetti grew very intimate; indeed, that they had fallen in love.[1] This disclosure of course was not only important for our understanding of Rossetti, but also represented a breakthrough for Morris scholarship. Philip Henderson, one of our leading authorities on Morris, hailed Doughty's book—somewhat ironically, it would seem—as the first real attempt to penetrate the mystery surrounding Morris.[2] The publication of Doughty's book on Rossetti finally seemed to supply the right key for unlocking the personality of Morris, allowing us to measure the pulse of his emotional life and to grasp fully the theme of unrequited love in his poetry. As the principal biographers of Morris since the appearance of Doughty's book have developed it,

[1] Oswald Doughty, *A Victorian Romantic, Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: 1945).

[2] Philip Henderson, *William Morris* (London: Longmans, 1952).

Jane Morris fell in love with Rossetti, rejected the love of her husband, leaving Morris prostrate with grief and unfulfilled longing.

I think there are strong reasons to doubt the validity of this interpretation of Morris's life. Let me begin by making a couple of general observations.

First, very simply, there is no concrete evidence to support this view of Morris's marriage. I am not saying that Rossetti did not fall in love with Jane Morris; I believe he did. What I am saying is that there is no concrete evidence to prove nor any compelling reason to believe that Jane Morris became Rossetti's mistress or that she ever had any desire to leave her husband. The fact that she never did leave Morris tends to confirm the point. And when there is not testimony to the contrary, it becomes us, at least for the moment, to assume Jane Morris innocent, especially where it involves the honor of a lady.

The second general point I would like to stress is one that Philip Henderson makes somewhere in his biography of Morris: that is, that the theme of unrequited love which surged forward so poignantly in the late 1860's was not new to Morris's work. The same theme occupied Morris's mind in the years before his marriage to Jane in 1859. We find the motif at full flood in the *Defence of Guenevere* and Morris's early romances which appeared in The *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in 1856. Remember: Morris did not meet Jane Burden until the early autumn of 1857. So how do we account for this early expression of romantic malaise? Should we write it off as simply a romantic pose of melancholy youth? Or was there some specific source, some person in Morris's youth who inspired him to poetry and whose identity has gone undetected?

I believe that Morris's early work was not an idle pose; that there was such a young woman in Morris's life before the time of his marriage. It is quite probable that we would never guess who she is, if it were not for the happy fact that among the William Morris papers in the British Museum there is a long poem which for some curious reason has remained unpublished and apparently gone unnoticed. The poem, entitled "The Three Flowers," was discovered in 1921 by Morris' niece, Effie Morris, in the back of a bureau drawer that had belonged to Morris's sister Emma. Effie Morris gave the poem and several others discovered with it to May Morris—Morris's daughter—thus finding their way into the Morris collection in the British Museum. In turning the poems over to May, Effie Morris at the time recalled that: "Aunt Emma used to tell me that as a young man Uncle William sent her his poems."[3]

[3] *British Museum, Add. MS. 45,298A.*

The poem is undated, but is obviously an early work. May Morris placed it second among the Morris manuscripts after her father's treatment of the subject of the Oxford Prize Poem for 1854 which she assumed was Morris's earliest piece of poetry. "The Three Flowers" indeed seems an even less mature poem and quite possibly pre-dates 1854.

The Three Flowers [4]

. . . .

We were children there together
    When we sat upon that hill,
In the sunny April weather,
    On the flower-covered hill.

. . . .

Tiger lilies, tall white lilies,
    In the summer grow together;
Gorgeous golden daffodillies
    In the spring grow lovely ever.

Yet the daffodils clung round me
    Yet she hung them round my brow;
Yet a child she said she loved me,
    Yet I know she loves me now.

. . . .

Yet, when there she had been reading,
    When with pity she looked on me,
As I stood before her pleading
    Dreary looked the flowers to me.

Then she rose up in her pity,
    While the wind about her played,
In her hand a tiger-lily,
    Very lovingly she said;

"Sweet friend do you not remember,
    In the summer long ago,
How we children played together
    On as sweet a day as now?

"How you played at swearing fealty
    To a Queen of beauty bright,
Of our vows of love and lealty
    In that sunset's golden light?

[4] British Museum, Add. MS. 45,298A.

"How you crowned me with white lilies
White is ever snow doth fall,
And three spotted tiger-lilies
Did my royal sceptre call?

. . . .

"We three stood with love between us,
While the swallow overhead
Flew around as he had seen us,
While the clouds the west wind led.

"Do you keep your child-love, Brother,
As you vowed to keep it then?
Will you love me, if another
Be my lover among men?

"Earth will not hold us forever,
On the earth we live not long;
When we live in heaven together
God will make our weak love strong."

O! my tears fell downward quickly,
Fell, as dropped my head to the ground,
On the daisies there, that thickly,
Yellow-centred stood around . . . .

It is difficult for me not to believe that this poem harks back to a central episode in Morris's youth. We know from both May Morris and J. W. Mackail, Morris's first biographer, that as a child Morris was quite close to both his older sisters, Emma and Henrietta. But of the two, Emma, the eldest, was Morris's favorite. May Morris tells us that, in contrast to Henrietta who was "more given to 'ruling,'" Emma possessed "a gentle nature" and was in turn "specially fond" of Morris.[5] This affinity between Emma and her brother seems to have been reinforced by their mutual love of literature, in particular the romantic novels. In his biography Mackail wrote that Morris's "eldest sister remembers how they used to read 'The Old English Baron' together in the rabbit warren at Woodford, poring over the enthralling pages till both were wrought up to a state of mind that made them afraid to cross the park to reach home."[6] Morris and his sister must have identified closely with the char-

[5] May Morris, ed., *William Morris. Artist, Writer, Socialist* (Oxford, 1936), II, 613.

[6] J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (London, 1901), I, 8.

acters of Clara Reeve's gothic romance in which one of the two heroes is a young man named William and the heroine is his sister Emma. We know also from Mackail that Morris was quite badly shaken when Emma married the Rev. Joseph Oldham in May 1850 when Morris was sixteen. In a brief and diplomatic passage Mackail wrote that "William Morris was thus put quite out of reach of his favourite sister. He felt the separation keenly; the brother and sister had been closely intimate in all their thoughts and enthusiasms; and it was to some degree under her influence that the Church was settled on as his own destined profession."[7] Among his notes used to prepare the text of his biography Mackail recorded more bluntly that Morris had "felt deserted at her marriage."[8]

I contend that this previously unpublished and unnoticed poem of "The Three Flowers" describes the mutual love between Morris and his sister Emma. In the poem the brother and sister have been reading together when she recalls how in the past he has sworn "vows of love and lealty," sanctifying the oath with a crown of white lilies and a scepter of tiger-lilies. Incidentally, in order to stress my belief that this poem was based at least in part on actual events, let me point out that in one of her edited volumes in a section entitled "Inconsequences" May Morris records that "On one occasion Morris and his two sisters stained their faces with the pollen from the tiger-lilies, and were much scolded . . . ." But back to the poem: The sister then goes on to ask her brother if he will continue to love her "if another be my lover among men?" The question comes as a cruel blow to the brother, indicating that he was until this moment unaware of the full ramification of his sister's marriage—of the prospect of separation, the loss of intimacy, the realization that his favored position must be relinquished. The only consolation is re-union after death, a theme which reappears in several of Morris's early romances and which helps to account for his willingness to accept his sister's suggestion that he enter the Church.

If this poem of "The Three Flowers" is in fact autobiographical, as I think it is, it appears that the source of Morris's romantic despair was his sense of loss arising from the marriage of his sister Emma in 1850, a feeling which dominates his earliest writing including the *Defence of Guenevere.* Without going into an elaborate discussion, let me point out two or three items in Morris's stories of 1855-56 which seem to me to reinforce my argument that the women in Morris's poems and stories are his sister. In the story written in 1855 entitled "A Dream," for ex-

[7] *Ibid.*, 25.
[8] William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow. Mackail notebook.

ample, the plot concerns a knight and young lady who have grown up together in the same house. The knight is "a kind of distant cousin of the house [and] . . . . it was *natural enough* that they should discover that they were in love with one another."[9] The name of the girl in this story is Ella, which I suggest is a rather transparent substitute for the name of Emma. Like the poem of "The Three Flowers" the story ends in a vision of re-union in death. In "The Story of an Unknown Church" the plot parallels very closely the triangular situation in "The Three Flowers": the three characters are Walter, his sister Margaret, and Amyot, the man his sister marries. I think the most revealing story though is Morris's curious tale of "Frank's Sealed Letter." In discussing Morris's design for the Oxford Murals done in 1857 with its legend of "How Sir Palomydes loved La Belle Iseult with exceeding great love out of measure, and how she loved not him, but rather Sir Tristram," Mackail observed—and it is this observation which makes me think that Mackail understood Morris better than any subsequent biographer—that "The subject was one for which Morris felt a singular and almost morbid attraction, that of the unsuccessful man and despised lover. The motive was the same which he had treated in prose a year earlier in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine with many details which were directly taken from his own life."[10] What were these details drawn directly from his own life?

