The South Carolina Review

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Cover photo of James Dickey by William Stafford

The editors invite articles on two topics we shall feature during 1979—(1) American poets and American poetry at the end of a decade (with emphasis on post-modernist techniques and themes), for the Spring 1979 issue, deadline, January 15, 1979; and (2) the literary achievement of 1929, fifty years after, for the Fall 1979 issue, deadline, September 1, 1979.

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EDITORIAL

When we announced in April 1977 and when we wrote to several persons who we thought might be interested in contributing to a special issue on James Dickey, we were certain that responses would be various. We expected President Carter to say through an aide that the President does not offer artistic judgments for publication, although the public (if not the "little literary") press on numerous occasions has cited his admiration for the work of his fellow Georgian. We expected replies like Karl Shapiro's "telegraph-like greeting": "More power to Jim Dickey!"; and, at more length and with more formality, Allen Tate's blessing: "I cannot do justice in this brief statement to James Dickey as a poet. His novel *Deliverance* is talented but I think his reputation will rest upon his poetry. To make a long story short I think he is the best poet the South has produced since three members of the Fugitive group — Ransom, Warren and Davidson." Robert Penn Warren, who so glowingly reviewed *The Zodiac* for the *New York Times*, wanted to stand "on record" as being "among Jim's greatest admirers." James Tate spoke of wanting to "add to our understanding of this great poet" by noting "his exquisite tenderness, which is a major source of his . . . power because it becomes a part of his attentiveness, his intelligence." And others, like James Applewhite, R. V. Cassill, Laurence Lieberman, William Stafford, Elder Olson, and Linda Wagner, made time to offer even more lengthy appraisals, poems, etc., for this issue.

But all is not sweetness and light regarding the reputation of James Dickey. Many good, sensitive writers are at best suspicious and at worst disdainful, especially of Dickey's later works. One respondent said, "I have two entirely opposite views of him . . . 'before' and 'after' . . . the work falls naturally on either side of that novel. The early work sings as true to me as it ever did . . . and since a poem cannot be 'past,' ever, then how to deal with that opinion and my certainty that the later work is worthless or worse. It would be too difficult. You'll have more articles submitted than you can ever read anyway, probably. Lots of people like writing them, I hear. Stanley Plumly did a good review of *Zodiac* in . . . *American Poetry Review* . . . he hit all the places I would have hit, even down to certain passages . . . it's a truthful review but maybe soft-pedaled a little." And this letter was tame, compared to others, which declared, "A Dickey Special No. would not be the place to be churlish, so I couldn't do it"; and another, at length, with harsh articulate heat:

> Why another issue on Dickey, at this of all times? Dickey is a subject which, when you bring it up, people have to look at the floor . . . I cannot write about him right now, for instance, for two related reasons. If I write about the work of the last seven or eight years, I am jumping on a man when he is down. If I write about the work before it, which I love, and do not mention that *Zodiac*, *Eyebeaters* is junk, I am being dishonest.

Are you going to have an issue full of people who are scared of Dickey, or who are South Carolina chauvinists, or people who jump on a man when he is down? Man, is he *down*! I can't believe the badness of this work, compared to the goodness of the early work. It is like Robert Lowell. Only in Dickey's case, people are willing to admit it, by and large. In Lowell's case, people are still pretending that he's good!

No, I don't want to be a part of it. I respect the old work too much. Dickey seems a sordid subject, right now. Every now and then — like Whitman after listening to the astronomer — I go back and look at something like the Heaven of Animals . . . and it was true, all of it!

Despite, however, the disappointment and derogation of some sincere critics, and braving the risks of seeming chauvinistic, sycophantic, or scared, we have prepared part of this issue of *SCR* to examine works by James Dickey, to include poems written in his honor, and to carry greetings from friends.

RWH

ROTTENROCK MOUNTAIN

For James Dickey

Up Rottenrock Mountain I went
Hand over hand,
Corrupt rock, in the grasp
Crumbling, powdering away,
Falling half a mile through thin sunlight,
A sheer drop,
A way out; but I knew a better:
I knew a cave near the summit
Unknown to the sun;
There, in coal-mine dark,
With a single droplet of lead
I could paint black on black
To match my darker mind.

I remember the whole morning
Tried and tried to dissuade me:
The sky said it was blue, had clean clouds,
Therefore I must not,
The grass said it was green,

So I ought not;
The far-down valley
Sent up urgent perfumes
To recall me;
The cliff made it tough for me,
Thorn-bushes tried to restrain me.
One,
One only, approved,
Drifting on crape-black feathers,
Watching with bent head;
Perhaps so much despair
Already seemed like death.

At last I braced one knee against a bush,
Hooked both hands on a ledge,
Pushed, pulled, hung halfway over,
Heard sudden harshness
Like a locust's whirring. *There,*
There it is, said something,
Now you have what you wanted.
What made you think you could choose,
After so much failed choice,
The shape even of that?

And there it was: in the shape
Of slant eyes, pitted cheeks,
Head, the dried shrunken head
Of an old Chinese,
Quivering, cocked,
Rocking, rocking a little,
Measuring the distance,
Swaying slowly above
The Navajo-designs
Braided into his coils;
The loud tail, erect,
Transparent in agitation.

Sweating, I clung,
All the animal alarms
Shrilling down every nerve.
It was my hand—not I—
Acted, all on its own.
Sky flashed through his head
As the lead struck,
The taut coils jumped,

Rolled out a slow
Spiral or so,
Went slack.

I hung there a long while;
Panting, pulled myself up,
Fished for a cigarette.
I had given up all desires
For a final one;
That, too, now meaningless.
Stark in shimmering air
The death-starved death-black bird,
Disdainful, sailed away.

ELDER OLSON

THE MAN WHO TOLD ME I WAS COLD

when i unwrapped
where he'd been,
just freezer burn

in June he brought
an ice age up and
down the atlantic

what didn't die
was washed out to
sea before the maples

when he looked at
me with those ice
blue eyes somewhere

in michigan an
animal stepped thru
the lake's ice and

couldn't get out

LYN LIFSHIN

THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME OF THE POET JAMES DICKEY

R. V. CASSILL

I have, as Emerson put it, the habit of tacking together the old and the new, a slick story called "The Most Dangerous Game" (about the hunting of one man by another) with my reading of the *Poems*. I am a great reader only in the common, folk, sense of that term. We mean, us folk, that we read a *lot*, when we claim for ourselves that we are "great readers." I read the faces, dispositions, destinies and quirks of poets I have known, as well as what is committed to print. And when I can not elegantly tack it together, I let it tack itself together, the way it wants to be together, the way the Poet has intended it to come together in the imagination of great readers.

To be sure, in his printed *Poems*, Dickey has said all that needs to be said (for the great reader) about himself as poet.

> I swore to myself I would see
> When all but my seeing had failed.
> Every light was too feeble to show
> My world as I knew it must be. . . .
>
> from *The Owl King*

After reading that, all commentators and explicators might have the grace to be silent — were they not committed to the most dangerous game of hunting the bowman, hid in the thicket of his poem, holding the great bow at full draw.

To keep the fatal bargain of the hunt, the pursuing reader may imagine

THE INVENTION OF THE POET

"Art is the path of the creator to his work." The way to write a poem is to make yourself a poet. The first stroke of genius is to see that the poet worthy of These States is blind as an owl. To see that you are a Southern boy environed by a host of talented Southron epigones twitching to go "North toward home" and be praised by the Ruling Circles for the perfection of their verse. To know that you in turn would be welcomed on the stage of the YMHA by the RC's if you went up there to speak smartly about Miss Eudora and Mr. Ransom and were reverent about Traveler (while you helped them snicker down Whitman and the Midwesterners and made the South into a commodity package). While you helped the Artificial Sodomites misread and package the Catholicism of Flannery O'Connor so she could become a favorite in Good Schools. You see the rules of the Poetry Game as the fool-killing darkness. You see that you can not beat them at their own game, that if they catch you trying they will attack you as an upstart Southern catbird from the advertising world trying to

beautify himself with their expensively dyed feathers.

You must transform the game while you play it (the only game in town). You ignite the darkness, show the "dark burn" and push your sight out slowly — "Inch by inch, as into stone."

You invent a persona that will pass — if the motion is swift and furious enough — as another pseudo-Sartoris making the Poetry Circuit, casting artificial Snopeses before the real Chillingworths of the RCE (Ruling Circle Establishment).

You play the guitar, like Certified Youth. You read at the YMHA. You have come North toward home. But you never quite fool those who made the rules of the game. They have your number. It is a no-win game. Game? Which game are we talking about? Bow? Who has the bow? Isn't this supposed to be a slick story? Why do the Suitors have the Great Bow and the first turn at stringing it? So, push your sight inch by inch into the stone, if you can. The Bow is only your metaphor, the arrows are noodles to tickle the ribs of the Suitors, and No One is shining beside you in the fabulous darkness.

AN ANECDOTE TO CHANGE THE TONE AND THE IMAGERY

I am told (by Dickey-watchers) that when a committee was considering whether to invite the poet to Vanderbilt for a literary festival, an aging Fugitive advised: "Do not bring Dickey to the campus. He will ravish your women."

Someone, somehow, is calling out of the darkness; the women no longer listen to wise Pentheus recite the Law of the Golden Mean!

ANECDOTES NOT SO FANCY

Peter Taylor and I spent some summer days with Jim at the University of Utah in (I believe) 1967. We were housed in a women's dorm with an overview of green lawns where the sprinklers swept back and forth all day with generous monotony to keep the campus from reverting to its natural condition. From dormitory windows we could look across Salt Lake City to some awful, distant mountains where there were said to be copper mines. I think it safe to say that, sober and not sober, Peter, Jim and I enjoyed each other's company, talked with that peculiar ecstasy of middle-aged men who love language and lore, mindful that the stories they exchange are always conditioned by the dormitory walls, the dumb and ceaseless artificial fountains and the brutal desert that environs them.

Since that time I have seen Jim less frequently than I have seen Peter. When Peter and I have got together, we try (impossibly) to keep up on Jim. Not as outsiders to his story or his stories or the stories about him.

Peter says, "Do you know what I hear Jim is telling about Utah?" His eyes (mid many wrinkles), his ancient, glittering eyes, are gay, and we are both afloat on the kind of laughter that comes last.

"I heard that Jim was telling how Cassill was shacked up with a gorgeous coed . . ."

"Who had no soul at all . . ."

". . . who had no soul at all. This Cassill . . ."

"This low-born Cassill."

Nods. ". . . was causing Brewster Ghiselin fits because, though Brewster is personally very tolerant we were in a strait-laced Mormon community, where such goings-on are bound to have repercussions and to reflect badly on the summer school writing program."

And there we abide, Peter and I, story-tellers caught up in an everlasting fiction we share with Jim. Safer than we will ever be amid the untrustworthy specifications of biographical data.

THE POET AMONG THE ANIMALS

"The deepest mysteries of human existence are sleep, language, dreams, madness, beasts, and sex" — said the New Englander, who really had, after all, seen the silhouette of Sweeney straddled in the sun — just hadn't been taken in by that spectacle, as the epigones always are.

Those critical biographers who dangerously hunt the man in his work, the possessor of the eyes behind the eyes, might have their best luck with "The Sheep Child." Here (again) with dazzling frankness the poet tells us who he is. He is the one who dies "staring" (the owl's eyes again, by which we recognize him through his disguises of Professor and Successful Reader). Jim Dickey is the one whose hoof and hand clasp each other, who frightens the farm boys into suffering themselves, marrying, and raising their kind. What prudent boy would choose to imitate the destiny of the poet?

HOW THE POET ACQUIRED THE GREAT BOW

I delight to imagine that he bought it in the sporting goods section of some outlet store, at the price a boy can afford. I have to imagine that there was a neural, intuitive recognition of what he had taken into his hand when he first lifted the bow from the display shelf where it was offered for sale. It had to be what they call a real bow with an economic value and definable physical properties before it could be handled as a real bow with metaphoric properties. Nerves and intuition had to assent before language shaped to an affirmation. If the bow does not say "Kill" to the hand, then the reading is off to a false start that can never be retrieved by talent, study, imitation or earnest effort.

When the bow says "Kill" the boy asks, "Who?"

"The False Suitors," says the bow.

"Sure a lot of them," says the boy.

"You will be helped."

That is the way I imagine it started. So James Dickey became an avid archer, as it says on the dust jacket of one of his books. The book is *Deliverance* and, as we know, it contains a passage in which the archer kills someone with a broadhead arrow. It's not a passage I mean to examine for its "literary value" nor comb for its "psychological revelations" but rather to cite for its general coincidence with the pattern of action in Richard Connell's slick story "The Most Dangerous Game," mentioned earlier. (Jim, there are High-minded Suitors all around us who think all novels are slick stories, just as they think all bows are recreational appliances, which is why they will never kill anyone with either of them.) The Hunted becomes the Hunter, maybe that's all there is to it, except that in *Deliverance* the implications are spelled out a little bit more. After the first killing Gentry draws a bead on his companion Bobby. *Might have* killed him too.

BUT IS THE NOVEL UP TO THE STANDARD OF THE POET?

Hell's bells, I'm not going to get into the question of the ranking of *Deliverance*, because that would lead right on to increasingly foolish questions about Dickey's rank as a poet on the national, international, and eternal scale.

It would lead right on, in the circumstantial world, to the question of whether Jim Dickey is "the Muhammed Ali of poetry."

That is a game we don't play, men, women and poets.

We know (and live by) the right answer to that foolish and journalistic-academic question: "Muhammed Ali is the Muhammed Ali of poetry." Jim Dickey is the Jim Dickey of poetry (as William Dickey is the William Dickey of poetry). Men and women are all in the most dangerous game one and by one. We follow the man or the woman by the track of the verse, and, in the kingdom, each will live and die with his and her own name. (Another poet whom I know has named his son Patrice. I know him as poet by the naming of his son. Poets do not name their sons — or their friends — except as poets.) Poets do not write novels except as poets. Or go on the circuit. Beat the guitar.

My encounter with Jim Dickey will be in the Cage Country. We meet each other when the sunglasses have been pushed back. And he will say — and I will quote — "your moves were exactly right for a few things in this world: we know you when you come." Head-aim, Jim. Fuck the liars and the cowards. We speak, we hear, we answer.

CADENZA: IF YOU HAVE CAUGHT A LIVING EYE,
JUST WINK AS YOU DEPART.

Nothing we have said is new. The Word is common. The word is common as our circumstances. The Poet is all of us, not Man Reading at The YMHA. We advance, we retire. If you have pushed your sight into the stone — with your "grim techniques" — the stone is still the stone.

TO MOST OF MY FAMILY, DEAD OF LUNG CANCER

It gives no sign; no sibyl
Contrives to trace its filaments
As with Penelope's constancy
It weaves among the trees
Cocoons of silk and wax.
It is, it does,
But does not see itself;
It lives, it grows,
Has no fingers or feet,
Yet plies with pudding patience
The butter paths it probes.
Resistance melts to this siege
Of cocoons; sap blends with silk
And wax in a flow of fraternal pledge,
Graceful encounter on inroads
Where branches murmur
The biographies of their cells.

Such tactics serve in all wars,
But even sandbox warfare
Has its deranged officials
Who order a pressing ahead.
Little silkworm point men
Metastasize to attention:
Outposts must be taken,
The forest felled,
Prisoners wasted.

J. W. RIVERS

REVIEWS

E. P. Thompson. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary.* New York: Pantheon Books, rev. ed., 1977 (orig. 1955), 829 pp. $12.50.

After twenty years E. P. Thompson has re-issued his massive biography of William Morris. This is of some consequence to Morris scholars, since copies of the first edition have disappeared from important libraries, like the Bodleian at Oxford and the British Museum in London. Anyone interested in Thompson's 1955 assessment of William Morris can now read it in its original form, virtually unsullied by the course of recent scholarship.

When Thompson wrote in 1955 he was an angry young man bent on rectifying the distorted image of William Morris. Attacking that "school of ignorant carpet-baggers and hypocrites" (bourgeois reactionaries desperately trying to cover up the real Morris), Thompson triumphantly exposed the Bard as a genuine communist. Much of Thompson's work had value; biographers, critics, scholars had either discounted or ignored Morris' commitment to the socialist movement. But Thompson overplayed his hand; he tried to show that Morris was in fact a Marxist. By protesting too much, he left most readers of his biography unconvinced.

The most interesting feature of this new edition is the Postscript. Although the biography stands unrevised, Thompson does review much of the scholarly literature that has appeared during the past twenty years. Naturally most of his attention is focused on his critics, those who have found his political assessment in some way or another deficient. With much the same brashness and bravado that characterize the original script, Thompson sets out to defend himself and, of course, Morris. Yet, even so, there is a subtle but important shift in the author's thinking. At one point he apologizes for the super-heated pugnacity of the original, saying that "it is true that in 1955 I allowed some hectoring political moralisms, as well as a few Stalinist pieties, to intrude upon the text. I had then a somewhat reverent notion of Marxism as a received orthodoxy, and my pages included some passages of polemic whose vulgarity no doubt makes contemporary scholars wince. . . . Marxist sympathies were so disreputable that they could find little expression outside of Communist publications; and the vulgarity of my own polemic can only be understood against the all-pervasive and well-furnished vulgarities of the anti-Marxist orthodoxies of that time."

In making this confession Thompson has moved considerably from where he stood in 1955 — or at least from where most readers perceived that he stood in 1955. "In all this," Thompson continues, "the book became typed, by enemies and even by some friends, as offering only one finding: the Morris-Marx equation. And yet the book, while perhaps offering too tidy an account of that relation, by no means contented itself with showing Morris ending his life in an orthodox Marxist terminus. The point was, rather, that Morris was an original Socialist thinker whose work was complementary to Marxism." For many, long familiar with this angry, overblown and doctrinaire book, this statement comes as a surprising concession.

Still, Thompson has difficulty in relinquishing a position that he had held for so long. Some pages later he asserts that "Insofar as these concepts [of Morris] were consonant with those of Marx, and were in some cases derived directly from Marxist sources, we ought to call them Marxist." Perhaps. But the core of Morris' thought was consonant with and complementary to the ideas of others besides Marx. It is just as proper and sensible to categorize his thought — if this is indeed useful at all — as Ruskinian or utopian. In modifying his posture, however slightly, Thompson finally has recognized what many readers of Morris, whether taken by his socialism or not, have seen for a long time: that Morris was both original and eclectic, developing his own inner resources and where necessary drawing on the ideas and values of others, among whom Marx was only one and not, I think, the most important.

JOHN LE BOURGEOIS
Clemson University

Percy G. Adams. *Graces of Harmony: Alliteration, Assonance, and Consonance in Eighteenth-Century Poetry*. Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1977, 253 pp. $11.00.

Few things are as polarized as the attitudes towards the study, and the fact, of sound-effects in poetry. To some they are a matter of endless fascination in the reading of poetry and of essential comprehension in its analysis. To others, members of the school of the barbaric yawp, the use of deliberate sound effects is puerile, and the analysis of them is a trivial sort of parlor game having little to do with the serious study of poetry. I suspect that the difference is simply a surface phenomenon induced by the great rift between those whose thinking and imagery are primarily auditory and those whose orientation is predominantly visual.

Even among the auditory group, the phenomena of rhythm have traditionally been much better explored than those of timbre. For the former we have the recognized field of metrics, or, in a broader sense, prosody, and this field has been widely — and often acrimoniously — discussed. For the latter, and for their study, we do not even have a name, so that Percy Adams had to adapt a phrase from Dr. Johnson for the title of his book, with a subtitle explaining just which of the possible graces of harmony he is studying.

He begins by carefully defining the terms *alliteration*, *assonance*, and *consonance*, as he is using them. Since others have used them with roughly similar, but by no means identical meanings, this procedure is highly necessary. For example, his usage limits alliteration to stressed syllables, so that in Dryden's line "To persecute from far the flying doe," there is alliteration between *far* and *flying*, but *from* does not enter into the pattern. Once these matters have been clarified, and a number of subsidiary terms like *phonestheme* and *augmentation* explained in the process, Adams can begin his real study.

He begins it well before the eighteenth century, and establishes, by presenting evidence from Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and a number of lesser poets, the tradition of sound effects which Dryden inherited. Dryden is the first writer treated in depth, and he is so essential for any study of eighteenth-century poetry that only a pedant would object that Dryden did not quite make it into the eighteenth century. After Dryden, he devotes a chapter each to Pope and Thomson, and follows these with a chapter on "Graces of Harmony in Varied Verse" which covers various minor (from the acoustical point of view) poets and genres of the eighteenth century: Young, Blair, Dyer, hymns, Hudibrastic verse, Collins, Gray, Johnson, etc. A final chapter, "The Continuing Echo," brings the study up to the present, sometimes with brief, incisive treatments of individual writers like Blake, Housman, Byron, Browning, Dickinson, and Eliot, and sometimes with discussions of the same or similar devices in various poets. The end of this chapter sums up the results of the whole investigation by drawing seven specifically stated conclusions about the use of effects of timbre in English, and especially eighteenth-century, poetry. The third of these (which has been completely proved) may serve as an illustration: "Contrary to a widely held notion, the eighteenth century was one of the principal users not only of alliteration but, more particularly, of the subtler echoes involving medial vowels and final consonants. . . ."

Several aspects of Adams' discussion call for particular comment. By quoting aptly chosen illustrations from the poetry of other languages (especially Latin, French, and German), he avoids the parochialism too often found in studies devoted to English — and especially American — literature, and at the same time reminds his readers that his specific subject is only one segment of an occidental, not merely an English, tradition.

He is thoroughly aware of historical linguistics and the differences in the reading of poetry produced by changes in pronunciation; and in this tricky field he distinguishes what is certain from what is merely probable or possible. Furthermore, without bothering to discuss the matter, he soundly rejects the intentional-fallacy fallacy and assumes that the sound effects which count in Pope are those endorsed by Pope's own ear and tongue. Throughout the book, he proves by authors' revisions how deliberately these effects have been sought.

He is aware of both the value and the limitations of statistics for a study of this sort. For example, his definition of alliteration involves "repetition[s] . . . close enough to each other for the ear to be affected, perhaps unconsciously, by the repetition." A statistical study would have to make an arbitrary decision as to exactly how close this is, to the exclusion of the absolutely

necessary subjective element. On occasion, he presents useful statistics, but in casual prose statements rather than in a tabular form which would lend them a specious aura of absolute factuality.

One example will illustrate the uncertainties inherent in any attempt to be precisely accurate in this type of study. Adams twice cites Byron's line, "The castled crag of Drachenfels," "where three stressed syllables in one line contain [æ]." Personally, I find this particular comment invalid. There is no standard Anglicized pronunciation of *Drachenfels*, and I have always read the line with the German pronunciation and assumed that Byron did the same. There is also a strong probability that he used the British "broad *a*" in *castled*. If these hypotheses are both correct, the line has assonance between *castled* and *Drachenfels*, but the [æ] of *crag* is out of the picture. In spite of inevitable uncertainties of this kind, if the investigator applies both learning and common sense to his problems, as Adams consistently does, the general results will be valid, though one may quibble over individual details.

Graces of Harmony is well written, though some of it, because of the constant attention to minute details which the subject demands, is pretty heavy going. But the rewards are well worth the effort, and a careful reading will change the approach to eighteenth-century poetry not only for the general reader, but for the specialist in the period.

CALVIN S. BROWN
University of Georgia

Lynn Gartrell Levins. *Faulkner's Heroic Design: The Yoknapatawpha Novels*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1976, 202 pp. $9.00.

Faulkner's Heroic Design is Lynn Gartrell Levins' able answer to classical scholar Edith Hamilton, who faulted William Faulkner because his fiction was "not heroic enough." It is a treat to come across a Faulkner scholar today who has something original to say and does it well; moreover, Levins skillfully builds upon the findings of such earlier critics as Hugh Holman, Walter Sullivan, Melvin Backman, Lennart Björk, Walter Brylowski, and Louis Rubin (and unobtrusively gives them their due), yet provides her reader with refreshing new insights so that he, too, is more capable of discovering the heroic design in the novels of Faulkner that she does not treat in detail.

Levins leads the reader through the Yoknapatawpha novels to exemplify sufficiently that Faulkner was consciously and eminently heroic in the juxtaposition of his rural Mississippi milieu with the scenes and echoes from the classical past. Faulkner utilized myth, classical drama, epic poetry, and chivalric and medieval romance throughout the characters and events depicted in the major novels of the Yoknapatawpha saga, revealing that the author's sense of the present is irrevocably tied to the past by an historical continuity that insists upon recognition that the heroic is not only possible, but actual. In such novels as *As I Lay Dying*, *Go Down, Moses*, *The Hamlet*, *Light in August*, and *The Wild Palms*, Faulkner led his contemporaries in portraying the heroic.

Faulkner once told a University of Virginia literature class that *Light in August* is illuminated by "an older light than ours . . . as though it came not from just today but from back in the old classic times: It might have fauns and satyrs and the gods — from Greece, from Olympus in it somewhere." Levins aptly uses Faulkner's own remarks (taken largely from *Faulkner and the University*) to juxtapose what *she* found that he did with what Faulkner himself said that he did, or intended to do. The book, a slim volume that could be read profitably in two or three sittings, is structured into five chapters, an organization based on the various modes of the heroic design rather than on individual works. The first chapter, "Faulkner and the Mythical Method," explains how the author enlarged his meaning by placing events in his fictional county within a framework of mythic and literary meaning. Similarly, he evaluated the behavior of his Yoknapatawpha characters by aligning them with forces larger than themselves. For example, in *As I Lay Dying* the burdens of the Bundren family in laying Addie down to rest are not unlike the ancient catastrophes of fire and flood encountered by Odysseus, Aeneas, and Dante in their voyages to the land of the dead. Certainly Addie's funeral procession from Frenchman's Bend to Jefferson can be

viewed as an epic journey. Medieval romance is echoed in *The Hamlet* when Ike Snopes defends his cow (whom he calls Helen, Astarte, and Juno) as a knight might do battle against such adversaries as fire, water, or a dragon. Even in as unlikely a tale as *Old Man* is the chivalric seen, although the tone is not romantic. Harry and Charlotte do sacrifice "all for love" in the best medieval tradition. Although Faulkner's knights-errant do not do battle in armor with jousting poles and their efforts are largely comedic, they stand fast and endure for the most commendable motives. "The point," says Levins, "is that Faulkner, in each case, is not parodying traditional literary modes by focusing on the grotesque diminution of legend and myth in Yoknapatawpha County; but rather he is writing in *As I Lay Dying* and *Old Man* and *The Hamlet* of the fulfillment of an ethical obligation, and when the obligation is accomplished in spite of temptations to abandon it and difficulties to thwart it, then the action of Anse Bundren or the tall convict or the idiot Ike Snopes approaches heroic proportions."

Chapter II, "The Heroic Design," draws most heavily upon *Absalom, Absalom!* for illustration. Levins demonstrates how each viewpoint in the novel is shaped after a different literary genre: the Gothic, the Greek tragedy, the chivalric romance, and the tall tale. By portraying Sutpen alternately as Gothic villain, Greek hero, or figure in a chivalric drama, Faulkner has his protagonist operate against a grand scale of heroic action distinguished — either by exceptional grandeur or baseness — from the ordinary world of everyday events. Rosa Coldfield's narrative is immersed in an atmosphere of mysterious inexplicable terror characteristic of the Gothic novel. Rosa is unable or unwilling to accept that the object of her vengeance is a mere mortal whose motives, hopes, and fears are common to her fellow man. Instead, she invests him with supernatural powers of fantastically distorted proportions. In Mr. Compson's narration, Sutpen assumes heroic proportions because he is a tragic hero in a drama acting out what Fate has decreed him. Quentin re-creates the tale as a highly imaginative chivalric romance. Judith and Charles Bon are characters in a medieval narrative, maiden and knight who suffer and sacrifice according to the conventions of courtly love. Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and his "Knight's Tale," are recalled in this section, as well as the poet Gower's incestuous tale of Canace. And to the last narrator, the rational, detached Canadian, Shreve, the Sutpen yarn is in the manner of a tall tale with its absurdly comical exaggeration. Without a doubt Levins makes a strong case for viewing *Absalom, Absalom!* within the framework of classical tragedy in general, with parallels drawn from certain specific Greek plays such as *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*. Levins also sees traces of Euripides' *Orestes* and notes the element of catharsis essential to Greek tragedy and faithfully adhered to by Faulkner.

Chapter III is concerned with "Faulkner's Use of Epic and Myth." *The Hamlet*, *Go Down, Moses*, and *As I Lay Dying* are the chief vehicles for this section. Levins sees Eula Varner as Frenchman's Bend's answer to Helen of Troy and likens Flem Snopes's abduction of her to "a bizarre reenactment of Pluto's rape of Persephone." There is nothing ordinary about Ike, Flem, or Eula, says Levins. All are larger than life, expecially Eula, explained Faulkner: "Her entire appearance suggested some symbology out of the old Dionysic times — honey in sunlight and bursting grapes, the writhen bleeding of the crushed fecundated vine beneath the hard rapacious trampling goat-hoof." In creating Eula, Faulkner allowed Frenchman's Bend the privilege of knowing how splendid a pagan goddess could be; in creating Flem, he revealed how convincing demons can be in the flesh and how easy it is for the world to believe in them. Epics such as the Faust legend are illustrated in this chapter. Levins sees the unifying factor in *Go Down, Moses* as the concept of an Edenic state of innocence and its subsequent fall. In Faulkner, it is the evil of slavery, rooted in pride and the lust for possession, that precipitates the fall. *Go Down, Moses* presents history as a providential pattern as truly as does *Paradise Lost*, says Levins; then she neatly demonstrates it. Faulkner also made frequent use of Old Testament myth. Isaac McCaslin's relinquishment of the land is presented in biblical terms and cadence, a contemporary parallel to Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. *As I Lay Dying* is rich in epic lore, mindful of the Apocalypse and such works as *The Divine Comedy*, *Piers Plowman*, and *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Chapter IV, "Faulkner's Use of the Chivalric Romance," illustrates how the author returned again and again to his favorite writers and books for inspiration and demonstration of universality

and the old verities: the Old Testament, Shakespeare, the Greek tragedies, and *Don Quixote*. The romances of Sir Walter Scott are also found in Faulkner. Although *Absalom, Absalom!*, *The Wild Palms*, *The Hamlet*, and *Light in August* all contain many elements of the chivalric romance, nowhere did Faulkner use it more successfully than in *Sartoris* and *The Unvanquished*. According to Levins, the code of behavior embraced by Colonel John Sartoris and passed on to his male descendants is based "not on that chivalric concept of life which is positive and which constitutes Faulkner's morality but on self-destructive pride and violence and cavalier recklessness." It is Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* who seeks to preserve the chivalric code in its most noble conception, an impossible task to which his suicide attests.