Briefly, the story of "Frank's Sealed Letter" analyzes the downfall of Hugh, an event brought on by the fact that Mabel, with whom he had lived from childhood, has deserted him and married someone else. In the course of the story Hugh—who at this point is a young man working in London just as Morris himself was doing—returns to the neighborhood of Epping Forest—where of course Morris himself lived as a child. As he nears a stream in the woods Hugh is overcome with a vision of the past. The details of this vision are the ones I think Mackail was referring to, details which were drawn directly from Morris's experience of reading with his sister in some secluded spot in Epping Forest. Hugh sees a boy and a girl, who is quite beautiful, reading a romance together. The scene that Morris describes gives, I think, a clear idea of the nature and intensity of his feeling toward Emma. The boy that Hugh envisions stops at a point in the story that he is reading where the lady throws her arms around her knight; the boy is obviously

---

[9] May Morris, ed., *Collected Works of William Morris* (London, 1910), I, 160. Author's italics.

[10] Mackail, 119.

identifying with the scene he imagines, wishing the girl might respond in the same way. The girl's thoughts, however, are a million miles away.

> "Go on, Hugh," says the little girl, still looking into the blue distance; "Why do you stop?" "I was – I was looking at the picture, Mabel," says the boy. "O, is there a picture of that? Let's see it!" and her eyes turn towards him at last; what a very beautiful child she is! "Not exactly of that," says Hugh, blushing as their eyes meet, and when she looks away for a second drawing his hand across his eyes for he is soft-hearted; "not exactly of that, but afterwards, where she crowns him at the tournament; here it is."

At this point Morris returned to the motive of the children crowning one another which he used in "The Three Flowers." In this case the procedure is reversed: the girl crowns Hugh. The passage continues:

> "O, that is pretty though! Hugh, I say, Hugh!"
> "Yes," says Hugh, "Go and get me some of the forget-me-not down by the brook there, and some of the pretty white star-shaped flower; I'll crown you too." Off runs Hugh directly, carrying the book with him. "Stop, don't lose the place, Hugh; here, give me the book!" Back he goes, then starts again in a great hurry; the flowers are not easy to get, but they are got somehow . . . .
>
> So when the flowers come she weaves them into a crown, blue flowers golden-hearted and white ones star-shaped, with the green leaves between them. Then she makes him kneel down, and looking at the picture on the fairy storybook, places him this way and that with her smooth brows knit into a puzzled frown. At last she says: "It won't do, somehow, I can't make it out. I say, Hugh!" She blurts out at last; "I tell you what, it won't do; you are too ugly." "Never mind, Mabel," he says; "shall I go on reading again?" "Yes, you may go on." Then she sits down, and again her eyes are fixed on the far-away blue hills; and Hugh is by her reading again, only stumbling sometimes, seemingly not so much interested as he was before.[11]

The trouble with the boy, and with Hugh who is the boy grown old, and with Morris who is the real Hugh, is that they do not realize and resign themselves to the impossibility of their love. Their love – obsession call it – is indelible. The upshot of the story is that Hugh, following the advice enclosed in his friend Frank's sealed letter, decides that he cannot and must not resist his overpowering memory of Mabel. At the close of the story Hugh cries out, "O Mabel, if you could have

[11] *Collected Works,* I, 321.

only loved me! Lord, keep my memory green!"[12] This very powerful and moving story was written early in 1856, when Morris was twenty-one, a year and a half before Morris met Jane Burden.

At this point I will simply state that I believe Morris never outgrew his attachment to Emma. And I assert that it was the re-surfacing of his feeling for her in the mid-1860s which helped to wreck his marriage with Jane Morris. I admit there is little more concrete evidence for this view than there is for the alternative view that Jane Morris turned away from her husband in favor of Rossetti. As far as we know there are no letters between Morris and Emma (outside those very early ones already published by Philip Henderson)[13] which would either prove or disprove my contention. In fact all we know is that the Morris clan normally got together on various occasions like any other large middle class Victorian family at which times Morris and Emma presumably saw one another. We know too that Morris visited Emma on occasion at her home in Clay Cross in Derbyshire. That is all we know of their actual, physical relationship. But of course this is neither here nor there; because what was important for Morris, in my opinion, was his memory of his love for Emma as they were when they were children together.

Well, what is there to go on then? Mainly there is Morris's poetry, the same evidence that E. P. Thompson[14] and Philip Henderson[15] have used to build their cases that Jane Morris rejected Morris. Thompson and Henderson have agued that the private poems and sonnets assigned to the period 1865-70 reveal Morris lamenting the loss of his wife as she turned towards Rossetti. The Thompson-Henderson thesis hinges very much on their assertion that the women of these poems are Jane. But is this so? How do we know? They are not identified by name. They are inadequately described except to say they are beautiful. If one assumes *a priori* that they are Jane Morris, the poems seem to make sense enough—but only if one does not really pay very close attention. Just one example from this series of private poems, I think, will show that Thompson and Henderson have been wrong all this time. The poem is entitled "Near But Far Away."[16]

---

[12] *Ibid.*, 325.

[13] Philip Henderson, ed., *The Letters of William Morris* (London: 1950).

[14] E. P. Thompson, *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary* (London, 1955).

[15] Philip Henderson, *William Morris, His Life Work and Friends* (London, 1967).

[16] *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist,* I, 538-9.

She wavered, stopped and turned, methought her eyes,
The deep grey windows of her heart, were wet
Methought they softened with a near regret
To note in mine unspoken miseries:
And as a prayer from out my heart did rise
And struggle on my lips in shame's strong net,
She stayed me, and cried 'Brother!' Our lips met.
Her hands drew me into Paradise.
Sweet seemed that kiss till thence her feet were gone,
Sweet seemed the word she spake, while it might be
As wordless music – But truth fell on me
And kiss and word I knew, and, left alone,
Face to face seemed I to a wall of stone,
While at my back there beat a boundless sea.

Henderson quotes this poem in his biography and tells us the poem is "obviously addressed to Jane."[17] But is it? Obviously it is not.

And as a prayer from out my heart did rise
And struggle on my lips in shame's strong net,
She stayed me, and cried 'Brother!'

Perhaps a wife who has decided to sever relations with her husband would call him "Brother," but the likelihood is far fetched. Quite clearly, based on what we now know, this woman is the poet's sister.

If this is true, how do we readjust our understanding of Morris, his poetry, his marriage, and his relation with Rossetti? There obviously is not time to do justice to all these topics, but let me as briefly as I can outline what I believe to be the structure of Morris's development.

As a child Morris was happy, too perfectly happy. Protected by the wealth of his family in the idyllic countryside near Epping Forest, Morris led a very secluded existence in which his closest, perhaps only companions were his older sisters and younger brothers. In this lovely and isolated world Morris's romantic imagination, his distaste for the outside world, his sense of brotherhood, and his profound feeling for Emma were all nurtured. Then, when Morris was an adolescent – that crucial age that psychologists tell us about – Morris experienced several consecutive shocks which revealed to him too suddenly, I think, the harshness of the real world: the death of his father, his being sent away to Marlborough, and the marriage of Emma. In his undergraduate years Morris began to register his disappointment in the world and his sense of lost love by turning to poetry. In the late 1850's sexual frustration (I

[17] Henderson, *William Morris, His Life . . .*, 92.

think this is a dominant theme in the *Defence of Guenevere*) finally outweighed Morris's commitment to abide by his childhood oaths of love and lealty to Emma. In Jane Burden Morris found a young woman who was physically attractive, largely uneducated but certainly not unintelligent, and, perhaps most important for him, unaffected and—except for her fidelity in marriage—unVictorian. I don't believe that Morris fell head over heels in love with Jane Burden. What evidence we have, and that is mostly in Mackail, shows Morris in 1858-early 1859 very anxious and not at all happy. Mackail writes that in late 1858, "The instability which Morris found or thought he found in his own character became for a time acute. The overstrain of the crowded years through which he had been passing, with all their inward revolutions, all their pangs of growth and fevers of imagination, had left him, like some lover in one of his own poems, languid and subject to strange fluctuations of mood." Then, "In late autumn of 1858 there are references to an illness, cheerfully attributed by his friends to his eating and drinking too much, or rather to his being quite careless (as he remained always) of what he ate and drank."[18] Today perhaps we would call such an illness something of a nervous breakdown. As I see it, Morris married with misgiving.