Levins' final chapter, "The Heroic Ideal," exemplifies Faulkner's intention of which he spoke in accepting the Nobel prize, that he had been writing all along to glorify the human condition, man's capacity "to endure well grief and misfortune and injustice . . . not for reward, but for virtue's own sake." Faulkner believed in a moral universe and in the dualism of good and evil. In his final, comedic novel, *The Reivers*, the forces of evil are soundly defeated by the forces of good. Young Lucius succeeds in transforming the prostitute into an honest woman. The happy ending supports Faulkner's explicit statement that his basic conception of life was optimistic. Like Ike McCaslin, he believed that "most men are a little better than their circumstances give them a chance to be."

Faulkner aptly demonstrated that twentieth-century man — and woman — can still attain heroic stature. For writers of the modern South — McCullers, O'Connor, Welty, Percy, Williams, Hellman — the stakes are high, but the bigger the stakes, the higher the rise. Faulkner's characters seek reconstruction of history and ennoblement of self through interpretive acts of the imagination. Historical truths are re-created and made palpable through the author's fictional dynasties of Sutpen, Sartoris, Compson, Edmunds, and the others who rise and fall and rise again.

Lynn Gartrell Levins' book on Faulkner is not for dummies. She assumes that the reader has been in touch with some of the literature in which the best writings of the twentieth century have their moorings. But she is not a name or a myth dropper. She nudges the reader's memory by reminding him of some of the details of the tragedy, myth, epic poem, or chivalric romance from which Faulkner has drawn, yet made uniquely his own. Reading *about* Faulkner and his intentions and achievements can never take the place of reading the fiction itself, but insightful commentary such as that found in *The Heroic Design* stimulates one to be a more sensitive reader himself.

VIRGINIA SPENCER CARR
Columbus College

Amy M. Charles. *A Life of George Herbert*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977, 242 pp. $15.00.

Amy Charles joins a fairly long line of biographers with the publication of her studiously researched sketch of George Herbert's life. Of those biographers working before her only John Daniell dug as hard to document the events and decisions underlying Herbert's career as a tutor, college spokesman, poet, and preacher. For someone attempting to form a unified image of Herbert's career and to learn the essentials of his thought and art, the present biography will send him back, with Professor Charles' blessing, to Herbert's letters and poems.

No one aware of the biographical studies of Daniell, Canon Hutchinson, Joseph Summers, or David Novarr will retreat as far back as Walton's purposively written sketch in search of a biography that brings Herbert's life and art into sharper focus after reading this latest account. As Appendix A in her book makes clear, she wanted to set relevant details from available documents before the reader and to avoid imposing her own image of Herbert's quiddity. She deliberately chose, therefore, not to attempt a psychograph. Herbert, as a result, rarely stands in the sun and must be viewed as one child among many, one student among several others, and one member of Parliament among mostly unnamed fellow members. Only as a parson does he emerge into a

checkered sunshine and only then primarily because of the details gathered from Arthur Woodnoth by Walton. As a poet, he remains a shadowy figure, even after seemingly tireless efforts to bring to light the stages of his poetic activities.

The frustrations just recorded here were surely among the many that Professor Charles encountered as she delved into the limited contemporary materials on Herbert's life. And lest I give the wrong impression of this biography, I must insist that the reading of this life is anything but frustrating. It does move us far closer to George Herbert than any of its predecessors. Through Professor Charles' exploration of Herbert's mother's household accounts as kept by her steward, John Gorse, a document earlier published by Professor Charles as the *Kitchin Booke*, some light falls on George Herbert's surroundings and circle of acquaintances when he was a lad. Even more illuminating of Herbert's cultural and intellectual milieu is the description given of the household of Herbert's stepfather, Sir John Danvers. And judicious quotation from the document that Canon Hutchinson used so sparingly, John Hacket's *Scrinia Reserata*, provides a brighter image of the Cambridge that Herbert knew than any sketch heretofore drawn for us of his years there. Moreover, her use of materials from the Little Gidding group gives considerable insight into the efforts of Herbert's friends to get his work before the public. Perhaps the most curious item to surface from her researches into the efforts of that group is the distinct possibility that Nicholas Ferrar, and not Herbert, entitled Herbert's collection of poems *The Temple*. Herbert would have probably preferred simply *The Church*, says Professor Charles. But a more intriguing subject, here examined in some detail, is Herbert's handwriting, the certain establishment of which might bring even greater value and interest to the Williams Manuscript of his poems.

Not all readers will likely agree to call this life definitive, if by that term they mean a work setting forth a unified image of the subject alongside incontrovertibly marshaled facts. If it does not earn that esteemed rank, it will nonetheless win praise for its fairness, dependability, clarity, seeming exhaustion of likely sources, and exacting marshaling of facts. Even though it may not be definitive, it surely will hold the field capably until such a life is written.

JOHN L. IDOL, JR.
Clemson University

Richard Walser. *Thomas Wolfe Undergraduate*. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1977, 310 pp. $8.75.

Although Thomas Wolfe's novels are out of fashion in the 1970s, there have been recently a number of significant studies of his life and art, most of them, as one might expect, by Southerners. Richard Walser's *Thomas Wolfe Undergraduate* is his third book on the novelist — and by all odds his best. Solidly researched and documented (Wolfe would undoubtedly smile at the hundreds of footnotes), and as readable as a novel itself, it represents the culmination of Walser's life-long devotion to studying and writing about the Tar Heel novelist.

There have been, of course, other studies of Wolfe's college years, but this is the first book to focus narrowly on the years from 1916 to 1920. Walser traces Wolfe's development from a gawky boy with a vague interest in law and politics to the successful Big Man on Campus who dazzled the University with his writing and forensic skills, leaving after graduation for Harvard with the zeal to become a great writer, a renowned playwright. Others have merely sketched in the outlines — and they have often been misled by the later novels or Wolfe's distorted recollections. Walser's aim is to tell the unvarnished truth about Wolfe's undergraduate years. And his story often seems more interesting than Wolfe's fictional use of the same scenes and characters in *Look Homeward, Angel* and the first half of *The Web and the Rock*. (In any case, Walser is always less prolix!)

For this new study the author not only made use of Wolfe's letters and recently published journals, he also interviewed many of Wolfe's classmates and friends, as well as Fred Wolfe, the only remaining member of the family. In addition, he discovered much unpublished and previously unexamined material, such as Wolfe's essays written for classes at Chapel Hill. Particularly useful is the unpublished "Autobiographical Outline," which serves beautifully to stitch this little volume together. As a result we now know, for the first time, not only what books Wolfe read for his courses, the topics he debated at the Di Society, but even the names of the

prostitutes he visited in Durham and Raleigh. If there is any source that has escaped Walser's diligent search, one would be surprised.

Of course, one must ask, finally, does the book change our view of young Tom Wolfe? Perhaps it does little to alter the broad outlines, but there are important new nuances. Earlier biographers like Richard Kennedy and Andrew Turnbull devoted rather sketchy chapters to Wolfe at Chapel Hill; they did not take the time to wade through the boxes of uncatalogued material at Harvard University and the Carolina Room at UNC at Chapel Hill. Perhaps without intending it, Thomas Wolfe created a myth at Chapel Hill and in the portrait of Eugene Gant in *Look Homeward, Angel*. The average reader thinks of the undergraduate Wolfe as a brooding genius, a loner, tormented by self-doubt and often the butt of his classmates and teachers.

Walser's study makes clear that Wolfe was indeed confused and paradoxical in his behavior, occasionally given to introspective moments and bouts of wide reading. But he was hardly a Joycean hero who was driven to repudiate his family, home and religion. The truth is that Wolfe was one of the most popular students at Chapel Hill, in spite of his odd looks and eccentric habits. He was a compulsive joiner of a variety of clubs. He was awarded numerous prizes and honors, as well as elected to the editorship of *The Tar Heel*. Moreover, his poems, stories and plays — often mediocre at best — were well received and over-praised. Finally, his teachers were quick to recognize his talents and encourage him.

Of course, Walser does not ignore the less pleasant aspects of his subject's character. Young Tom Wolfe was self-centered and aloof at times; he also had a cruel streak in him. He did not bathe often enough or care enough about his dress, nor did he always pay his debts or return borrowed books. Although he was popular, he could not seem to keep roommates; Wolfe restlessly changed his living quarters, sometimes every few months. Even so, the portrait that emerges here is that of a provincial but ambitious young man who was likable enough in spite of a few bad habits and hangups.

Apparently Wolfe arrived at Chapel Hill at just the right time. Still in some ways a backwater school, the University was losing the worst aspects of its provinciality. The callow student, whose grades were only average during his first two years, was able to study under at least four professors who had a lasting impact on his intellectual and artistic development. Walser provides chapter-long portraits of these important teachers, suggesting the nature of their influence on the fledgling author. From W. S. Bernard he imbibed a life-long love for the classics, especially Homer and Plato. Edwin Greenlaw, Chairman of the English department, gave him a broad sweep of English literature, even awakening the young aesthete's social consciousness. Horace Williams gave him a rare A in philosophy while teaching him to question his fundamentalist beliefs. Finally, "Proff" Koch fired his enthusiasm for folk drama — stressing the use of native themes and Southern speech. Although Wolfe later wrote satirical sketches of each of his major professors, as a student he seems to have valued them highly. In any case, Walser provides us with lively portraits that are, of course, closer to the truth than Wolfe's depiction of them in his fiction or abortive plays.

Thomas Wolfe Undergraduate is an admirable work of scholarship and love. It not only breaks new ground and broadens our image of North Carolina's greatest literary figure, it also points the way for numerous new studies. Although he writes with admiration and affection — and out of a life-long respect — Walser is ruthlessly honest.

If there is ever a revival of interest in Thomas Wolfe's sprawling, poetic novels — and this seems unlikely in the near future — it will be owing to the continuing efforts of a handful of Southern scholars and devotees like Richard Walser.

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However, if, after sleepless nights, you have got the Great Bow strung, She who is shining beside you is, as always, Athena. The False Suitors, though they change their names, are still the same False Suitors. Our women die and change and deny their name, but have, always, the same name. Which we utter.

THE CHURCH PIANIST AT HOME

an old piano face with split keys
she wears her roses in her hat
petals made of cloth,
opens up a can of sprouts
and watches preachers on tv

she shoos the cat
off Homer's plastic head
and from a cartoon-painted
jelly glass sips her sherry dry.

birds squawk for the grain
she's scattered outside.

beads straggle from her
unhinged jewelry box.

she plays her old truisms
with the damper pedal down;
they work like miners at the truth.

TOM HAWKINS

SEVEN POEMS BY JAMES APPLEWHITE

CHRISTIAN DAUGHTER

Gable and parapet, pinnacle, sharp arch: now I see
in cedars, in wooden house-angles, a Gothic aspiration,
charmed that the sun yellow air in this new world
can ring to the distant trees with Biblical *Ruth*.
It is time out of mind that sharpens these steeples,
faith in a sacrifice that spread-eagles this woman
across fields through years from her house-topped hill.
As honestly used as wash tubs and work clothes,
she has left only tingling points of her presence:
arched nails, ends of her untucked hair, glances
of desire, that refined the pinewoods into needles.
Her heart, spent in Christian work, was left full
of yellow light, like a school house deserted in summer:
initials carved in pairs, in rooms of resignation.
Ruth, sad heart, your name haunts corn,
lives with wild fur gleaning any dropped kernels.

FROM AS FAR AWAY AS DYING

And now in the end I can see this community together,
Under angles of poor wooden gables and porches,
Accumulated in vision and fronting the west at evening,
With figures fixed in humblest gesture, descending
A warped step, arising from porch swing or rocker,
Or stooping to spit tobacco, become an architectural face
Above Salisbury's entrance, man and wife in cotton
Rosy with low sun as if King at Wells with elbows
Thrust from his throne, or stone-wimpled Lady medievally
Distant in that air I remember, like choirs of all souls:
Beside posts, porch railings — voices, this saintly communion.

AN ERASED WINDOW

Back where I was born, feeling innocent of recognition
As a wind: plate glass held sky, a few shoppers, but the pane
To hold me, I was thinking, was open air that used to be
Between a market and a store, gabled by a cotton gin roof.
That lot held empty for canvases: fairs, circuses,

Foreshadowed by tigers they'd post. Like loneliness' mirror,
It waited to be ringed round by bare-back feats, so a child
Could imagine kings. That tabula rasa has received,
In its grass, a drug store's impress. No earlier self reflects.
I stand across the street, between the whittled wooden posts,
Before a general store window that promised the harnesses,
Molasses, twenty-two rifles, plant bed muslin,
Bush axes, lace-up boots. Gold on glass once spelled there
My grandfather's name, like the letters for *treasure*.
It is legible in memory, where refrigerators, only, are ghosts.

I see myself in a surface holding no more color
Than a pond from rain. Hovering over the drug store,
I am not there anymore, the one they'd likely remember:
Old friends of my father and mother. My head outlines
Glass space as invisibly populous as that air of the past.
White horse shadows circus round in a windowy brain,
In a pane of time come clear with deaths and forgetting:
My eyes lost in iris-blue of some master of rings.

OUTSIDE CLEEVE ABBEY

If marked location is often not significant place,
Then the quantities of distance and time are not literal and fixed.
Notable places seem almost to inhabit local boundaries
Only sometimes, depending on our spirits and the weather.
If, after the chanced-upon bus to Stoke Poges, what a sign
Insists is "Gray's field" should have quietly enclosed
A sky which those unfamiliar elms had somehow cut
To the heart's silhouette, in spite of that grandiose urn —
Though perhaps helped on by its words — then the problem exists.
If place may be words more than formal stone, what is it?
Near these thirteenth-century ruins on a windy day,
An intense, moss-smooth green, crows cawing, cattle
In a field, seem somehow older than Cleeve Abbey, whose church
Is now an outline of stones. Perhaps such a plan is a place:
Nave, transept, apse, chapel, piers
Which ordered the pillars toward the choir. Wind flares
Through with the flying, medieval caws, inhabiting
This abbey. I'll move inside now, to cut timbers, stones
And a window, things known once but difficult to remember.

ROYAL HOSPITAL

The Royal Hospital's pensioners
Are veterans of no recent wars.
Within iron-old gates, prisoners,
They sit mildly, where flowers
Trim gravel, at ease in uniforms
Like those of firemen, second children
Awaiting some play of drums.
Before buildings by Christopher Wren,
Eighteenth-century bronze mute
Muzzles stand ready to repel whatever
Can be repelled by the Queen's salute.
There are playing fields toward the river,
But no young bodies to volley
Or bowl as at martial Eton.
The brown, barged Thames looks empty
Under the arc in keeping of these cannon.
Pensioners tend foxglove, grave
And memorial, their garden like colors
Of ribbon which mark the degrees brave
They shone in their youth, when others
In the battle lay dying or dead.
Empire and warfare is a ceremonial
Music faintly far from overhead,
While these remember, and that is all.