It is significant that Morris's interest in poetry receded with his marriage. It is equally significant that as his interest returned his marriage began to disintegrate. Between 1858 and 1865 Morris did little in the way of writing, a reflection to some extent, I think, of the fact that Morris seemed to have been fairly content during the first two or three years of his marriage. But with time Morris began to grow uneasy. The terrible expense of building Red House—it cost at least £4000[19] which represented about one half of his inherited wealth—together with a growing fear that he was not accomplishing anything financially or artistically drove him to question the course he had set for himself. The idea of married life at Red House as a kind of Palace of Art was proving a failure. Morris, I think, expressed this view in what was supposed to be the first volume of the Earthly Paradise: his rendition of the story of Jason. *Jason* is primarily a tale of leave-taking and abandonment: the poem begins with men forsaking domestic tranquility for adventure, leaving their families and homes to search for the golden fleece. The corresponding theme is that of feminine outrage and despair, the inability of men to explain and of women to understand the meaning of this upheaval. In writing *Jason* Morris was describing the similar upheaval taking place in his own life and in his own marriage. The

---

[18] Mackail, 137.

[19] Mackail notebook, William Morris Gallery.

writing of *Jason* in 1865 marked the beginning of the break in Morris's marriage. It also, understandably, marked the beginning of Jane Morris's elusive but prolonged suffering.

It was Morris then who turned away from his wife, not she who rejected him. As this estrangement developed two other things began to happen. In returning to poetry and in moving away emotionally from his marital commitment to Jane, Morris was also returning to the tap-root of his earlier emotional experience. We see Emma re-appear in his poetry: as Glauce in *Jason*, as the vague and enchanted women of the Earthly Paradise series, as Venus in the "Hill of Venus," as Ingebiord in the "Lovers of Gudrun," and as the sister in the "Near But Far Away" sonnet. The other thing that happened was that Rossetti became interested in the domestic crisis of the Morrises. It was not long before Rossetti, following the dictates of his own romantic passion for the woman in distress, fell in love with Jane Morris. Did she respond to Rossetti's attention? I think the answer is yes, but not by falling in love with Rossetti. She appreciated Rossetti's offer of sympathy and responded with friendship. Had she loved Rossetti, had she stopped loving Morris, there was every reason for her to leave Morris for Rossetti. But she refused to go. I think Morris would have been glad to see her go during the very difficult years of the late 1860's and early 1870's. It seems to me this was really Morris's intention in taking Kelmscott in 1871 and then departing for Iceland.

Ironically, it was Philip Henderson who – contrary to the intentions of his biography – convinced me that Jane Morris remained a faithful wife. In support of his argument that Jane returned Rossetti's love, Henderson cites in his biography two letters written by Philip Webb to Jane Morris in September 1872, shortly after Rossetti's breakdown. In the first letter dated 7 September, Webb wrote to Jane, remarking that "The last visit on arriving did give my soul a twist which I hope my face did not express, as it was quite unavoidable (In the unfortunate circumstances)." Five days later he wrote thanking her for her "simple and straightforward" letter, and added that "I had no idea that you would think it worthwhile to tell me a lie." According to Henderson, these passages suggest that Jane Morris had confirmed to Webb what he had seen at Kelmscott, i.e., that, in Henderson's words, "she appeared more married to Rossetti than to Morris."[20] Indeed, if Webb had seen Jane Morris and Rossetti in a highly compromising situation at this time, Henderson's analysis would have some justification.

The trouble with the Henderson interpretation is that it does not fit the facts. When Webb visited Jane Morris at Kelmscott in early

[20] Henderson, *William Morris His Life . . .*, 132.

September, Rossetti was still in Crieff, Scotland, recovering from his nervous collapse and did not arrive again at Kelmscott until September 25th.[21] If anyone was with Jane at Kelmscott in the late summer-early fall of 1872, it was Morris. "I have been backwards and forwards to Kelmscott a good deal this summer and autumn," Morris wrote to Mrs. Coronio on October 8th, 1872, "The weather has been lovely here this autumn, but doesn't seem to have suited me very well, I have been queer several times, and am not very brilliant today. As to my mental health – I have had ups and downs as you may very easily imagine . . . ."[22] Given Morris's condition during this period, what Webb probably saw at Kelmscott was a violent outburst on the part of Morris at Jane. Her unsolicited and "straightforward" letter was her denial of Morris's accusations.

It is only in this context that Webb's highly sensitive and sympathetic letters make any sense. "Dear Janey," Webb wrote on 7 September 1872:

> I was very glad to have your letter, because it was written without my asking for it – and I very much wish to have your confidence in my sympathy (if you think it would be worth anything) By "sympathy" I do not mean to express anything more than a wish that – an old friend should find comfort in liking me, and being liked by me, and that no real untruth sh[d] come between us, and as little mistake in expression as possible.
>
> Of course I know the strength of resource in despair, well enough – that is, the willingly cutting one self off from the help of any one, so as to avoid the risk of being deserted by them – but, "nothing ventured" – you know – well, one must venture in friends help, for such a thing to be possible; and assured friendship is very beautiful, and at times deeply soothing in the mere belief in it –
>
> I send 3 books, not at all knowing whether you have read all or any of them – I've not seen Topsy to ask him –
>
> Very much should I like to come to Kelmscott again, and will try to do so, if you stay much longer – the last visit, on arriving, did give my soul a twist which I hope my face did not express, as it was quite unavoidable (in the unfortunate circumstances) . . . .

Throughout both letters it is the desire for her confidence, it is his feeling of deep friendship, it is his sympathy for her plight, not Morris's, that he expresses. In reply to her reply to this letter, Webb wrote again on September 12th:

---

[21] Cf. Oswald Doughty and J. R. Wahl, eds., *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (Oxford, 1967), III, 22 Aug.-25 Sept., 1872.

[22] Henderson, ed., *Letters of William Morris,* 8 Oct. 1872.

Dear Janey

I thank you for your letter which is simple and straightforward to my minds content. I do not think I misunderstood your former letter, for I had no idea that you would think it worthwhile to tell me a lie, anymore than I would really lie to you – there is something in human nature pure and simple, which touches me dearly; and when I see any one clinging to the natural parts of life, I feel much inclined to become one of their friends. This is not often, as you know; so many things come between a human being and simplicity; and so few can resist the inter attraction –

I have always taken a great interest in you, and none the less that time has tossed all of us about, and made us play other parts than we set out upon – I see that you play yours, well and truly under the changes, and I feel deeply sympathetic on that account – for my own troubles are not so absorbing that I cannot attend to the troubles of those who are wrapt about with the pains of life which are not ignoble.

Please believe that I in no way wish to penetrate into sorrows which I can in no way relieve; I, from my own self, know the impossibility of two people bearing one's burden.

Yours affectionately
Philip Webb[23]

Wrapped about with the pains of life, praised for her nobility, Jane Morris suffered her unhappy burden – a husband who did not want her. Had it been otherwise – had Jane Morris given herself to Rossetti – it is difficult to see how Webb – who next to Burne-Jones was Morris's closest and dearest friend – could have expressed such deeply felt respect and tenderness for her position. Finally, in this connection, May Morris's assessment of Rossetti is highly relevant. "It seems to me," she wrote, "that the duty of anyone who ever came into contact with Rossetti (even as I did only in childhood) is to lose no opportunity in passing of stressing the fineness of his character."[24] Surely May Morris could never have written this if she had believed that Rossetti was her mother's lover and the cause of the failure of her parents' marriage.

It is not my purpose to condemn Morris – men do what they have to do. On the other hand, there is certainly a need to revalue the character of Jane Morris – cast as she is among the unfaithful woman of literary history – just as there is now a definite need to recognize the taproot of Morris's emotional development.

---

[23] British Museum, Add. MS. 45,342.

[24] *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist*, I, 75.

THREE POEMS BY ANDREW HUDGINS

THE HINDMOST AND THE DEVIL

1

The angels are indolent; eveyone takes
his own sweet time. Like great black wasps,
only white, they flit across memory and dream
as you trace a sin back through a broken line
of fathers, the sin of leaving. Your father
left when you were nine, left bug-eyed and endless
on a passionate Easter and left behind
one son, one wife, and a suicide note that rhymed.
On sleepless nights you take your fire, your brimstone
to Satan. He sleeps through your fiercest dreams.