BEGINNING WITH EGYPT
(The British Museum)

Manuscript and mummy, awl, gold, bowl and skull:
A detritus of civilizations. Clay-breasted mother,
Your face was a blade or a beak then, perfunctory pinch
By his fingers, whose dream filled those thighs' cornucopia.
Your Old Kingdom milky breasts were Isis. Long before
Madonnas, you suckled Horus. Violent pot full
Of tillage and births — between bestial Bes, a dwarf,
And Min with erection as long as three thousand years —
Your seed cram us still into stretch-belly time.

In a later niche, by crouching Aphrodite, I give thanks
To the inventors of loveliness: there is clear-faced Demeter,
These Aurorae with stone gauze of wind between the knees.
An artist's folds envelop those thighs in their mystery,
Whose sweet fat in stone erupts the shape of the Divine.

DRINKING MUSIC

I

Cornstalks and arrowheads, wood rot cleanly as wash
Hung in wind. They are covered by this roof as I think:
The losers, the fallen, the kind who go under, faces
As familiar as Civil War casualties to the soil's imagination.
Whiskey workers with no front teeth, men from down home,
Leather boots made by the *Georgia Giant,* denim or khaki
Their only other clothes, scrubbed by the brush in fields
So a sand white cotton shines through.

They stand for the showing of true colors, on soil
Instilled with the sun's going down, which crests up
At evening in a brick hue of broom sedge, clots below
In sweet potatoes succulent as blood.

Their ears give over to a jukebox excuse poured
Slow as molasses. Hank Williams' whiskey forgiveness.
The twang has a body like tenderloin and turnips.
Paul Junior Taylor, with your Budweiser belly,
Your shoulders muscled wide like a tackle's,
I wonder what it's done with you now.

II

The broom sedge fields were ruddy from sunset.
Cold whiskey is the color of straw.
Sky ain't hardly kept no color at all,
And Lord I'm lonely for the ground.
I'm far from home but near.
I'm high, so high and low. Sweet chariot.

The song is red, like what men eat.
Sky is clear as the ninety proof shine they drink.
Lord, Lord, a man is a funny piece of meat.
Their boots print fields that understand their feet.

* * *

CAPE IRO: THE STONE PILLARS

(Izu Peninsula, Japan, 1972)

for James Dickey

I.

We follow the switchback trail
uphill, a slow
ascent
to the lighthouse — its tower glinting
overhead. As we mount
the last
windbreak, sea-spume blasts us
blindingly. . . .
I gasp
at the vista!
A dozen-odd great spears of rock,
upward-pointing, straddle
the cape.
Strung together, they form a horse-
shoe curve.
A row
of teeth! —
they are petrified fangs, jutting skyward
from a drowned mastodon's
lower jaw -
bone, sunken and embedded in offshore
coral reefs.
Coastal
stalagmites!

II.

We squint into the scratched eyepiece
of the motorized
whirring binoculars,
pulsing on its rock-socketed stem
(a mammalian
eye with a heart in it,
throbbing its three-minute panorama) . . .
Close-up.
Highest pinnacles
disclose patches of earth, wide heaps
near the base
rimming high water mark
stains, a few yards above sea level.
Mid-way

up the sleek bare
shafts, thick earth-clumps cling,
nest-like,
to ridges of stone;
each, solitary and isolate.
(Eagles'
eyries?
Not just blood-clots
flecking the mastodon's gums, as my eye'd,
distantly,
guessed) . . .
Uneroded!
Deposits of sea-scum and wave-silt
balancing
soil-waste, washoff
from rain and surf, by an unerring
symbiosis:
many trees — tall pine,
cedar, cypress — find lodgement
in earth-bulbs
sunk in clefts
deep as tide pools.
Potted hothouse
flora!
A few aspen scale
peaks of the stone spear-heads (no
timberline
in the upper reaches),
scores of gulls and sea-hawks perched
on tree-limbs
or gliding aloft . . .

III.

Geological enigma!
Misplaced puzzle
piece, transplanted
from the wrong
jigsaw seascape to this low-lying
headland:
peninsula
tip of few
hills and shallow valleys, coves.
No plunging gorges
or abysses.

No lofty crags or high mesas to match
the dozen grim incisors
of stone . . .
Twin of the Grand Tetons, Wyoming's
displaced American
cousin
to the Swiss Alps – a whole sky line
of barrens: escarpments,
summits,
gnarled peaks . . .
Lacking a Matterhorn!
How account for so much
bare rock
in a country of colorful lush Ozarks,
Smokies, Grand Sierras,
Big Horns?

IV.

The eyepiece is blinkered, two black
shutters
guillotining my view.
Shaken from reverie, I trip.
Hover
on cliff-
ledge. Stabilize. No
guardrails, gates, or low stone walls
fencing in
viewers.
The children —
by leaps and darts — take their turns
at telescopy,
racing across rocks, sparse
foliage.
Gently chiding, I warn them
to return
from the lookout viewing
ledge to the pathway, finding the enemy
in their eyes —
myself, foe to all
sure-footed impulse.

They oblige,
veering
back from the precipice
edging the lookout; then, they sweep
with one will —
a cunning nonchalance —
to the adjacent lighthouse.
Sidestepping
the paved
approach walk, they detour,
sliding freely across loose pebbles, a few
sharp-edged
cobblestones, gravel.
Their moves erratic, they skirt
borders
of the overhang — spindrift,
darting hawks and squalling wind fueling
their wildness . . .
In me, outsize panic.
A fear of heights beyond everything.
I hide
my eyes — face away.

LAURENCE LIEBERMAN

THE NEO-ROMANTICISM OF JAMES DICKEY

GEORGE S. LENSING

> There is a fundamental difference between what I am trying to do in poetry and what Pound and Eliot were trying to do. They were trying to interpret culture in one way or the other. I am not trying to interpret; I am trying to *give* to people.
>
> What I don't like in Frost is a sort of personally agreed-upon complacency.
>
> "Journals," *Sorties*

Not even the most latitudinarian of readers, after completing *The Zodiac* or *The Eye-Beaters, Blood, Victory, Madness, Buckhead and Mercy*, would accuse James Dickey of being an imitator of Pound, Eliot or Frost. The directives of Eliot and Pound, in fact, are no longer in practice in American poetry today, though Dickey was not the first or even the most important poet to pull his own work out of that stream on which Americans like Allen Tate, Hart Crane, and the earlier Lowell were launched. Dickey's poetry does demonstrate conclusively, however, a more contemporary idiom of American poetry since mid-century. Its most legitimate ancestor is not Eliot or Pound, but Theodore Roethke, and it includes today, in addition to Dickey, poets like William Stafford and James Wright.

Dickey's poetry, almost all of it to date written during the decade of the 1960s, is an instructive model to chart the emergence of an American neo-romanticism. By demonstrating more precisely the nature of the disparity between Dickey and Eliot, the value of the Roethke sensibility as an alternative tradition, the bond that ties Dickey's poetry to other contemporary American poets, and finally the modifications of his romanticism suggested by *The Zodiac*, I would like to suggest a general outline of that emergence. Dickey's distinctive and unique voice is fashioned by two principal and consistent attitudes: one involves the role of personality (or persona) in the poem and the other the function of what I term the audacious metaphor.

I

For Eliot, of course, the "individual talent" could only become manifest through "tradition," thus the need to cultivate the "historical sense" on the part of the poet and to devalue the expression of his own personality. The idiosyncrasies of the individual personality, Eliot affirms, displace the poet from the past and make of him an aberrant curiosity: "It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting. His particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat. . . . One error, in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to

seek for new human emotions to express; and in this search for novelty in the wrong place it discovers the perverse. The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones."[1] These now familiar remarks from "Tradition and the Individual Talent" are deliberately and egregiously challenged by Dickey, more so perhaps than by any American since Eliot. "I am sick of self-effacing poetry," says Dickey in his "Journals,"[2] and, in an essay that treats the issue in detail, "The Self as Agent": "I would say, rather, that he [the poet] has a personality large enough to encompass and explore each of the separate, sometimes related, sometimes unrelated, personalities that inhabit him, as they inhabit us all."[3]

In part, Dickey's poetry of the unrepressed ego is directly the result of his larger poetic aim, one which he has defined in his essay "The Poet Turns on Himself": "I also discovered that I worked most fruitfully in cases in which there was no clear-cut distinction between what was actually happening and what was happening in the mind of a character in the poem. I meant to try to get a fusion of inner and outer states, of dream, fantasy, and illusion where everything partakes of the protagonist's mental processes and creates a single impression."[4] Toward such an avowal, the "protagonist's mental processes" can never be thwarted by impersonality, reduced to decorum, or even exempt from the perverse, the very danger Eliot dreads. Instead of escaping *from* personality, there is an eager surrender *to* it.

The "fusion of inner and outer states" consistently occurs in Dickey's poetry to a speaker who is given a clear identity early in the poem, but who then undergoes a psychic metamorphosis into another form of life. Such a transformation is posited upon the implicit theory that all pulses of life — vegetative, animal, and human — participate in a common vitalism and that a profound human enrichment can be won by the willingness of the self to enter for a while into psychic identity with other living forms. The prodigality and fluidity of life constitute the range of Dickey's verse. "I stir/ Within another's life," says the poet of "In the Tree House at Night."[5] The son becomes the father ("I put on the ravelled nerves/ And gray hairs of my tall father") in "Approaching Prayer." In "Springer Mountain" the hunter becomes his quarry ("My brain dazed and pointed with trying/ To grow horns"), and the failed lifeguard assumes the person of Christ ("I am thinking of how I may be/ The savior of one/ Who has already died in my care") in "The Lifeguard."

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[1] *Selected Essays of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Harcourt, 1932), p. 10.

[2] *Sorties* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), p. 88.

[3] *Sorties*, p. 161.

[4] *Babel to Byzantium, Poets & Poetry Now* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), p. 287.

[5] *Poems 1957-1967* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), p. 67. Subsequent quotations of poems by James Dickey are from this collection, *The Eye-Beaters, Blood, Victory, Madness, Buckhead and Mercy* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), and *The Zodiac* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976).

"The Vegetable King" is one of Dickey's earliest poems, first published in the *Sewanee Review* in 1959. The poet has singled it out as "an important poem for me because I tried to take on a larger dimension."[6] It is significant for another reason as well, one which clearly signals Dickey's reshaping of the Eliot influence toward his own ends as a poet. Dickey, in fact, calls the poem "my answer to Eliot's use of the Osiris myth."[7] "The Vegetable King" recounts the poet's annual practice of sleeping outdoors one night each April "in the unconsecrated grove" that is his yard. During the night's sleep and through the agency of dream, the speaker assumes the identity of the ancient vegetative god, like Osiris, whose ritual resurrection from the dead was celebrated annually to commemorate the coming of the rains and the revival of both vegetative and human fertility:

> . . . being part of the acclaimed rebirth
> Of the ruined, calm world, in spring,
> When the drowned god and the dreamed-of sun
>
> Unite, to bring the red, the blue,
> The common yellow flower out of earth
> Of the tended and untended garden: when the chosen man,
> Hacked apart in the growing cold
> Of the year, by the whole mindless nature is assembled
>
> From the trembling, untroubled river.
> I believe I become that man.

The passage recalls the structure of *The Waste Land*. But here there are no footnoted allusions to Jessie Weston or Sir James Frazer, no personae like Tiresias or the Phoenician Sailor. It is the poet himself who constitutes his own persona: "I believe I become that man."

The power of the speaker's dream lingers on after sleep in "The Vegetable King." Addressed to "Mother, son and wife," the conclusion of the poem marks the speaker's return to the house the following morning where spring flowers, like those from the dream, greet him, as if he were indeed the resurrected god:

> I am in death
> And waking. Give me the looks that recall me.
> None knows why you have waited
> In the cold, thin house for winter
> To turn the inmost sunlight green

[6] *Self-Interviews* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 89-90.
[7] *Self-Interviews*, p. 85.

And blue and red with life,
But it must be so, since you have set
These flowers upon the table.

The hint of the poet's transformation into the god is like that of the lifeguard's transformation into Christ in "The Lifeguard" and other similar metamorphoses in other poems. But the stimulus for such a transformation is totally personal and subjective, as Dickey has declared in describing the poem's composition: "The flowers on the table and everything else might have been brought about by his [the speaker's] death and rebirth, as the people in the Near Eastern cultures believed. I thought, suppose I take this idea seriously and make part of it dream, part reality?"[8] Indeed, here is Dickey's "fusion of inner and outer states" characteristic of most of his poems. Dickey's play with myth, however, draws less from Eliot's process of cumulative mythic construct and more from the poet's personal fantasy ("part dream, part reality"). Instead of making the personal myth universal, as Eliot does, Dickey moves conversely from the universal to the personal.

II

In one other way "The Vegetable King" is a useful illustration of the direction Dickey was to take as a poet. The description of the dream, wherein the poet becomes the slain, but reviving god, discloses a watery terrain of prehuman, vegetative life:

I would not think to move,
Nor cry, "I live," just yet,
Nor shake the twinkling horsehair of my head,

Nor rise, nor shine, nor live
With any but the slant, green mummied light
And wintry, bell-swung undergloom of waters
Wherethrough my severed head has prophesied
For the silent daffodil and righteous

Leaf, and now has told the truth.

The poet's absorption into elemental life ("undergloom of waters") is totally unlike Eliot and recalls inevitably the kind of imagery and psychic expansiveness typical of the work of Theodore Roethke. Consider, for example, the similarity between these lines by Dickey and the following from "The Longing" in the *North American Sequence:*

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[8] *Self-Interviews*, p. 90.

I would be a stream, winding between great striated rocks in late summer;
A leaf, I would love the leaves, delighting in the redolent disorder of this mortal life,
This ambush, this silence,
Where shadow can change into flame,
And the dark be forgotten.[9]

In his essay "The Greatest American Poet: Roethke," Dickey singles out the salutary quality of Roethke's identity between "place and human responsiveness": "There is no poetry anywhere that is so valuably conscious of the human body as Roethke's; no poetry that can place the body in an *environment* — wind, seascape, greenhouse, forest, desert, mountainside, among animals or insects or stones — so vividly and evocatively, waking unheard of exchanges between the place and human responsiveness at its most creative."[10]

The degree to which Roethke's work served Dickey in his own development is beyond the direct discernment of the critic, and there are important differences between the two poets. Roethke, for example, writes with a more richly textured and controlled lyricism, just as Dickey's poems tend to rely more ostensibly upon the structure of plot-narrative. Where the two poets most clearly converge, however, is in their common use of metaphor. Both make extraordinary claims upon the unification of phenomena otherwise disparate. For both Roethke and Dickey metaphor is not merely a technique; it is a manifesto that proclaims the truth of the world and its accessibility to human consciousness: "I *am* interested in Roethke's relationship to the ocean, because that gets me *into* it,"[11] says Dickey in a recent interview in the *Paris Review*.