2

No longer do we use brutal methods–funnels
and hot lead. We are civilized now (at least
in the front office); to the victim comes violence
like sleep. Adam when he was yet woman
never dreamed. He was the only one.

He who is first cannot last; the smart money
goes with the first born who inherit eternal, continual
slaughter. Ah! Sleep & Death! Like Jesus merely three nails
and one crown to the world, I find myself at cross
purposes. While you sleep, your eyes begin to heal shut.

FIVE WAYS TO SUNDAY

1. Two years before I was born, on a cold
April Sunday far from Easter's green rain,
My mother lost control of a car on a patch
Of ice, and my sister's soft head starred
The white glass with the blood of my first death.

2. On Christmas Eve the year I was nine
My mother came into my room and told me
She was Santa. I knew that already
But cried most of the night, thinking
The toys would stop. They never have.

3. The day my wife's grandmother, sick and sour,
Gave up and died, we drove to Thomaston
To begin the ritual of relief. Sunday,
I walked with the old men, holding a corner
Of the casket. There was no revelation.

4. On these Sundays in my middle-age, made holy
By sleeping late and eating breakfast slowly,
I take my church about once a month
By radio and then, by accident.
Monday, I wake with my own dust in my mouth.

5. Like my birth, my death will fall on a Sunday
In the north as I'm visiting casual friends.
Upset, even shocked, they will ship me home
Where the fields are clouded with cotton.
The funeral is no concern of mine.

SHOPPING WITH FRANZ LISZT

It's bound to raise some eyebrows in
the Scottsboro A & P when Miss Evelyn

Ann Gordon, organist at the First Church
of Christ, goes shopping with her

familiar. She can't believe that the elegant
figure who strolls with her through the sweet

rolls and Cheerios and says gently
with an impossible wink, 'Please, Liebchen, the Hi C,"

was really a Man of God. He assures her
that was but for a few elderly years

and well after he'd lost most of his touch
with the ladies. Finding it wiser not

to reply until they've returned home, she
merely pushes her cart and blushes as he

regales her with tales of beautiful Geneva
and the equally beautiful Comtesse d'Agoult.

For the applause of listening he gives her
music to write. If it's totally out

of date and not quite Liszt, it's still
better than she can do. "After all,

Liebchen," he says, "I'm not even half
the man I was, a shadow of my former self."

TWO POEMS BY LUCKY JACOBS

PSYCHED

An orange-beaked black mascaraed swan
bulled his head, rolled up the bank
of Boar's Head Lake,
April, and the sky empty.
It was funny at first
the way he came at us.
It was funny at second
the way he *refused* our bread,
April, and the sky grown still.
We moved back uphill at about his uphill speed
until I glimpsed his mate
on a clutch of eggs.
He'd had all he could take,
April, and the water black.
The car seemed acres away
but I stuffed the kids in the rear,
as he gnawed our tires in back.
I couldn't get out, couldn't go,
April, and we're caged by a goddam swan.
We watched him trundle off and
down the hill, April, and this summer
I will not be cynical.

FOR HEIDEGGER

An old terrace of clover
flows between five or six barns
to water.
On the sides of barns the mud conceals and unconceals
the blue mud wasps.
They seem to have nothing to do with us,
everything to do with that silence which comes home to us.
Half-buried by sand, half-exposed by tide,
a forgotten ship's bell under the dock.
Down the far back the fires rise, fall,
take the calm shape of small lamps in small rooms.
Through the cove of blue starfish
the shepherd's crook leans to the tree
and is not found.
The cloak holds in deepwater branches
where the bell sticks with the nest of a hornet
and is not heard.
Friend,
you gave a space to keep the candled night,
a pewter silence to hear the wine.

REVIEWS

James O. Hoge, ed. *The Letters of Emily Lady Tennyson*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974, 377 pp. $14.50.

When Emily Sellwood married Alfred Tennyson on June 13, 1850, the poet was not yet "Lord" but almost Laureate. In the year of their marriage *In Memoriam* passed through its first three editions; *The Princess* entered its third, the 1842 *Poems* its sixth, edition; and by December friends had "prevailed on him to accept the Laureateship," wrote Emily, despite his "dread of levees and court balls and increased publicity." Thus the man she met at sixteen in the private woods of Somersby had, when she married him twenty years later, irrevocably become the preeminent Victorian

The three hundred and eighty-two letters edited for this selection by James O. Hoge suggest that Emily Tennyson never forgot that she had married both a public figure and a very private man, and that she devotedly strove to serve the first and sustain the second. She wrote countless bread-and-butter notes (many of which, in her hand, must be counted as Tennyson's because they bear his signature), and when she collapsed of exhaustion in 1874, her husband frankly observed that "She has overwrought herself with the multifarious correspondence of many years . . . answering every idle fellow who writes to me." Despite the quasi-official, dutiful function of many of her letters, Emily wrote, as Hoge observes, "with no thought of posterity." There is no posturing, no effort to prejudice the historical record, certainly no attempt to upstage Tennyson with her own wit or charm.

But there is notable regard for propriety; Emily guards her husband's privacy and her own against a predatory press ("We have such a horror of newspapers") and possibly indiscreet acquaintances by writing always with courteous decorum and her innate sweet charity. Her social position reinforced her natural reserve, and in letters devoid of idle gossip, unbridled emotion, or searching reflection, she can still plead "keep it to yourself"; advise her son to burn a seemingly harmless note; and remark in answer to a "kind letter" of Edward Lear that "I have so strong a feeling of the uncertainty of all human things that I mean to burn it at once."

"Burning" more fittingly describes the fate of Lady Tennyson's letters than the emotion. The letters we would most like to read—those written in the early courtship of 1836 or during the 1838-40 "engagement"—were incinerated by the poet or his son, Hallam, who was particularly eager to shelter his parents and the world from "the intensity of feeling" in their early letters. Likewise, from the decade following their broken engagement and preceding their marriage, Hoge can include only two letters (the second of which, however, suggests how the "admiration and delight, not unmixed with awe" inspired by *In Memoriam* may have helped to make a marriage).

Such formal reserve and decorum is both refreshingly antique and challenging. Instead of taking the author's character from a shamelessly effusive pen, we must look within and behind the style to discover this engaging woman who casually, incidentally informs us of the Tennysons' reading, travels, house-hunting, childrearing, and a domestic life "knee-deep in guests" such as the Brownings, Gladstones, Edward Lear, Charles Dodgson, and (on one unexpected occasion) Prince Albert. Though she rarely pauses to amplify (spinal trouble and a wrist injury made long letters particularly uncomfortable), one reads with interested delight of Ruskin's offering to show Tennyson the Turners in the National Gallery; of her husband's sensitivity to criticism ("a grain of dispraise from almost anyone," she regretfully informs the Brownings, "outweighs even your praise"); of her own dis-

regard for critics ("being strong in the conceit of my own instinct," she explains to Tennyson); and of "Ally" dancing in a room alone, "if not for pure pleasure, for pleasure and exercise."

One relishes, too, the passing references to her "chest expander" ("We both of us like our gymnastics very much"); to hirsute Alfred ("I wish the public would compel Alfred by act of Parliament to cut off his beard!"); to "Ally's" reciting part of "The Charge of the Light Brigade" into a phonograph sent him as a gift by Thomas Edison; and to rival poets (she cautions her son against "the implication that Matt Arnold is the crown of poets in these days," and wistfully observes that Browning "has had a great trial in Ally's great popularity"). If in the forty letters to Alfred there is deep love and concern for a husband plagued both by physical illness and the wages of fame, in the hundred letters to her schoolboy sons there are timeless admonitions of a watchful mother: "Be sure you do not take uncooked fruit"; "No chloroform"; "Pray write with ink" (that from the father); "Don't read novels"; "half a glass [of beer] is as much as is good for you"; and, "Thou wouldst spare thy mother many tears and perpetual anxiety couldst thou but send her two or three words every day. . . ." Elsewhere one meets this woman gently chiding Lear for "gnawing your own heart or doing some other cannibal thing of the kind"; reflecting that "one is not told of joy as a Christian virtue as one ought to be"; protesting against publishing schemes that make her husband seem "a mere low, cunning tradesman"; and bemoaning the public's confusion of a man and his art ("there was no particular 'Bar'" in "Crossing the Bar").

Lady Tennyson was decidedly not a liberated woman, preferring Paul's text to the Wife of Bath's *midrash*, but her letters fully support Professor Hoge's introductory contention that she neither stifled, nor censored, nor slavishly indulged her famous husband, supporting him loyally and lovingly with her goodness, intelligence, and discretion. Assisted by a handsome text, Hoge has admirably achieved the "readability" he sought in this edition. His introduction provides a rich background to the selection, and his thorough, concise notes illuminate each letter. His narrative links offer clarity and coherence to the selection and demonstrate an intimate acquaintance not only with published scholarship on the poet and his age, but also with abundant unpublished materials in the Tennyson Research Centre, including Emily Tennyson's "Journal," Hallam Tennyson's "Draft of Materials for a Life of A.T.," and Emily's "Narrative for Her Sons" (an account of her courtship and first three years of marriage, written for Hallam and Lionel, and recently edited by Hoge). This, then, is a book full of original insights into Lady Tennyson, her family, and friends, and a welcome addition to our knowledge of the poet and his age.

PAUL H. CONNOLLY
Yeshiva University

Marion Montgomery. *The Reflective Journey Toward Order: Essays on Dante, Wordsworth, Eliot, and Others*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1973, 312 pp. $10.00.

In form, *The Reflective Journey* is composed of several essays, loosely connected but recapitulative in texture, a technique intended to emulate the literature under consideration. Montgomery proceeds by "allusive reflections and by avoiding a strict dictation by chronology. . . . Mine is an approach which is also meant to argue the suitability of an epic and narrative movement to literary criticism itself." The pace of the volume is leisurely, usually pleasantly so, apparently calculated, like a

novel, to draw the reader into almost unwitting affirmation, as though we listened to a learned friend talking most thoughtfully.

Montgomery talks mainly of romanticism in post-medieval Western culture: "Given a certain temperament and certain principles, one might go so far as to call the whole of this period, from Dante to the present and perhaps beyond, the romantic age." His attention is on the sense of The Innocent, especially its aberration in American literature—i.e., Milton's Chastity or Yeats's "radical innocence" versus Huck Finn's plain ignorance. Dante, Wordsworth, and Eliot understood that innocence is the knowing pursuit—not the goal of retreat—for any significant poet over thirty. Montgomery's best comparison is of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," whose persona recalls his innocent past without laying aside the perspective of the present; to Hemingway, who looks on the past as The Good Time, when things were better because knowledge/experience had not yet corrupted his pure youth. It is the mature facing of the passing of time as opposed to childish escapism: "There is less of the frenzy of the moment in Wordsworth—less excited concern for catching it the 'way it really was' and more concern for understanding why it was the way it was. In his writing, when the moment of *why* threatens, Hemingway quickly brings in either a woman or a bull. . . . It would appear that he is finally frightened by tranquility when it attempts to accompany his recollections, for with tranquility comes the why which sends one deeper into the past and into the self than Hemingway is willing to go."

Montgomery's treatments of myth and genre are of one fabric from the Loom of Certainty. He seeks categories, and his idea of myth clings tightly to the companion idea that literature has authoritative, mythic forms as well as mythic subject matter. Perhaps the most subtle distinctions drawn in this book are in the discussions of lyric and tragic modes. Montgomery's disenchantment with the twentieth century is underscored as he sees the terms of myth inverted nowadays. In *Agamemnon*, he says, the major term is the king, and the people are the minor terms. On the other hand, contemporary writers force the traits of Everyman upon mythic heroes of the past—we strain to prove Bloom an apt Ulysses; Stephen, a Daedalus, a Prometheus. Willie Loman, although not mentioned, lurks as the archetype of the modern effort to drag grand folk like Oedipus and Elektra, Clytemnestra and Creon, down into our small-minded spheres, the hinds forcing entry, crashing Olympian parties waving puerile posters of equality under the law, or under god, or something equally subversive.

Montgomery works in the tradition of the Coleridgean vatic-critic, a man of letters after the aspirations of Wilson and Trilling, an Arnoldian interpreter of culture and soul. Transmitting the Fugitive/Agrarian/Christian ethos of 1930s Vanderbilt, he insists on a monolithic Truth, as yet undiscovered but nonetheless known "as though the Charts were given." Usually wide-open about his premises, he nurtures the same impulse seen in his novels, but here it is more graceful, more decorous than in stories.

Despite his obvious dedication to the profession, Montgomery speaks eloquently of the weaknesses of the critic: "No matter how careful his reading of evidence, the unsaid cries out from the critic's simplification. . . . At the best the critic's figuring of his subject's mind represents tendencies—his own included. In the end he hopes to have made some resemblance of that unique force that curves through time bearing a name—Dante or Wordsworth or Eliot. But always under the burden of that separate force bearing a separate name in time, his own." But such handsome intel-

lectual modesty ("Everywhere and always words decay under the force of mind.") goes hand in hand with an urge for order ("We should finally come to one poem in which mind would burn, a wordless prayer, pure life."), suggesting that no relativism is allowed here, no varieties permissible except as evidence of error. Montgomery's statements are often reminiscent of Eliot's: "The central concern of these essays is the poet's continuing quest for certitude, for a point of rest which reflects an order and harmony of mind. . . . These essays consider modern literature as an integral part of a continuum more extensive than generally taken. They are composed within a broad spectrum marked at a beginning by Dante's journey out of his dark wood and at the end by Jack Kerouac's pathetic wanderings on the road." If one agrees that Pathetic Jack is directly analogous to Dante as the epitome of his age, Montgomery's composition holds up, but what about Barth, Updike, Bellow, *Roethke, or Lowell? Are they so pathetic, or less epitomical?*

The errata sheet omits three errors: page 6, line 9, "etherised"; 8:15, "likely"; and 18:13, "villain."

ROBERT W. HILL
Clemson University

Charles S. Watson. *Antebellum Charleston Dramatists.* University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1976, 183 pp., $7.95.

In his excellent foreword to Charles S. Watson's study of early Charleston dramatists, Walter J. Meserve deplores the absence of "a comprehensive and scholarly history of American drama," and suggests that such a history is now being written in "bits and pieces." Watson has made his contribution to that history. Though one can only wish that the study had been better written, better edited, and better proofread, Watson has performed a valuable service for students of history, drama, and literature.

In explaining the methodology used in his study, Watson maintains that it is "imperative to know the historical events of the particular time in which a play was composed in order to comprehend its meaning for a contemporary audience." Because of this demand, Watson has painstakingly reconstructed not only the history of the Charleston theatres and their dramatists but much of American history up to the Civil War (sometimes including material that seems irrelevant to the subject being discussed). Because of the political concerns of much of the drama produced in Charleston, one must recognize the need for historical background.

Indeed, the first conclusion that Watson reaches in "assessing dramatic writing in Charleston in regard to the evolution of American drama" is that "the original pieces written for the Charleston theatre serve as an accurate barometer of the major concerns which attracted public opinion in the South and nation from 1790 to 1860," whether those concerns were political or social—and they were both.

Following a history of Charleston theatres, with special emphasis on some of the theatre managers, and a discussion of lesser dramatists, Watson devotes a chapter to each of the three dramatists he considers most important in the development of dramatic writing in Charleston: William Ioor, a physician whose *Independence* (1805) was "one of the first plays of the South and the first of South Carolina and . . . a very early example of agrarianism in American literature" and whose *The Battle of Eutaw Springs* Watson considers one of the two most important plays to emerge from his study; John Blake White, better known as a painter than as a writer (four of his works hang in the Capitol) but important in the history of American drama for having written the first anti-dueling plays in America (*Modern*

Honor) and one of the first temperance plays (*The Forgers*); and William Gilmore Simms, whose *Norman Maurice* Watson calls "the best play of the most skilled and important writer to compose for the Charleston stage" and whom Watson labels "the most dominant figure in dramatic writing for the three decades before the Civil War," despite the fact that only one of Simms's plays was performed.

LOUIS HENRY
Clemson University

Paschal Reeves. *Thomas Wolfe: The Critical Reception.* New York: David Lewis, 1974, 256 pp. $19.95.

Leo Gurko. *Thomas Wolfe: Beyond the Romantic Ego.* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1975, 183 pp. $5.95.

The first of these two books, that by Reeves, provides the materials needed for a study of the reception given Thomas Wolfe's works as they appeared. The second, by Gurko, surveys the whole of Wolfe's career and critical reception and offers a fresh estimate of Wolfe's achievement.