"I believe that to go forward as a spiritual man it is necessary first to go back,"[12] asserts Roethke in what is really a summary of his larger poetic experiment. That "going back" meant for Roethke the metaphoric identity between his present consciousness and that of the innocent boy pursuing the lost father through the corridors of the greenhouse microcosm or that of the more ancient world of nudging and reptilian creatures of prehuman life. The implications of Roethke's experiment for contemporary American poets I believe have been underestimated. Robert Bly's remarks in a 1970 interview, for example, are so close to those of Roethke cited above as to be paraphrase: "American poetry is attempting for the first time since Whitman to follow the path backwards toward the womb and try to make some spiritual progress by

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[9] *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 188. Subsequent quotations of poems by Theodore Roethke are from this collection.

[10] *Sorties*, p. 220.

[11] "James Dickey, The Art of Poetry XX," *The Paris Review*, 65 (Spring 1976), 72.

[12] "Open Letter," *On the Poet and His Craft: Selected Prose of Theodore Roethke* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), p. 39.

going backwards into silence and into gentleness and into nature."[13] "The Vegetable King" is one variation of Dickey's play upon this kind of metaphoric activity. I will cite only one further example that establishes Dickey's kinship with Roethke's experiment. "Inside the River," from Dickey's second volume *Drowning With Others*, situates a human protagonist standing in the flow of a river:

> Put on the river
> Like a fleeing coat,
> A garment of motion,
> Tremendous, immortal.
> Find a still root
>
> To hold you in it.
> Let flowing create
> A new, inner being.

This activity enfolds its participant in a stream of existence that encircles the dead as well as the living, the earth and sea as well as the river: "Move with the world/ As the deep dead move,/ Opposed to nothing." Roethke's shorter lyric, "River Incident," appeared in his 1948 volume *The Lost Son and Other Poems*. Here, too, by planting himself in the river's current, the speaker discovers an identity between himself and the river and concludes with his arrival at a renewing knowledge:

> A shell arched under my toes,
> Stirred up a whirl of silt
> That riffled around my knees.
> Whatever I owed to time
> Slowed in my human form;
> Sea water stood in my veins,
> The elements I kept warm
> Crumbled and flowed away,
> And I knew I had been there before,
> In that cold, granitic slime,
> In the dark, in the rolling water.

Dickey's range of metaphor is greater and frequently even more startling than that of Roethke. Most of his poems, for example, are not retrospective in the primordial overtones of "The Vegetable King." Dickey's subjective identities are most often set in present time or even, with the "Reincarnation" poems, the future. But for Dickey as for Roethke "spiritual progress" seems to

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[13] "A Conversation with Robert Bly," *The Harvard Advocate*, 103 (February 1970), 8.

be posited upon the ability of the self to transcend its enclosed consciousness in order to become one with the earth's largess. And for the poet struggling with language, metaphor is the instrument of that advance.

III

If Roethke illustrated the great resourcefulness of metaphor for later American poets, his successors have modified that use to their own sensibilities. Dickey shares with many of his contemporaries some of these modifications. The metaphorical identity between the self and the natural world, particularly at a time when the integrity of the natural world seems imperiled from many directions, has become a common motif in contemporary American romanticism.

James Wright, a former student of Roethke's at the University of Washington, is frequently identified with a common mode of American poetry today, sometimes called image-poetry. Wright's association with Robert Bly and his translation of poets like Trakl, Neruda, Vallejo and others have been a shaping influence on his work. One of Wright's best known poems, "A Blessing," describes his encounter with "two Indian ponies" in a pasture near Rochester, Minnesota. The poet delights in the apparent happiness of the horses: "They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their happiness / That we have come." The poem's metaphor hints at human sexuality in one of the horses, but shifts its focus at the end to a unity between himself and the natural world as he delights in the meeting with the animals: "Suddenly I realize / That if I stepped out of my body I would break/ Into blossom."[14] This is the kind of abrupt metaphor common to the poetry of Bly and Wright that either startles the reader into a keenly new awareness or succumbs to the bathetic or absurd. But many poets are playing those risks and frequently with astonishing results. Dickey's poetry is not often identified with these poets of the Emotive Imagination, partly because of his long-standing feud with Robert Bly and partly because images do not work in quite the same way in his poetry. But his use of metaphor is similar, and in "A Birth" Dickey has written his own version of an encounter with horses:

> Inventing a story with grass,
> I find a young horse deep inside it.
> I cannot nail wires around him;
> My fence posts fail to be solid,
>
> And he is free, strongly, without me.
> With his head still browsing the greenness,
> He walks slowly out of the pasture
> To enter the sun of his story.

[14] *Collected Poems* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), p. 135.

My mind freed of its own creature,
I find myself deep in my life
In a room with my child and my mother,
When I feel the sun climbing my shoulder

Change, to include a new horse.

While Wright's poem ends with the unity between himself and the blossom, Dickey, with even greater audacity, actually becomes the horse that is both "deep inside" his story and "deep in my life."

Dickey's frequent animal poems, often introduced through the poet's hunting and fishing excursions, open his work to the outdoors. Though the location of many of these poems is Georgia or South Carolina, the landscape of the wilderness recalls the western terrain where many of the poems of Gary Snyder and William Stafford are set. With the latter poets, the method of metamorphic identities with that world is not as extreme as that of Dickey. In fact, when asked in a recent interview about the future direction of American poetry, Dickey replied: "It could be toward some new and strange simplicity. Stafford has made a run at it."[15] Stafford's simplicity shares with Dickey, however, the employment of the personification method where the natural world is endowed with human or animal qualities ("the lost road went climbing the slope like a ladder"; "around our group I could hear the wilderness listen"). In a society that has otherwise become too inhumane and complicated by technology, urbanization and artificialities of every sort, a poet like Stafford shares with Dickey a faith in the regenerative power of the natural world. The wisdom of animals in Dickey's "The Heaven of Animals" is evidenced as they track their exalted world "Under such trees in full knowledge/ Of what is in glory above them." And Stafford's conclusion in "Outside" is similar: "For all we have taken into our keeping/ and polished with our hands belongs to a truth/ greater than ours, in the animals' keeping."[16] The deference to nature as a store of moral truths is one of the pervasive premises of the neo-romantic poets.

IV

The 1976 publication of *The Zodiac*, a long poem in 12 parts, marked a new turning in Dickey's evolving romanticism; it suggests a tradition closer to Whitman and Crane than to Wright or Stafford. At once more ambitious and more elusive, the ideal which is sought in the poem is different from the "fusion of inner and outer states." Vision captured in verbal figuration by the poet and rendered universally accessible determines the scope of the poem's ambition. Though the ideal remains inviolate, the futility of its attainment

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[15] "James Dickey, The Art of Poetry XX," 85.

[16] *West of Your City* (Los Gatos, California: The Talisman Press, 1960), p. 45.

signals its elusiveness. *The Zodiac* is ostensibly a poem of failed vision, but its true subject consists of the various departures in quest of it.

The use of personality, both on the part of the speaker and the persona, is experimental on Dickey's part. The innovation lies in the fact that the two are divided into separate speaking voices, even though the division breaks down as the poem advances. "The man I'm telling you about," the poem begins, introducing the character on whom the poem is modeled and who is identified by Dickey in his brief foreword to the poem: "This poem is based on another of the same title. It was written by Hendrik Marsman, who was killed by a torpedo in the North Atlantic in 1940. . . . Its twelve sections are the story of a drunken and perhaps dying Dutch poet who returns to his home in Amsterdam after years of travel and tries desperately to relate himself, by means of stars, to the universe." Marsman is unnamed in the poem itself; he is identified only as a derelict-poet, friendless, penniless, occupying a room so shabby "A flower couldn't make it in this place." The Marsman-persona is not the ostensible speaker in the poem, though the separate narrator merges with the consciousness of that persona even as he periodically reasserts his own voice as an exterior narrator.

Another variation from Dickey's usual method involves the identity and presence of the persona. He never quite reshapes psychically his consciousness by merging it with other forms of life. An early poem from *Drowning With Others*, "For the Nightly Ascent of the Hunter Orion Over a Forest Clearing," anticipates *The Zodiac* by its use of the metaphor of the constellation. Typical of Dickey's earlier poems, the human protagonist becomes one with Orion as he "becomes a man/ Of stars." One might have expected Dickey to infuse his persona in *The Zodiac* with the life of one of the constellation-creatures he yearns to invent. This never occurs, in spite of the emotion generated by the stars. (An alcoholic hallucination evokes such terror at the sight of his imagined lobster-constellation that he cancels the image. Or, the persona can become sexually aroused by the sight of Venus in the heavens.) Unlike the pattern of his earlier work, nonetheless, the poem does not fully fuse the persona's personality with the images of his fantasy.

The subjective intensity of the speaker, and Dickey's attempt to sustain it by every contrivance, is reminiscent of earlier poems, especially "May Day Sermon to the Women of Gilmer County, Georgia, By a Woman Preacher Leaving the Baptist Church," another of Dickey's longer poems. "Imagination and dissipation both fire at me," the persona exclaims in *The Zodiac*, naming the two powers by which Dickey attempts to lengthen and renew the speaker's near-manic urgency. The alcoholic vision is one Dickey has used sparingly in the past, however, as when the dust motes take on various configurations "Through a haze/ Of afternoon liquor" in "Dust." Although we are reminded from time to time that "Whiskey helps," and Dickey likes to pun on *aquavit*, the poem's seriousness is vitiated by being presented dramatically as alcoholic stupor.

Dickey's split line, the use of spaces between word groups in place of regular punctuation, is regular in the elongated lines of the 1976 poem, as it has been generally in Dickey's work since *Buckdancer's Choice*. The colloquial tone of the personal monologue also determines the attempt to sustain frantic intensity. There are serious lapses here, particularly when the poet falls back on repetition of words and phrases, exclamation marks, and words in upper-case letters to sustain the effect:

> I've traveled and screwed too much,
> but but by dawn, now NOW
> Something coming through-coming down-coming up
> To me ME!

In his choice of the constellations themselves, Dickey establishes a metaphoric range that draws his poet into discourse with God, the cosmos, Pythagoras, and various of the individual constellations. As the "perpetual Eden of space," the metaphor is both inchoate and fixed and consequently affords Dickey a base in reality for the imagination's fantasy to roam freely:

> How about a *Lobster* up there? With a snap of two right fingers
> Cancer will whirl like an anthill people will rise
> Singing from their beds and take their wheaten children in their arms,
>
> Who thought their parents were departing
> For the hammer-clawed stars of death. They'll live
> And live.

Resolved that the starry patterns are "pictures/ Of some sort of meaning," Dickey's poet is driven "with connecting and joining things that lay their meanings/ Over billions of light years." Even though "he knows/ Not a damn thing of stars," his imagination aspires to shape new creatures among them. His Lobster, for example, will replace the deathly Cancer. Dickey's promise of immortality is an imagined one, both as a vision in the heavens and as a verbal construct:

> The
> *secret* —
> Is whiteness. You can do *anything* with that. But no —
> The secret is that on whiteness you can release
> The blackness,
> The night sky. Whiteness is death is dying
> For human words to raise it from purity from the grave
> Of too much light. Words must come to it
> Words from *any*where.

In his earlier poems Dickey charted a fusion of inner and outer states, a middle-class American who becomes a vegetable king, for example, but those states were always temporary. "I must enter/ The waking house, and return to a human love," he says in anticipation of the conclusion of "The Vegetable King." The vision sought in *The Zodiac* is more permanent. Not only will the poet create his own constellation, but in so doing he will defeat "the hammer-clawed stars of death." A transcendence of his present temporal torpor and a triumph over death are his ends. In Part I, Andromeda is eternal:

> And she shows herself as any face does
> That *is* eternal, raying in and out
> Of the body of a man: in profile sketched-in by stars
> Better than the ones God set turning
>
> Around us forever.

Surrendering his squalid present to the pull of memory in Part IX, he realigns himself with his youth, his adolescent fantasies and his mother's voice. But his mother reminds him that memory is not the key to transcendence; she commissions him to the road, to the future, to the heavens of which she is a part: "He sees his mother laid-out in space,/Point to the moon. 'That thing,' she says,/'Puts man-tracks out like candles.' "

Dickey's journey of the imagination and the redemptive claims it portends are not new in American poetry. One recalls Roethke again, and especially his *North American Sequence* where, instead of looking to the stars, the poet assimilates the far field and Oyster River. Whitman on the open road or Hart Crane on Brooklyn Bridge assigned to the poet's eye no less ambitious goals. *The Zodiac* begins with the Marsman-figure peering out his window and seeing "bridges shrivel on contact with low cloud," but especially in Part V of Crane's *The Bridge*, "Southern Cross," is there a counterpart for the struggle toward vision of Dickey's persona. One of the weaker sections of the poem, "Southern Cross" presents the paradox of the woman as virgin and whore in the metaphor of the constellation. She personifies the poet's need:

> I wanted you, nameless Woman of the South,
> No wraith, but utterly — as still more alone
> The Southern Cross takes night
> And lifts her girdles from her, one by one —
> High, cool,
> wide from the slowly smoldering fire
> Of lower heavens.[17]

[17] *The Bridge* (New York: Liveright, 1933), p. 51.

The transcendental optimism of *The Bridge*, founded in the ideals of the American past, in the vision of Columbus, Pocahontas and Whitman, as well as the poet's own potent gaze, is unattained in *The Zodiac*. For Roethke "all finite things reveal infinitude," but for Dickey infinity is finally at too great a remove. Dickey's dark night of despair is like "The Tunnel" in *The Bridge* and Roethke's "kingdom of stinks and sighs,/ Fetor of cockroaches, dead fish, petroleum" in "The Longing." But *The Zodiac* does not finally lead to the splendor of Crane's sunken "Atlantis" or the redolence of Roethke's "The Rose." Only his "nit-witted useless images" summarize Dickey's poet, an effort, he concludes, that "has no more life/ Than the gray grass of public parks." Dickey's faith in the realization of the imagination is more qualified in *The Zodiac* than in his earlier work, a position that suggests the anti-romantic. The triumph of *The Zodiac* is only in the trying.

Dickey's future growth as a poet is uncertain at the moment. Much of his time in recent years has been given over to the writing of fiction. With the exception of *The Zodiac*, no more than about a dozen poems by Dickey have appeared since the publication of *The Eye-Beaters, etc.* in 1970. Moreover, Dickey's weaknesses as a poet should not be ignored. Like parts of *The Zodiac*, some of the poems of *The Eye-Beaters, etc.* seem to me blurred by a tendency toward verbosity and overstatement. "Turning Away" and "Pine" are examples of poems too discursive to sustain interest. Dickey frequently has difficulty in bringing his poems to an effective conclusion when the "fusion of inner and outer states" ceases, and though he wishes to pronounce a kind of apotheosis signaling his own enrichment by the experience that statement is sometimes glib or flat ("we are going/ To win, and not only win but win/ Big, win big").