A glance at a bibliography in either the *PMLA* or *American Literature* for the last twenty years or so will show that academic and professional critics have given Wolfe but a fraction of the time they have spent on Steinbeck, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Faulkner. In Wolfe's case the names of the same critics turn up again and again, a circumstance suggesting that he is winning few new admirers and defenders. A careful run through the collection of reviews and assessments compiled here by the late Paschal Reeves should lead anyone interested in American literature to wonder why the critics who first ventured to assay the value of Wolfe's ore chose to compare him to Joyce, Meredith, Sterne, Fielding, Dickens, Rabelais, Dostoevsky, Carlyle, Proust, Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, and Hart Crane and to place him alongside Melville and Whitman when they speculated on the place he would come to hold in American letters.

Were these first critics mistaken about the nature of Wolfe's art and genius or have tastes so shifted that critics over the past twenty years have found Wolfe passé and the earlier admirers of Wolfe blind to his faults? Were the journalistic critics and contemporary novelists who followed the whole of Wolfe's brief career too responsive to potential and too unconcerned about his weaknesses as a craftsman? What worth did his admirers find in his books? In what ways did he fail as a novelist? How did his autobiographical approach strike his readers? Was he esteemed more for his gifts as a poet than for his talents as a novelist? Did readers confuse his recurring themes about the ordeal of growing up in America and nurturing an artistic talent to partial fulfillment with Wolfe's alleged inability to grow up? Were the critics uniformly happy when Wolfe, late in his career, blue-lined his rhetorical and verbose ways and began writing in a leaner style? Who among the critics or novelists of the 1930s and '40s spoke well of Wolfe, who wrote hostilely? Did the publication of his letters and notebooks confirm or refute the notion that Wolfe drew directly upon his personal experiences for all of his stories and novels? Was Wolfe ever called a novelist of ideas as well as a novelist of feeling and experience?

These are but a few of the topics which present-day scholars and critics could explore if they were seeking to examine the impact of Wolfe's writing on the scholars and critics of an earlier age. It is the stated hope of Professor Thomas Inge,

general editor of the American Critical Tradition series, of which this volume is a part, that the collection of most of the reviews which greeted the work of Wolfe and his contemporaries will both provide materials to show the reception of their writings and enable modern scholars to relate these writers to their "contemporary cultural milieu" (p. ix). The format of this series calls for three standard features: an introduction by the compiler which notes the concerns and tenor of the reviews, a selection of reviews gathered from newspapers and periodicals, and a checklist of additional reviews.

No one was better equipped than Paschal Reeves to do each part demanded by the format. In addition to writing a book about Wolfe's views on race, he had edited a checklist of reviews and scholarly studies, a volume of criticism, and a volume growing out of a symposium on Wolfe. He had served as co-editor of *The Notebooks of Thomas Wolfe* and, at the time of his death, was working on a volume of Wolfe's complete plays. He did his work well here, even though his decision to reprint one review and merely list another could be questioned. I detect no pattern of downplaying hostile critics by consigning their reviews to the checklists. Many reviewers wrote much the same thing—plot summaries and biographical sketches. His failure to reprint Robert Penn Warren's review might be explained by his inability to receive permission to include the piece. I regret, too, the evident policy which prevented him from including reviews by English, German, and other foreign critics. But I cannot surmise his reasons for failing to include reviews of *The Face of a Nation* and *The Thomas Wolfe Reader*, especially since he published reviews of the somewhat similar *A Stone, A Leaf, A Door* and *Thomas Wolfe's Short Novels*.

Though books of this sort are not significant in themselves, merely convenient, they will serve a vital role if scholars will search through them to discover how literary reputations are gained or lost, to trace the critical stances of an earlier era, to sort out how much our literary historians owe to the tastes of earlier critics, and to match their own perceptions against those of the readers who first encountered Wolfe and his contemporaries. Professor Reeves' compilation will thus serve a readership larger than the thinning ranks of Wolfe devotees. Rightly used, it could lead scholars and general readers alike to ask why Wolfe was so often linked to some of the world's greatest writers and why he was supposed to stand one day beside Whitman and Melville. This book could bring all of us to ask whether we might be cheating ourselves by not sharing in a literary wealth equal to that of Melville or Whitman or whether these early critics were wide of the mark when they likened Wolfe to those great writers.

Whatever our answer to this question, the word "novelist" has never looked right when spread across Wolfe's expansive chest. Decades ago, Joseph Warren Beach tried labelling Wolfe a composer of long tone poems or symphonies. More recently, C. Hugh Holman has pinned up two terms: artist of the *Nouvelle*, author of the prose-epic. Like Holman, Leo Gurko agrees in *Thomas Wolfe: Beyond the Romantic Ego* that *Look Homeward, Angel* may correctly be listed as a novel. What follows that work must come under some other term. Gurko rejects Richard Kennedy's label, "anatomy," and he finds Beach's analogy inappropriate. He opts instead for painting and suggests that Wolfe's creations following *Look Homeward, Angel* most closely resemble those of a muralist who is at once capable of oversized tableaux and well-wrought miniatures. Since Wolfe seldom referred to himself as a novelist and since he relished the expressiveness he found in the paintings of Breughel, Teniers, Bosch, and Hogarth, he would no doubt consider Gurko's analogy apt.

Gurko is not solely interested in attaching new labels to Wolfe's literary corpus, for he is as much concerned with the notion, mistaken in his view, that Wolfe was an autobiographical romantic off on a wordy ego-trip. With something less than complete accuracy (since he fails to acknowledge Wolfe's stance in *Welcome To Our City*), Gurko argues that Wolfe began as a latter-day romantic but "wound up among the postwar expressionists" (p. 83). Gurko places Wolfe among such writers as Stefan George, Elmer Rice, Ernst Toller, and John Dos Passos. He insists, moreover, that for the purpose of comparison, names like Swift, Rabelais, Sinclair Lewis, and Steinbeck are more suitable to evoke than Wordsworth, Keats, or Shelley if one wishes to discuss the works appearing after *Look Homeward, Angel*. Gurko's point, of course, is that Wolfe celebrated the romantic ego one time and then moved on to reflect through a reshaped Eugene Gant, who sometimes backslid, and George Webber the cultural, social, political, and philosophical upheavals of the booming 'Twenties and depressed 'Thirties. In short, Wolfe labored to paint the faces and to record the words of his countrymen during a time of great hope and a period of deep suffering.

Gurko thus discovers, as Herbert Muller did many years ago, a provincial natural genius who develops into a spokesman for his countrymen. Unlike Muller, Gurko stresses Wolfe's increasingly liberal political views and his expanding satiric talents.

If Wolfe was not a traditional novelist or a lifelong romantic egoist crushed by the weight of his autobiographical fiction, neither was he, in Gurko's judgment, always a verbose, bombastic writer puffed full of Southern rhetoric. Speaking of the variety of styles Wolfe used during his career, Gurko says, "He is the great purveyor of the rhetorical smorgasbord, with something in it for every taste, vulgar and exquisite" (p. 71). No other one-line assessment of Wolfe's stylistic cornucopia is likely to match this one by Gurko.

In addition to examining the critical stances which currently pass as tenable descriptions and interpretations of Wolfe's life and writings, Gurko devotes one chapter each to the major works of Wolfe. Although he accepts the widely held view that *Look Homeward, Angel* is a novel, Gurko detects signs, as early as that work, that Wolfe consciously rejected the fictional mode practiced by Henry James and other advocates of the well-made novel. "Typical of Wolfe's intention," writes Gurko, "to represent rather than fictionalize was his passion to record what was transient and fleeting . . ." (p. 80). This thesis totters precariously if one considers Wolfe's continuing hope to find some scheme to use as a framework for his growing mounds of episodes. A greater cause of toddling, however, is Gurko's inability to use his analogy based on painting to bring to the surface any praiseworthy insights into Wolfe's artistic methods. His critical method finally rests most comfortably upon a sociological and psychological base. So based, what he has to say about Wolfe's work is worth reading, for he points clearly to the focus which Wolfe gave to the joys, aims, frustrations, and shattered dreams of Americans during the first three decades of the present century.

In this brief study, the process of re-assessment is pushed forward one much-needed step. As Gurko recognizes, Wolfe is not going to have either a full or fair hearing until scholars and critics cease kicking Wolfe aside by telling their students and readers that Wolfe is a callow, inartistic, romantic egoist. Gurko's run through most of the canon of Wolfe has found him stopping short sometimes and marveling at the good things he saw along the way. His book is thus a report on the satisfying

challenge of re-reading and rediscovering for himself that the critical commonplaces posted about Wolfe are not always the most accurate routes to follow. Gurko's new map is not wholly pleasing, but it does honestly try to avoid drawing in paths and roads which Wolfe never attempted to build.