A later poem, "Remnant Water," appeared in the March 10, 1973, issue of *The New Yorker*, fourteen years after "The Vegetable King," but before *The Zodiac*. In some ways it is not typical of the later poems of Dickey which he himself acknowledges as dependent on "violence and length." Like the 1959 poem, however, it fuses the poet with the Roethke-like world of nature ("hair-lined backwater"). Here there is no renewal of life, but its cancellation as the dried-up water brings forth the image of death, a fish turned "belly-up." The poet takes on the identity of a surviving fish, himself dying in the remnant water:

Laugh primally: be
Like an open-gut flash   an open under-
water eye with the thumb
pressure to brain the winter-wool head of me,
Spinning my guts with my fish in the old place,
Suffering its consequences   dying
Living up to it.

Dickey has said of this poem that it is not like his more recent work: " 'Remnant Water' is a short piece and so the whole revolves around the placement of each single word and not the presentation of an action, as it does in 'The Firebombing.' I worked on that an awful long time. It might point a new direction, I don't know."[18] Far from a new direction, it suggests to me some of the earlier poems of Dickey. It recaptures many of the traits of the poet's radical neo-romanticism, while eschewing the sensationalism of poems like "The Fiend" and "The Sheep Child."

The Zodiac, however, suggests that Dickey is seeking a newer poetic idiom, one in which his confidence in the transforming efficacy of the imagination is more tentative. Even so, the romanticism of Dickey remains vital in his work in two consistent ways. "The stars are mine, and so is / The imagination to work them — / To create," says the poet of *The Zodiac*, and that aspiration, generally drawing upon a wealth of metaphoric resources, is in no way impugned. In addition, the personality of the poet's voice in the poem, unconcealed, unconstrained, unpredictable, remains constant. Even in *The Zodiac*, no one is likely to confuse Hendrik Marsman for James Dickey. Both of these faculties, the metaphorical and the personal, preserve the neo-romanticism of Dickey intact and hint at the likely course of his future work.

[18] "James Dickey, The Art of Poetry XX," 65.

CAST ON THE WATERS AND RAISED ON HIGH

MARK STEADMAN

There were two men. One was large and soft with a bland, red face, as round and plain as a hoe cake. The smaller man was more angular and drawn, with the fixed, implacable look of a follower in a lost cause. Matthew Brady caught the look in Johnston's revetments before the Battle of Atlanta, and on the faces of Stonewall Jackson's men after Chancellorsville.

The name of the big man was Dothan Garr. And the name of the implacable man was Hamilton Swazey.

"It's just got to be a nigger. Nothing else it *could* be." In their conversations, Dothan made the assertions, to which Hamilton would reply — or not — as the spirit moved him.

"I reckon," said Hamilton. "Ain't never heard of no white man concrete finisher."

The men did not read about the announcement in the Dorchester *Sentinel*. Most of their Georgia news came to them by word of mouth. It was only afterwards that Hamilton bought a copy of the paper for them to read about the details.

" 'Delano Washington Father. . . .' " Hamilton looked at Dothan and shot his eyebrows. The two men were sitting in cane-bottomed rocking chairs on the porch of Mrs. Estelle Dalton's private, residential house, where they shared a room. The five o'clock sun still had the heft of summer in it, and the men had pulled their chairs back away from the railing, into the shadow. "Jesus God," said Hamilton. "*Delano Washington*. You can't get no more niggery of a name than that."

"*Leroy* Delano Washington," said Dothan.

"You know what I mean."

"Read the rest of it," said Dothan.

Hamilton read on. " 'Delano Washington Father, age forty-five, a resident of Glimmer Street in this city, declared today his intention to walk across the Eugene Talmadge Reservoir as a token of his life in Christ. . . .' " Hamilton's voice trailed off. ". . . life in *Christ*. . . ." He pronounced it "lahf." Shaking his head, he handed the paper to Dothan. "Here," he said, "you read it."

"I don't read too good," said Dothan.

"Here," said Hamilton. "I don't know if I want to hear it anyways."

"Reading never was my strong point."

Dothan took the paper, holding it open with both hands, resting his elbows on the arms of the rocker, and bending forward to get his face closer to the page. " 'Delano Washington Father, age forty-five, a resident of Glimmer Street in this city. . . .' "

"I done read that already," said Hamilton.

"I told you, I got to start at the first," said Dothan. "It's all of a piece." He

moved his hands together, collapsing the paper in his lap. "Where's Glimmer Street at?" he said.

"I don't know," said Hamilton. "Where does it sound like it's at? Niggertown, I reckon."

"I *know* it's niggertown."

"You got to start at the beginning again?"

"No."

"Read on," said Hamilton.

Dothan opened his hands and bent forward to the paper. " '. . . declared his intention to walk across the Eugene Talmadge Reservaw as a token of his life in Christ." Dothan lowered the paper slightly and raised his eyebrows at Hamilton.

Hamilton's mouth tightened, as if a screw had been turned somewhere inside him.

Dothan raised the paper again. " 'At the time of the disclosure, Mister Father. . . . ' " Dothan looked up at Hamilton again. "*Mister* Father . . . ?"

"I know," said Hamilton.

"Who *is* that nigger?"

Hamilton didn't look at him. "I don't know ever nigger in Dorchester, Dothan," he said. "How the hell would I know who that *particular* nigger is?"

"Jesus," said Dothan, shaking the paper and holding it at arm's length. He leaned forward again. " '*Mister* Father was unprepared to specify an exact time for his journey, though he feels that the time is im- . . . im- . . . immernent . . . ?' " Dothan looked up at Hamilton.

"Immernent," said Hamilton.

Dothan shook the paper and frowned. "That god damn nigger never said 'immernent.' He wouldn't say 'immernent' in a thousand years."

"Yes," said Hamilton.

Dothan shook the paper again. "I never heard no *white* man say 'immernent.' "

"Yes," said Hamilton.

"Much less no nigger."

"Read on," said Hamilton.

Dothan leaned forward. " 'When pressed, his only response was, "I am going to DO it!" ' " Dothan looked up. "DO it! *That's* nigger talk."•

Hamilton nodded.

" 'Mister Father has no current church. . . .' " Dothan moved his hands together, collapsing the paper into his lap and looking at Hamilton. "Why they got to put words in that nigger's mouth?" he said.

"How much nigger talk you read in the newspaper?" said Hamilton.

"Nigger talk is *news* in Georgia."

"No it ain't. Just niggers."

Dothan opened his hands and looked at the paper again. " '. . . church . . .' " He frowned, moving his lips silently. " '. . . affilation . . .?' " He looked at Hamilton.

"He don't go to no church."

" 'Affilation' . . . ," said Dothan. "That ain't no nigger word neither."

"Read on."

"Shit," said Dothan. "Affilation. . . ." He opened the paper again and shook it. " 'But he said that he has been to church *numerous* times in the past.' " Dothan shot his eyebrows at Hamilton. " 'He is presently employed as a concrete finisher by the Coulter-Dixie Concrete and Plaster Company of this city.' "

Dothan folded the paper and put it on the arm of the rocking chair, then rested his elbow on it to hold it there.

"That all of it?" said Hamilton.

"It's a quarter mile acrost that reservaw. Couldn't no nigger even *swim* no quarter mile reservaw."

"He ain't going to do neither one," said Hamilton. "All he's going to do is just run his mouth about it." Hamilton had cloudy green eyes and a fringe of red hair that hung down like a piece of wet silk under his John Deere cap. "He'll keep it up til they put his picture in the paper."

"His picture's *in* the paper," said Dothan, taking the newspaper from under this arm and starting to unfold it.

"You know what I mean," said Hamilton.

Dothan put the paper back on the arm of the rocking chair. "Why'd they want to put that kind of a thing in the newspaper anyway?" he said. "Don't nobody believe he's going to do it." Dothan had very dark eyes and curly black hair. He wore a dark blue baseball cap with a gold anchor on it.

"There's some going to believe it. Newspapers're doing us in, Dothan. Doing us in. I mean as a *group*."

"What is it about niggers anyway? They going to take over the whole goddamn country?"

"You wait," said Hamilton. "It's going to be some Martin Luther King talk. He'll get around to that."

"What *is* it about niggers, Ham? Don't they appreciate all we done for them?"

Delano Washington Father was interviewed twice on WDOR, the local television news program. The first time was the day after he made his announcement, and that time Hamilton and Dothan missed him. But they heard about the second time beforehand, and they went down to the Sportsman's Cafe to watch.

Mr. Father was not a tall man, but he was squarely built. He sat very erect with his forearms resting on the table in front of him. The dark suit and the starched white collar of his shirt made him look like he didn't have a neck.

Dothan sat with both arms on the counter, the blue light of the television set full in his face. Hamilton sat with his counter stool turned to the side, resting one elbow on the counter top, taking the blue light from the television on only one side — into the hard stare of one unblinking eye.

"What'd I tell you?" said Hamilton. "I told you he'd get around to it, didn't I?"

"He died for our sins," said Mr. Father. "Walking on the waters ain't nothing to what he done done already."

"Come now, Mister Father," said the announcer. The announcer was a long-necked, angular man, with a lot of dark hair that he wore in a swirled pompadour. He talked in a deep voice with his chin pulled back. "We wouldn't want to take anything away from Doctor King, but walking on *water*?"

"Ain't *nothing*!" said Mr. Father. He balled his hands into fists.

"I told you he'd get Martin Luther into it," said Hamilton. "God damn it. I told you."

"Well, Mister Father . . . ," said the announcer.

"Kin I say something?" said Mr. Father.

"Of course."

"I thought it would be that I might set a date."

"Date?" said the announcer. Then he swallowed and lowered his voice. "Of course," he said.

"It will be the four month anniversary."

"Yes . . . ?" said the announcer.

"Martin Luther passed on April four."

"April four . . . ," said the announcer.

"I will walk on the reservaw August the fourth."

"The fourth of August!" said the announcer.

"That's two weeks," said Dothan.

"I didn't expect it was going to be tomorrow," said Hamilton flatly.

Mr. Father explained how he had gotten the idea. "You know how it is when you floating the concrete," he said. "They pour it and you can put your foot right in. Stick it right on in like it was a pool of water." He sat with his hands clasped on the desk in front of him, staring into the camera. "Bye and bye you can *stand* on it. Right on the top of it. You can just walk around." He made a motion with one of his hands.

The announcer kept bobbing his head while Mr. Father was explaining. "Yes?" he said. "Walk *around* on it?"

"That's the way hit's going to be," said Mr. Father.

"You mean the whole reservoir is going to turn to concrete?" said the announcer. He forgot to pull his chin back and his voice went up.

Mr. Father knitted his brows slightly. "Don't seem like it would hardly be the *whole* reservaw," he said.

"I see," said the announcer.

"That's how it would be," said Mr. Father.

"I see," said the announcer. "The fourth of August?"

Mr. Father nodded. "Friday, August the fourth."

The announcer spoke to the camera, lowering his voice for emphasis.

"Friday the fourth of August. Remember, you heard it right here on station WDOR."

The weather report came on, and Hamilton and Dothan sipped their beers for a while without saying anything.

"That's as niggery looking a nigger as ever I saw," said Dothan. "Him and Jesus. Good God almighty."

Hamilton didn't say anything.

"It ought to blowed the tubes on the television. Talking about Jesus and him walking on the water."

"Come on," said Hamilton. He snapped a coin onto the counter and started for the door.

They drove down to the reservoir, where Hamilton stood looking through the hurricane fence at the water.

"That goddamn nigger is crazy," said Dothan. "Cra-zee. It's *more'n* a quarter mile acrost."

They leaned against the hurricane fence, looking out across the expanse of water. There was a restless, silvery wake made by the moon, with small waves dancing in it.

"Dothan," said Hamilton. "It makes my blood boil."

"I know it," said Dothan.

"I never could stand Jesus talk from niggers. It just makes my blood boil."

"Yes," said Dothan.

"It was *us* give it to them," said Hamilton.

"I know what you mean," said Dothan.

Hamilton looked at Dothan. "What the shit do they know about it?" he said. "What the god damn shit do *they* know about it?" Hamilton's emphatic way of speaking quieted Dothan, and he didn't answer.

"Walking on the water," said Hamilton, speaking almost to himself. He turned back to the fence and rested his forehead against it. "That's nigger Jesus, Dothan. Walking on the water is pure nigger Jesus."

"Yes?" said Dothan.

"Flashy shit. That's all that is. There ain't no Jesus in that."

Dothan nodded his head, watching his friend looking out at the water of the reservoir.

"Can't no nigger tell his ass from a hole in the ground about Jesus."

Hamilton stood back from the fence and turned to face his friend. "You know what, Dothan? It's like he done put a foxtail on him. Or a yaller zoot suit. Even if he don't never walk on the water, he's done niggered up Jesus already. Just the way he's run his mouth."

"You don't really think he would do it?" said Dothan.

"It wouldn't be here nor there, Dothan. Neither here nor there. He's niggered him up already."

"Yes," said Dothan. "But you don't really think he would do it?"

Hamilton stabbed the forefinger of his right hand into the palm of his left. "Jesus was a *white* man, Dothan! *White* man! Don't nobody recall that these days. Jesus wasn't never no goddamn jungle bunny."

Dothan looked at Hamilton. "Everbody knows that, Ham."

Hamilton took off his John Deere cap and wiped his right forearm across his brow. When he spoke he sounded tired. "No they don't, Dothan. No they don't. That's what they *ought* to know." He put his cap back on. "These days everbody's getting to think Jesus was a nigger."

Dothan nodded his head. "Niggers going to take over the whole goddamn country," he said.

"No they ain't," said Hamilton. "It ain't never going to happen, Dothan."

For a minute Hamilton didn't speak. He stood with his fingers hooked through the links of the fence. "It's time somebody put this here country in mind of what Jesus is about," he said. "High time."

"Yes, it is," said Dothan.

"High time," said Hamilton.

Hamilton brooded on Mr. Father for a week. Then on Friday afternoon, July the twenty-eighth, he went down to the Cadwallader Lumber Company and bought two undressed six by six pine timbers to make a cross. Saturday afternoon he spent in Mrs. Dalton's garage, hewing and chiseling a lap joint to put it together. Dothan, overwhelmed by the magnitude of his friend's undertaking, sat at the back of the garage on an upended Coca-Cola crate, sucking the roof of his mouth and listening while Hamilton tried to explain as much as he himself understood of the symbolic nature of the act he was about to perform.

"Christ was on the *cross,* Dothan. That's all it comes down to finally. Christ was *on* the cross. Ain't nothing for a nigger in that."

Dothan swallowed and nodded. "That's what it was, Ham." His voice sounded thick and choked, as if he were about to cry. "It was all on the cross."

Making the joint was not much more than a one-hour job, but Hamilton spread it over the whole afternoon, working down the face of the notches meticulously — first with a socket chisel, then with a file, and, finally, shaving off minute slivers and flakes with his Barlow knife — flakes so papery and fine they stuck to the backs of his hands. He had to wax the wood to slide the two pieces together.

Dothan watched as he bored the holes for the dowels, then flinched while be pounded them in with a wooden mallet. When it was done, he got up off the Coca-Cola crate and walked over to his friend. "I want to shake your hand," he said.

"It's you and me against the niggers, Dothan," said Hamilton, taking his friend's hand. "Just you and me against the niggers."

That night they went back to the reservoir with the cross in the bed of the pickup truck, and a pair of posthole diggers they had borrowed from Mrs. Dalton.