JOHN IDOL
Clemson University

C. Hugh Holman. *The Loneliness at the Core: Studies in Thomas Wolfe.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975, 184 pp. $8.95.

> *In fitting twelve essays into eight studies, I have tried to keep the studies' integrity as separate essays, although I, of course, hope that they meld well enough to make at least a semibook. But maintaining their separateness has resulted in my occasionally saying the same thing in different contexts. I hope the reader will understand that this is not unintentional self-plagiarism.*

The reader will, of course, have to judge for himself. But Mr. Holman's opening remarks do help clear the air. Like Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales,* Holman's *The Loneliness at the Core* is a welcome recapitulation, in the latter instance of significant work done by Holman on Thomas Wolfe over the past fifteen years. For that whole period Holman has been a major scholar-critic-editor of Thomas Wolfe, and although Holman has not produced the large works on Wolfe such as those by Rubin or Kennedy, he has continually provided the timely essay, the needed edition of Wolfe, the catalytic idea.

Holman's opening chapter is basically his 1960 University of Minnesota pamphlet on Thomas Wolfe. This essay, as Holman points out, gives "in summary outline most of what I have to say about Thomas Wolfe." The rest, then, is a fleshing out. More specifically, Holman's method throughout is "to select and define an angle of approach and then look at Wolfe through that definition." In this opening chapter Holman also provides parenthetical cross references to subsequent chapters.

Holman views Wolfe in the following way: First, there is a conflict in Wolfe, a contradictory quality, a polarity. On one hand Wolfe wanted to capture his vision of America in fiction, but on the other he constantly told the story of Thomas Wolfe. So one has "the private self and the public seer." And in structure one sees the compact, powerful dramatic scene and the flabbiness or diffuseness of his larger works, "a combination of realistic presentation and romantic declaration." The latter quality Holman attributes to six important teachers in Wolfe's life—Margaret Roberts, Horace Williams, Frederick Koch, Edwin A. Greenlaw, John Livingston Lowes, and George Pierce Baker. Moreover, if one compares the early to the later Wolfe, one finds, says Holman, a movement from a focus on the artist himself to the world outside of the artist, from a rejection to an acceptance of social consciousness.

It is inescapable to Holman and to most other sensitive critics of Wolfe's work that Wolfe's own life—which he rendered in an often thinly disguised chronological account—provided the material for Wolfe's fiction. So one must go to the life to arrive at the most comprehensive meaning of the fiction. Thus Holman rehearses the key points of Wolfe's life, especially as they relate to his fiction.

Look Homeward, Angel was well received by the public. But the same public was less enthusiastic a few years later when *Of Time and the River* came out. And in 1936, when *The Story of a Novel* was published, which detailed Wolfe's version

of the composition and editing of *Of Time and the River*, the author was attacked violently by Bernard DeVoto in his famous essay/review "Genius Is Not Enough." DeVoto was soon joined by other critics. Wolfe could not tolerate criticism of his writing, but he felt he must answer his critics. So he changed editors—from Perkins of Scribner's to Aswell of Harper's—and he tried to change the thrust of his fiction as well.

The last period of Wolfe's life involves wandering years, back and forth to Europe, especially Germany, and years of writing. Holman recounts that in May, 1938, shortly before Wolfe's trip West and his death, he entrusted his manuscripts of perhaps a million words to Aswell, his last editor. From this Aswell culled two posthumous novels, *The Web and the Rock* and *You Can't Go Home Again*, and the ten chapters of the fragmentary novel *The Hills Beyond*, as well as a number of short stories. Holman's evaluation is that the posthumous longer works are inferior creations.

It is unfortunate that in Holman's discussion of the last months of Wolfe's life he all but ignores *Thomas Wolfe's Purdue Speech* (it is mentioned twice in chapter 7), a talk which Wolfe delivered at Purdue University in May, 1938, and which was published in 1964. Some believe the *Purdue Speech* was at least as significant a document as was his earlier *The Story of a Novel*, which had its genesis at the University of Colorado at a forum like the one at Purdue. In both talks Wolfe is the artist discussing his craft, but the *Purdue Speech* goes beyond *The Story of a Novel* in that in the later work Wolfe speaks at great length about his changed viewpoints of the actual and the artistic worlds. The *Purdue Speech* (subtitled *Writing and Living*) gives us a sense of Wolfe's social consciousness during the last years of his life.

In addition, Wolfe clearly wanted eventually to translate the material of his talk at Purdue into the substance of "poetic truth." Before he died, he did. And what we ultimately had was the famous Credo as dialogue between Maxwell Perkins/Foxhall Edwards and Thomas Wolfe/George Webber in the last pages of Wolfe's last "complete" posthumous novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*. Elizabeth Nowell, Wolfe's literary agent at the time of his death, thought the *Purdue Speech* was important enough to include twenty pages of it in her 1960 biography of Wolfe.

There is another point which one should not gloss over. Holman dismisses *The Hills Beyond* as a fragment which "adds very little to Wolfe's stature as a novelist." One is entitled to one's evaluations, and usually Holman is perceptive in his analyses of Wolfe. Here, however, I believe his judgment is flawed. I am convinced that *The Hills Beyond* is a powerful, imaginative work. Elsewhere I have written that "Wolfe's fragmentary novel shows that he was approaching a most significant corner in his artistry. Had he lived long enough to turn the corner successfully, perhaps we would now have his 'whole story' of America in addition to his 'whole story' of Eugene Gant-George Webber."*

Holman spends some time discussing Wolfe's successes and failures. A number of the shorter works are as successful as *Look Homeward, Angel*, Holman believes. He emphasizes that only in the first novel and some of the stories or novellas was Wolfe able to sustain the power and vision necessary for his artistry. Holman praises Wolfe for his ability to render "accurate and vivid dialogue" and "folk speech." In this context, however, Holman says that often Wolfe is more the poet

* See "*The Hills Beyond*: A Folk Novel of America" in *Thomas Wolfe: Three Decades of Criticism*, New York University Press, 1968, pp. 241-252.

than the novelist. In Wolfe's fiction, language and theme are interrelated, and Wolfe's major themes were large ones. "The loneliness at the core of all human experience" and "the search for a father" were both important aspects of life and literature that Wolfe had to explore. Also, just as he was concerned with the oppositions one finds in life, so was he engrossed by the mystery of time.

"In one sense," says Holman, "Wolfe's characters transcend his themes." This general statement is argued forcefully under the rubric of "the paradox of self and the larger world." Wolfe's fictional characters have "gusto," "vigor," and "force," but they are rendered with great "subjectivity" by Wolfe. Partially because of his subjectivity Wolfe's satire in his first book, Holman feels, was "satire aimed at Main Street and at Boosters' Club targets." True, for the most part, but one cannot ignore in this same book Wolfe's larger satire of provincial education and politics, and the boom or bust economy. Of course Holman is perfectly right to insist that emphasis on satire does not emerge until one gets to Wolfe's later fiction. For Holman, Wolfe is in the romantic tradition of American literature. Wolfe's fiction, he says, depicts "loneliness and suffering and pain and death. . . . Yet man, for Wolfe, is also a noble creature." And in Wolfe's "vision of man" what emerges is "man possessed of tragic grandeur."

Part of this "tragic grandeur" impressed itself on Wolfe during his many trips to Germany in the 1930's. As Holman points out, "His love affair with Berlin was intense on both sides." But eventually it became a love affair gone sour. From "a young man responding with an almost Germanic fervor to the sights and sounds of Hitler's Germany" Wolfe ultimately came "to see that the Germany he had loved had fallen before the march of the Brownshirts." Germany had meant much to Wolfe, and when he left it for the last time he felt "a tremendous sense of loss." However, Europe also gave Wolfe the inspiration to write two of his most powerful tracts at the end of his career: "I Have a Thing to Tell You," which appeared in *The New Republic* and *The Short Novels of Thomas Wolfe*, and the *Credo*, which moved from *The Purdue Speech* to the final pages of *You Can't Go Home Again*.

Holman's concluding words on Wolfe attempt to place the author within the large context of modern American literature. Thomas Wolfe's work, he says—the "book" Wolfe was writing all his life—can be considered the closest thing we have today to a modern American epic, an epic in the tradition of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Wolfe, argues Holman, followed in the steps of Whitman's *Song of Myself*, Pound's *Cantos*, Hart Crane's *The Bridge*, and William Carlos Williams' *Paterson*. But, of course, these were epic poems. Wolfe's "epic impulse" flowed into his attempts to write the "Great American Novel," and Holman agrees that the end result was a magnificent failure. It failed as all such ambitions must fail. But it was magnificent in that Wolfe's fiction revealed his "passion for experience."

This collection of essays does bring together some significant views on Thomas Wolfe, views that have been a part of Holman's critical and scholarly life for many years. The book is provided with a full index and comprehensive set of notes, but a bibliography would have been welcome too. One disconcerting element in the end notes is inconsistency. For example, we have ample documentation to the effect that certain essays on Wolfe have appeared in such and such a journal and have also been reprinted in *The Enigma of Thomas Wolfe*, by Richard Walser, or *The World of Thomas Wolfe*, by C. Hugh Holman. But we are never told when an essay has been reprinted in *Thomas Wolfe: Three Decades of Criticism*, by Leslie Field. (A brutish observation, perhaps, but why at this late stage of academic publishing should reviewers become angels?)

One can sum up Holman's book by noting once again that his first chapter—"The Loneliness at the Core"—is in effect a comprehensive abstract of what is to follow. The rest, as I've already indicated, is a fleshing out in seven parts: "The Stigma of Autobiography," "The Blest Nouvelle," "The Problem of Point of View," "Rhetorical Hope and Dramatic Despair," "The Web of the South," "Europe as His Catalyst," and 'The Epic Impulse." In retrospect, it may seem odd to review a book by devoting so much space to a first section, but Holman's book insists upon this approach.

LESLIE FIELD
Purdue University

Linda Welshimer Wagner. *Hemingway and Faulkner: inventors/masters.* Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1975. $11.00.

Knowledgeable students of American literature will already know Linda Welshimer Wagner's criticism from her books on Eliot, Williams, McGinley, and Levertov. Many will have profited from her work as editor of *William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism* and *Ernest Hemingway: Five Decades of Criticism.* Now readers of these two modern American masters can benefit directly from her longtime immersion in the fiction as well as in the body of criticism that has built up around it.

For years it has been an easy critical commonplace, a handy cliché, to dispose of the two by contrasting them in terms of Hemingway's spare disciplined line and Faulkner's luxuriant rhetoric, by emphasizing Hemingway's isolated expatriates and Faulkner's self-doomed Southerners. Professor Wagner denies neither man his uniqueness nor the contrasts deriving from it; like all good criticism hers helps to identify and explain these qualities. But to begin she emphasizes what has heretofore been all but ignored: the common elements in their backgrounds with which they began and the way the literary climate of change and experimentation helped to shape them both.

At the outset she establishes a firm foundation for her study by placing both writers in the revolutionary literary milieu in which they began to write and came to maturity. Beginning her book with epigraphs from Pound and James, Professor Wagner goes on to discuss the influence of their views, particularly those of Pound on both poetry and prose which, coupled with his fierce partisanship and energy, helped to create Imagism and Vorticism. Ranging from the way-breaking theories of Conrad and Ford to the ambience created in Paris by the French Symbolists and then Stein and Joyce, Professor Wagner sets the scene for Hemingway's progression from apprenticeship to mastery. Reading the same authors, plunging into experimentation if along a different route, William Faulkner too was forging his own art, in Mississippi, then in New Orleans, and, briefly, in Paris. In this discussion as in later ones the author draws upon her wide scholarship to give us the ideas of the two authors in their own words as well as the pronouncements of Pound, Ford, and the literary critics and historians.

In the six chapters that follow Wagner proceeds to a close analysis of Hemingway's developing themes and techniques. Moving chronologically through his career, she traces the evolution of the famous style, making clear how carefully and laboriously it was forged, how the material was worked and reworked—how the novels were marinated in the author's unconscious and usually approached first in shorter pieces before taking their final form. Although Professor Wagner treats the Hemingway code hero and Hemingway's emerging constellation of values, she stresses most the writer's craft, the way he wrought the vehicle that would carry

his favorite themes. There are acute insights throughout, as for instance on the epigraph of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and the rhythm and structure of *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* Treating the process of composition, Professor Wagner persuasively analyzes reasons for the falling-off in works such as *To Have and Have Not* and *Across the River and Into the Trees.* Linking the end of her treatment with the beginning, she justly praises *The Old Man and the Sea* and points out the techniques by which Hemingway, nearing the end of his career, was still following Imagist doctrine. She also shows how Hemingway—still praising courage and endurance, skill and dignity—had shifted his emphasis more from loss to love, though both were still inextricably bound together in his stoical world view.

The five chapters on William Faulkner which follow trace the two-fold process again: the choice of material and then the discovery and development of the style demanded by the material. Professor Wagner rightly stresses the constant experimentation which marked Faulkner's career even after he discovered Yoknapatawpha County, further blending the colloquial and rhetorical as he gave its inhabitants voices. Closely exploring the texture of Quentin's language in *The Sound and the Fury,* she goes on to make an interesting case for his brother Jason as being not quite the villain he has been thought by most commentators. There are stimulating discussions of the structure of *As I Lay Dying* and of the question of who is the foil to Joe Christmas in *Light in August.* Arguing persuasively, Professor Wagner suggests that it is not Lena Grove but her admirable suitor, Byron Bunch. Following Faulkner's themes of endurance and love through the completion of the Snopes trilogy, she sees a reaffirmation of the centrality of the latter in the valedictory novel, *The Reivers.* The author should have been better served by her proofreaders—who should have changed Tallifero to Talliaferro, Joanne to Joanna, and Vallinova to Allanovna—and some readers would argue that though Mink Snopes is the center of consciousness in three early chapters of *The Mansion* he is not their narrator, but it would be ungrateful to quibble with a critic who has approached her task as devotedly as has this one.

In appendices Professor Wagner provides analyses of both of these great novelists as poets, thus picking up a theme she explores earlier in describing Hemingway as the lyric poet of American fiction and Faulkner as its epic poet. In the assessment of the two which forms her last chapter, she asserts that "No writer of this century created better-crafted novels than Faulkner; but Hemingway ran a close second. The power of economical writing, the countless successes of *le mot juste*: the novel as the New Form of Conrad and Ford's dream became a reality through the writing of Hemingway and Faulkner." Noting that Hemingway's philosophy of stoic acceptance of life has cost him readers since his death, she suggests that the quicker accessibility which his style gives the reader may in the long run enhance his readability as compared with Faulkner's despite the way Faulkner's "awesome vitality, in both subject and technique" seems to make him less vulnerable to entrapment by changes in the direction of future fiction.

Partisans of the two writers will find much here to enrich their reading of both, and no matter which their favorite, no matter what their degree of disagreement or concurrence with the final evaluation of the two vis-à-vis each other, readers can only be grateful for Professor Wagner's demonstration of the shared interests, themes, techniques, and achievements of these two great contemporaries.

JOSEPH BLOTNER
University of Michigan

CONTRIBUTORS

FRANKLIN ASHLEY, a jazz musician and fiction editor for *Sandlapper*, has published previous work in *Harper's* and other magazines.

DAVID BOTTOMS is a Georgian whose poems have been published in many magazines as well as in the Macmillan anthology *Traveling America: With Today's Poets*.

C. TRENT BUSCH, who teaches at Valdosta State College in Georgia, has published other poems in such journals as *The California Quarterly, Florida Review*, and *The Georgia Review*.

WILLIAM HARMON is chairman of the Department of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has published previous Eliot pieces in *PMLA, Sewanee Review, American Anthropologist*, and *T. S. Eliot Review*.

ANDREW HUDGINS' poems have appeared in *The Wisconsin Review, The Vanderbilt Poetry Review, The Andover Review*, and *The Mississippi Review*. He is a graduate assistant at the University of Alabama.

LUCKY JACOBS teaches at Campbell College in North Carolina and has published poetry in *Texas Quarterly, Rocky Mountain Review*, and other journals.

JOHN LEBOURGEOIS is Assistant Professor of history at Clemson University.

JOYCE CAROL OATES, winner of a National Book Award for *Them*, now teaches in the Department of English at the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada.

EILEEN STRATIDAKIS is Administrative Secretary to the Chief Judge of Fulton County, Georgia. Her poems have appeared in over thirty publications, including *Cimarron Review, Florida Quarterly*, and *The Wisconsin Review*.

MARLENE YOUMANS is a South Carolina native who has degrees from Hollins College and Brown University. Her poems have appeared in *Intro 8, Black Warrior Review, Southern Poetry Review*, and other publications.