Dothan lifted the last of the loose dirt out of the posthole, then speared the diggers into the ground. "It's kind of complicated, ain't it? Wouldn't it be better to just put a couple of long rifles into him and let it go at that?"

Hamilton lowered a carpenter's rule into the hole to check the depth. "You know what the newspapers would do with that," he said. "Look what they done to Ray. They'd say it was a Commonist plot. Or blame it on the KKK. Us going to jail ain't going to hurt the niggers none."

"Well," said Dothan.

"Three feet," said Hamilton, marking the place on the rule with his thumb. He folded the rule and handed it to Dothan. "Niggers ain't all we got against us. You got to think about what the newspapers are going to say. And the law."

"I reckon", said Dothan.

They got the cross out of the truck and put it down on the ground next to the hole. Then Hamilton lay down on it, spreading his arms to check the fit. While he was doing that, Dothan went back to the truck.

"What you got?" Hamilton looked up at his friend.

"You ready for me to nail you?"

"What?"

Dothan held up three galvanized gutter spikes and a hammer. "Nails."

"*Nails?*"

"Yeah, nails."

Hamilton sat up on the cross. "You out of your god damned mind?"

Dothan furrowed his brow. "We going to nail you on the cross ain't we?"

"Give me them things," said Hamilton, holding out his hand.

"What you going to do?"

"*Give* me them things."

Dothan dropped the nails into his hand. Hamilton stood up and threw them over the hurricane fence into the reservoir. He turned back to Dothan. "Sometimes I wonder about you, Dothan." He looked at Dothan steadily for a minute. "I really do." Dothan grew restive and shuffled his feet. "There's some number twelve electric wire behind the seat."

"We going to *wire* you?"

"Get the wire."

"What kind of Jesus is it with wire?" said Dothan. He frowned. "I thought we was going to do this *regular*."

"Get the god damned wire."

"What's it going to mean to the niggers if I *wire* you on the cross?"

"Get the side cutters, too," said Hamilton, sitting back down on the cross.

"You put this thing up *careful*, Dothan. I can't just hop off if something goes wrong." There was a small platform nailed to the upright for Hamilton to stand on. His wrists were bound to the crossarms with electrical wire that was covered with yellow plastic insulation. Dothan looked at the wire disapprov-

ingly, but he didn't say anything. He put the side cutters into his back pocket and went around to the top of the upright.

"Easy, Dothan," said Hamilton. "Do it easy."

Dothan locked both hands under the upright and heaved it up, jamming the bottom end against the wall of the posthole. He raised it with his arms until he could get his shoulder under it, then he walked it forward until it was almost straight up and down. For a moment it teetered, then it started to fall away from him.

"Look out, Ham!" Dothan yelled.

Dothan could not see Hamilton in the darkness, but he could hear him as he moved through the arc at the top of the cross. He was making a low, whining noise in the back of his throat. Just before he hit the ground, his voice went up, as if he were trying to say something. He came down face first on a gravel walk with the cross on top of him.

"Ham?" said Dothan, whispering. "You okay, Ham?" He stooped down, turning his head to listen. "Is anything broke, old buddy?"

"Unngghh . . . ," said Hamilton.

The hospital made Dothan nervous in general, and waiting outside the Emergency Room made him nervous in particular. While he was sitting there they brought in a man who had been carrying a box of dynamite caps in his pocket when they went off. Then they brought in an eight-year-old boy who had put his head into a gasoline can and lit a match to see if it was empty. Dothan drank five Coca-Colas to quiet his nerves, then couldn't find the men's room when he went to look for it. The doctor was waiting for him when he came back.

"Is anything broke?" he asked.

"*Everything's* broke," said the doctor. "What kind of fool stunt were you pulling anyway?" He sounded exasperated.

"But he's going to be all right, ain't he?"

"What I don't understand is why he went to all that trouble, when he could just go out and lay down on U. S. Seventeen and get rolled over by a semi." The doctor looked at Dothan for a minute, then he looked away. "We wired him back together. He isn't going to be as pretty as he used to."

"Wired him?"

"We don't use nails anymore," said the doctor.

Dothan looked at him. "You don't?" he said.

For a minute the doctor looked at Dothan thoughtfully. "The nurse will tell you what room he's in. I had to wire his jaw shut. Anyway, he won't feel like talking for awhile."

"Wired," said Dothan, shaking his head.

The doctor turned and started to walk away.

"But he's going to be all right?" Dothan yelled after him. "When you take off the wire."

"His head's going to be a little bit catercornered, but it'll be as much use to him as it was before."

Dothan found the room and went into it. Then he came right back out again. He stopped a nurse who was passing in the corridor. "How do I know it's him?"

"What?"

"He looks like *The Mummy's Curse.* How do I know it's him?"

Dothan took picture shows to heart, though he had mustered up the courage to see *one* of every monster movie that played at the Dorchester *Star* in his childhood. He had been twelve years old when he had gone to see Lon Chaney, Jr., in *The Mummy's Curse,* and the implacable quality in the monster had unsettled him even more than Boris Karloff's Frankenstein monster, which he also never went back to see again. The way he saw it, you might be able to reason with Frankenstein, but there was no way to talk yourself loose from a mummy.

The nurse went into the room with him to assure him it was not the mummy. "Good lord! What in the world happened to him?"

Dothan shuffled his feet and cleared his throat. "A cross fell on him."

The nurse looked at Dothan, but she didn't say anything. While she went over to the bed to check the name tag, Dothan stood by the door. "H. Swazey?" she said. Dothan stared at his friend in the bed without answering. Hamilton's right foot and arm were suspended from pulleys with weights attached. His whole head was swathed in bandages, with holes for his eyes and mouth and nostrils. The nurse bent down and put her ear to the mouth hole and listened for a minute. "He's breathing all right," she said cheerfully. "That's very significant."

When she started out of the room, Dothan snapped his head up. "You ain't going to stay?" he said.

"I'll check back in a little while," she said. "He hasn't come out of the anesthesia yet." Her voice was pleasant, and she smiled at Dothan when she spoke. "He's going to be okay. Don't worry."

Dothan followed her out into the corridor where he stood beside the door for three or four minutes, thinking. Finally he went back into the room and sat down on a chair as far from the bed as he could get. He stared at the head of his friend, trying to remember what it looked like underneath the bandages.

After awhile he cleared his throat. "How you feeling, Ham?" There was no movement behind the carapace of gauze and plaster. Ham's eyes seemed to be closed.

For several minutes Dothan sat contemplating the floor. Finally he looked up at his friend again. "I reckon it's going to be up to me," he said. He sighed, looking into the black hole where Ham's mouth was. "We're going to show them, old buddy," he said, raising his voice. "We're going to show the niggers."

That afternoon, Dothan went down to see Glimmer Street for himself. It was one block long, dead end — a sandy corridor between unpainted clapboard houses built on high brick piers that led to a vacant lot at the end. The vacant lot was filled with old washing machines and kitchen stoves and rusting hot water tanks. At the edge of the lot there was a blackened chinaberry tree with a rope swing hanging from its lowest limb.

None of the houses on the street had numbers on them, but Dothan saw Mr. Father sitting on the porch of the third house. He was not wearing his suit, and Dothan had trouble telling one black from another anyway, but he recognized Mr. Father right away.

He drove on by, turning the back of his head to Mr. Father, pretending to be looking at houses on the opposite side. At the end of the street he swung the truck slowly around the chinaberry tree and drove back out. It was as if the whole of Dothan's brain, the inside of his head, had contracted, wrapping itself into a package to contain one single thought concerning Mr. Delano Washington Father. And with the contraction Dothan had suddenly turned crafty. He realized that Mr. Father should not be able to recognize his face.

The next day he went down to the Coulter-Dixie Concrete and Plaster Company at four twenty-five, just before quitting time. He pulled his truck into the yard, and when the yard foreman asked him what he wanted, he bought half a ton of mortar sand. While they were loading the truck, he watched for Mr. Father.

Dothan did not want to follow Mr. Father in the truck. So he drove out to the county landfill and unloaded the sand. The superintendent of the landfill didn't understand.

"That's good sand, mister."

"I got no use for it."

"It's a shame to waste it."

"You can have it."

"I got no way to haul it."

"I got no *use* for it," said Dothan.

"Well, but that's good sand, mister," said the superintendent. "I hate to see it go to waste."

The next day, which was Tuesday, Dothan parked his truck and followed Mr. Father on foot, to see the way he would take going home. On Wednesday he followed Mr. Father again, to see if the way would be different.

The afternoon of the third of August, Dothan parked at the entrance to Glimmer Street. Then he slumped in the cab of the truck and pulled his cap down over his eyes. His rifle was lying across his arms with the muzzle on the arm rest of the driver's side door. It was a hot, glary day and the heat inside the cab pulsed like a beating heart.

When Mr. Father appeared, Dothan let him get just opposite the truck, so he would be sure of a clean hit. Then he raised the rifle and took aim. The

moment before he fired, Mr. Father turned and looked at him, directly into his eyes. And then Dothan pulled the trigger.

Mr. Father dropped to the sidewalk, falling below the blade of the sight. Dothan slid the rifle onto the seat beside him and put the truck into gear. "No walking on water for you, nigger," he said.

"You gone plumb crazy, Garr?" The Police Chief was red-faced and sweating. "You gone plumb crazy with the heat?"

Dothan sat on the bunk in the cell. The Chief stood leaning against the bars. "I didn't kill him," said Dothan. "Never meant to kill him."

"You can't shoot *at* him, Garr. You meant to *hit* him."

"I was aiming to get him in the leg. Just in the meat of his leg. Ain't nothing broken."

"You think that makes it all right?"

"It shows I knowed what I was doing."

"No it don't. You can't screw around with a rifle. You can't even pull the trigger on it in the city limits."

For a minute Dothan didn't say anything. "You know who he is, don't you?"

"Delano Washington Father."

"I mean, you know who he *is*?"

The Chief looked at him.

"He's the one was on the television."

"The crazy one?"

"He said he was going to walk on the waters."

"He's crazy, Garr."

"It was on the *television*!"

"You ain't going to tell me you believe that shit?"

Dothan relaxed, leaning back against the wall of the cell. "He ain't going to walk nowhere tomorrow. He ain't even going to walk on dry land tomorrow."

"He ain't going to walk on the waters ever. But he can hoof it on dry land til the cows come home."

Dothan frowned and sat up. "I didn't nick him no more than that?"

"Not hardly," said the Chief.

Dothan shook his head in puzzlement. "I could have reached out and touched him," he said. "He was so close I could have reached out and touched him with my hand."

"You'd have hurt him worse if you had," said the Chief.

Delano Washington Father and Dothan Garr came face to face for the second time in the office of the Chief of Police on the evening of the third of August. Mr. Father had been brought around to make a positive identification of his assailant. A patrolman brought him in walking on crutches.

The Chief raised his eyebrows. "You ain't hurt that bad are you?"

"I took a bullet," he said. Then he looked at the floor. "Hit might be the blood poison would set in."

"I saw where he hit you," said the Chief. "All you needed was a smear of axle grease. I hurt myself worse than that every morning when I shave."

"I'm inclined to the blood poison."

"You look like you coming back from the Battle of the Bulge."

Mr. Father looked up at Dothan. "What you want to do it for?"

Dothan didn't answer.

"What I ever done to you make you want to shoot me down like a dog?"

"I wasn't never going to kill you," said Dothan. "If I was going to kill you, you'd be dead."

"What I ever done to you?"

"I put my gun on you, you'd be mine."

The Chief looked at the two men and suddenly his eyebrows went up. "Are you two in cahoots or something?"

Dothan looked at him. "What?" he said.

"I hadn't thought of it before. He couldn't of done it that neat by himself."

"What're you talking about?" said Dothan.

"Look at the crutches, Dothan. You got him off."

Dothan looked at the Chief, then at Mr. Father leaning on his crutches.

"You didn't think about that, did you?"

"He was going to walk tomorrow."

The Chief looked at Mr. Father. "You got him out of it, Dothan."

Dothan looked at the Chief, then at Mr. Father, then at the Chief again.

" 'I put my gun on you, you're *mine*!' " The Chief spoke elaborately, rolling his eyes. "How dumb *are* you, Dothan?"

"I got him out of it?"

"You didn't think of it til I told you, did you?"

Dothan looked at Mr. Father. "You was going to do it. You was *going* to do it, wasn't you?"

Mr. Father considered the question, seeming to turn it around to see it on all sides. "I ain't going to do it tomorrow," he said at last.

"He ain't going to do it at all," said the Chief. "Anybody but an outright fool would have known that all along."

"When you *heal*?" said Dothan.

"Wouldn't nobody expect he would be able to do it on crutches, Dothan. Can't you see?"

"There's a white man in the hospital on account of that nigger."

"He's on *crutches*, Dothan."

"When you going to do it?" said Dothan, speaking to Mr. Father. "Name me a date!"

Mr. Father thought for a minute. There was a serious expression on his face. "It wouldn't be tomorrow," he said.

Dothan started to get up out of the chair, but the Chief put his hand on his shoulder and held him back. "You're bucking for a ticket to Milledgeville, Garr," he said.

"You give a date for that queer on the television. Now you give me one."

"I don't know when it'd be," said Mr. Father. "I got to get off these here crutches first."

"They had to *wire* him back together!" Dothan spoke over his shoulder to the Chief.

"How'd I know when it would be?" said Mr. Father. "That got to be up to the Lawd."

"Nigger Jesus!" said Dothan. "Pure nigger Jesus." He looked over his shoulder at the Chief then back at Mr. Father.

Mr. Father looked as though he had been offended. "Jesus wadn't no nigger," he said, indignantly. "What kind of talk is that?" He looked at the Chief. "What kind of talk is that he said?"

"You better get on out of here," said the Chief, speaking to Mr. Father. The patrolman stepped up to help the Chief hold Dothan in the chair. But Dothan had slumped back. His face had gone slack, and he seemed to be thinking. Mr. Father turned to go.

"Just a minute!" Dothan spoke so loudly all of them flinched. He stood up and put out his hand. "I want to shake your hand," he said. Standing up, Dothan was a head taller than the other three men in the room.

Mr. Father looked up at him warily.

"You beaten us fair and square," said Dothan. "I know a good four-flusher when I see one." He moved his hand insistently. "No hard feelings. I admire your luck." He moved his hand again. "Put it there, nigger."

Mr. Father had started to extend his hand. He withdrew it, holding it against his chest. "I go by Delano," he said.

Dothan looked surprised. "That's your preference, eh?" He moved his hand again. "Put it there, Delano."

Mr. Father looked at the Chief, then cautiously extended his hand. Dothan took it firmly and gave it two emphatic shakes. "I sure do admire your luck, Delano," he said. For a minute he stood without saying anything. "Times is changed," he said. He seemed to be relieved. "You got to move with the times."

The Chief, Mr. Father, and the patrolman looked at one another. Dothan stood by the chair, looking easy and relaxed. When he spoke, he seemed to be talking to himself. "He got the television, the newspaper, and the god damn *law* on his side. This day an time . . . that's *better* than Jesus." Dothan looked at the Chief. "I could run up the side of the Dorchester Bank Building barefoot, and they wouldn't put *me* on the television."

The Chief looked at Mr. Father, then back at Dothan. "He ain't going to walk on the waters, Dothan."

For a minute he didn't reply. "I know it," he said. "I reckon I knowed it all

along." He shook his head. "It ain't neither here nor there. Neither here nor there. He got the newspapers and the television and the law on his side. And blind luck to boot." He made an indefinite gesture with his hands. "That's a miracle right there." He sat back down and thought a minute. "I don't know where Ham got that Jesus talk all of a sudden. We ain't neither one of us been inside a church in fifteen years." He paused. "Ham wouldn't recognize Jesus if he come up and bit him on the ass."

Mr. Father looked at Dothan sitting in the chair, then at the Chief. "You know what he's talking about?"

The Chief looked down at Dothan and shook his head. "I don't know if it's worth trying to figure it out." He looked up at Mr. Father. "Whyn't you go on home and think about it?"

Mr. Father stood staring at Dothan. "Bit him on the ass?" he said.

"Whyn't you go on home?" said the Chief, speaking very emphatically.

Mr. Father nodded his head, then he shook it from side to side. When he walked out of the office, he forgot to use his crutches.

Dothan sat looking at his hands in his lap. "You know what?" he said after awhile. "If Jesus did come back . . . I bet he'd be a nigger." He looked up at the Chief. "That's exactly what he'd be . . . if he had any sense." He thought for a minute. "Ham's wired together in the hospital . . . I'm sitting in the jailhouse. . . ." He shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know what got into him all of a sudden." He paused. "We ain't neither one of us been inside of a church in fifteen years." He sat thinking for a minute, then he looked up at the Chief. "I bet they going to put that nigger on the television again, ain't they?"

The Chief nodded. "I wouldn't be surprised," he said.

"Time's done run out on us, Chief," said Dothan, shaking his head. For the first time there was a note of sadness in his voice. "Time's done run out. You got to move with the times."

After they put him back into his cell, they could hear him muttering to himself in the darkness. But finally the muttering faded away into the night sounds of crickets and tree frogs and the faint idiot curlicues of a whippoorwill.

During the night he had a dream about the Mummy, who came up to him and shook his hand, very friendly, then put his arm around him and had a serious talk about how the times were changing, and the way a man had to move with the times. The dream woke him up, and he lay there in the darkness, thinking about his friend in the hospital, and the things they would have to talk about when he got out.

"We got to figure this out, old buddy. We sure have got to figure this thing out. How come that nigger is so lucky? . . . soon's you get unwired."

TWO POEMS BY WILLIAM STAFFORD

SCENES THAT ESCAPED FROM JAMES DICKEY POEMS

One place — it's an island with a lake
and an island; it's in the Pacific on
the dateline where the tide goes "Today,"
"Tomorrow," "Yesterday," just being
arbitrary.

Another — a train whistle searches deep
into woods every morning, its path
across a pond where a turtle waits.
The sound goes on, dimmed by the water
to a sigh.

And — sunlight props up a mountain. It is brave
to the eyes, but who knows how soft
on the other side? And every night it
moves its rocks a little, soaking up the dark,
affirming the real tide.

THREE STORIES FROM INSIDE JAMES DICKEY'S GUITAR

1. Any Morning

One morning you are a ghost. The world
is heavy. People coming toward you
have spirits bobbing above their heads.
You turn aside and watch. More
and more a strange glow burns
from your eyes. You are afraid a gaze
too long will ignite faces you love.
You turn aside. You have become
less friend than flame. All around you
people are turning to stone — brave
but unknowing, saved by not being able
to see what you see. Before the others
can grow afraid you let go
of the world and fall upward alone:
bright, bright home, dark dark sky.

2. *By a Late Fire*

It burns in the mind like juniper, steady,
how last year one day — through miles only
the wind would want — smoke hunted along
through something less than a storm, letting
drops outline trees in silver toward
one last leafblade a drop could follow
under a cliff, dry even in winter.

There is that way for smoke to go
following history onward; and by watching
the fire you can have someone again
but this time in a spell that means they can't leave
till both of you follow the day
wherever it goes — the slow drops on the pines,
the miles turning everything thinner and thinner
away, away, away, all over the world.

3. *Afterwards*

High in an oak you listen quietly
where the leaves are, their tree house,
with rain coming through that airy room
filled with bird talk. You wait:
those fluttering selves have life around them
so quick they'll never fall, so summer
says. Sitting there, you think winter.
Leaves touch you. Saved, you descend
carefully branch by branch and lightly
spring down, the way rain falls from each leaf and runs
till it finds its way into the ground.

DELIVERANCE: INITIATION AND POSSIBILITY

LINDA WAGNER

For all his collections of poetry, James Dickey came closest to capturing his personal mythopoeic vision in the controversial novel *Deliverance*. That his vision was admittedly masculine seems unnecessary to justify, and that the novel was filled with violence, gore, and sport imagery is also defensible. For what Dickey was creating in his novel was a *Pilgrim's Progress* of male egoism, complete with all varieties of masculine fantasy — physical power and prowess, sexual expectation and satisfaction, and above all, contest, competition. What he achieved in the execution of the novel was a resolution far different from his characters' expectations — whether those of Lewis Medlock, the greatest achiever, or those of Ed Gentry, the follower. Dickey's resolution was an understanding beyond fantasy, an understanding of the reality of life, and an acceptance.

In his story of initiation and ritual, initiation through ritual, Dickey balances the characters' expectations before the canoeing trip with their recognition of reality after it. For emphasis, he divides the novel into five sections, the first titled simply "Before," the last, "After"; the three middle sections carry the dates of the three days of the trip, September 14, 15, and 16. Each of the five segments has its particular progression, both as part of the continuum of the book and as its own unit; the ending of each is especially significant. "Before" ends with Ed viewing the young golden-eyed model as some kind of nymph (he speaks of a "deep and complex male thrill" as he watches her), her golden eye "more gold than any real gold could possibly be; it was alive."[1] She represents the possibility of his returning to youth and energy: the fear of aging, death, permeates the "Before" section:

> The feeling of the inconsequence of whatever I would do, of anything I would pick up or think about or turn to see was at that moment being set in the very bone marrow. How does one get through this? I asked myself. . . . It was the old mortal, helpless, time-terrified human feeling. . . . (28)

One mark of this fear of mortality is the men's need to merge with nature and its beings. Ed notes with pleasure, "I sat with the pressure of the woods against me; when I looked down I saw that one leaf was shaking with my heart" (77). By the end of "September 14," Ed finds his imaginative fulfillment in his interlude with the mysterious owl, who with its claws tears through the tent where he and Drew are sleeping. Just as Ed had touched the girl at the close of the first section, so now he touches the owl: "I slipped my forefinger between the claw and the tent, and half around the stony toe. The claw tightened" (98).

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[1] James Dickey, *Deliverance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), p. 32.

Taking his identity from the bird, Ed then "hunted with him as well as I could, there in my weightlessness. The woods burned in my head." Union complete, Ed — and his friends — revel in the communion with nature. As the quiet Drew remarked, "I've always wanted to do this. . . . Only I didn't know it" (94).

The euphoric mood changes at the beginning of "September 15," however, when Ed slips into his fog-colored long underwear to merge with the atmosphere, for the purpose of killing a deer, and misses the animal through human failure, buck fever. Soon Ed and Bobby are captured, Bobby raped, Lewis a murderer, and Drew killed. At the close of "September 15," Ed is wedged inhumanly in a rock crevice "like a lizard," his quest no longer a romantic tryst with nature. His mission at the close of the second day is a simple search for revenge and self-preservation, through the execution of still another murder. Hunted, man will also hunt: "The world is easily lost" (21).

The close of "September 16" brings the image of Ed, bloodied and sodden after one of the longest days in contemporary American fiction, cognizant that his body is dry, so dry, standing half asleep under the river-water shower in the blue-green light of the basement. But when he goes upstairs, to bed, there is no transformation: he remains himself. There is no fusion with any other sort of being or consciousness, memory or fantasy. All that is left is the reality: "It was over. I lay awake all night in the brilliant sleep" (246). The glory that had previously come only through imagined exploits, the gold that had spun its color only from unattainable images, was now a part of Ed's common experience of human renewal.

The closing sections bring Ed back to his reverence for the river ("The river and everything I remembered about it became a possession to me, a personal, private possession, as nothing else in my life ever had. Now it ran nowhere but in my head, but there it ran as though immortally. . . . In me it still is, and will be until I die, green, rocky, deep, fast, slow, and beautiful beyond reality" [281]), a reverence that is incorruptible, for the water is ageless, timeless, pure. It is the human factor that corrupts, and only the human factor.

Once into the "After" segment, Dickey makes it eminently clear that Lewis and Ed have learned from their experience, have come full circle to an appreciation of the reality of their lives. They dare very little that is foolhardy. They settle, as it were, near another lake, sharing their knowledge and their severely limited power. It is all so different from the opening scene and their expectations; and that great, and grave, difference is the point of *Deliverance:* the *doing* is the knowledge. Only in the doing, when bared to the essential, the zero at the bone, does a person come to know himself. Playing against the overbearing male pride so evident in the opening passage, Dickey chooses his epigrams for the novel to stress the vanity of pride — in self, strength, control. The real control, as Lewis comes to observe, may lie in losing it. But in the opening scene, every word works hard to emphasize the power and control in Lewis' hands:

> It unrolled slowly, forced to show its colors, curling and snapping back whenever one of us turned loose. The whole land was very tense until we put our four steins on its corners and laid the river out to run for us through the mountains 150 miles north. Lewis' hand took a pencil and marked out a small strong X in a place where some of the green bled away and the paper changed with high ground, and began to work downstream, northeast to southwest through the printed woods. I watched the hand rather than the location, for it seemed to have power over the terrain, and when it stopped for Lewis' voice to explain something, it was as though all streams everywhere quit running, hanging silently where they were to let the point be made. (13)

The human control of "the whole land," caught and tamed under beer steins; the power of Lewis' hand and voice — Dickey's image of the living map as land evokes vividly the theme of the novel, man's belief in his physical power to control. (Lewis touts the studied development of his body; the four men are each conscious of their naked appearances.) The tone of the active verbs, however, darkens the image, suggesting rape through the words *forced* and *bled away,* and the figure of the land (usually feminine) being *unrolled,* then *curling, snapping,* is also suggestive. The physicality of the men's force is emphasized too in the dehumanization of "Lewis' hand," acting as if without conscious direction in its "small strong" mark. The unidentified pronoun *It* also suggests more than the simple scene that is actually described.

The passage also opens the pervading color imagery — the kindly green bleeds away; the threat of omnipresent blue; the implication of ruin in the red of the verb *bled.* Later, Dickey begins the use of the evanescent gold, first in the more-than-real gold of the woman's eyes; then in the "light green-gold" of the developing leaves; finally the magical green becoming his identity: "I was light green, a tall forest man, an explorer, guerrilla, hunter" (78). The most noticeable detail about Dickey's use of color imagery is its absence once the sodomy scene begins: from then on the only emphasized color is the red of the wasted blood, first on his own chest, then "like an apple" in the dying man's mouth, finally in a ferocious flood with Ed's murder of the second victim:

> The top of his chest was another color, and as he melted forward and down I saw the arrow hanging down his back just below the neck; it was painted entirely red, and was just hanging by the nock and flipping stiffly and softly. He got carefully down to his knees; blood poured when his mouth opened and seemed to splash up out of the ground, to have the force of something coming out of the earth, a spring revealed when the right stone was moved. Die, I thought, my God, die, die. (199)

All the attempts at evasion — not describing the "color" in the opening line, giving the arrow's presence an innocence and softness that changed its real role, trying to imply a naturalness to the man's bleeding to death — cannot counteract Ed's recognition of his responsibility that the last sentence reveals.

But the handling of the blood image, and the omission of the color red, makes this an unusually powerful description.

Incremental in this scene, which includes Ed's own arrow wound and its removal, the haze of blood shrouds the action as well as the scene: Ed must follow the dying man by his bloody trail, covering that blood, as he moves, with his own. After this scene, all gold is gone from the novel, except for the yellow tree, symbol of the collective and staining lie; but that color does not pretend to gold. Only the natural green and the darkness of the river remain.

Dickey's color imagery comes to suggest the dichotomy between fantasy and reality. For all the talk about fantasy ("That's all anybody has got. It depends on how strong your fantasy is, and whether you really — *really* — in your own mind, fit into your own fantasy, whether you measure up to what you've fantasized" [59]), Lewis and Ed both know, finally, that reality is their final power: "I believe in survival. All kinds. . . . I am becoming myself, as inconsequential as that may be. I am not something somebody shoved off on me. I am what I choose to be, and I am *it*." Lewis' pride in self-knowledge is premature, however, and just as wrong as Ed's belief that only through the imaginative, the unreal, the mysterious image of the golden-eyed girl in the midst of making love to Martha could he find what he needed ("another life, deliverance"). Through characterization, imagery, and structure, Dickey makes, and remakes, his points.

Perhaps the chief weakness in *Deliverance* is the fact that all its parts do mesh so well. The explicit leads of the opening — with the charged dialogue between Ed and Lewis, even though it may be ironic dialogue, speech that we as readers understand as naive and indulgent — leave very little for the reader to come to alone. Once into the story, however, the demands of the plot keep Dickey from repeating his theme excessively; the movement of the book is apt for this twentieth-century river story. Dickey's is an incremental yet never leisurely rhythm, based on moderately long sentences which often branch with unexpected modifiers, and come up short in a simpler structure. The shorter sentence often repeats a key element from the longer:

> With my cheek on one shoulder, I lay there on my side in the crevice, facing out, not thinking about anything, solid on one side with stone and open to the darkness on the other, as though I were in a sideways grave. The glass of the bow was cold in my hands, cold and familiar. The curves were beautiful to the touch, a smooth chill flowing, and beside the curves the arrow lay — or stood — rigidly, the feathers bristling when I moved a little, and the points pricking at me. But it was good pain; it was reality, and deep in the situation. (175)

The voice of Ed Gentry, narrator, not unlike Dickey's own in poems like "Driving" and "Falling," maintains its pace, suiting its narrative to the natural flow of the action. Dickey-Gentry is good at controlling not only what the reader learns, but the manner in which he learns it. In this scene with a change of movement, as the hunted man realizes danger is near, Dickey varies the

tempo of the sentences to build suspense:

> I was down to my last two points, and he was still right there, stooping a little but now facing me just a shade more than he had been. Then he moved, slightly but quickly, and I fought to hold on to the arrow. He stirred the ground once with his foot, and I saw his face — saw that he had a face — for the first time. The whole careful structure of my shot began to come apart, and I struggled in my muscles and guts and heart to hold it together. His eyes were moving over the sand and rock, faster and faster. They were coming. (197)

The masterful parenthetical "saw that he had a face," which personalizes the encounter tremendously, stops the action briefly before Dickey resumes the intense pace. Because of writing like this, the similarity of much of the narrative — long accounts of action in the river, or in the hunt — never becomes repetitious.

Viewed as a masculine initiation story, set on a river, *Deliverance* can be considered a kind of gothic, even bitter, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. That the story is no idyl! is part of Dickey's theme: the simple tests, the primitive encounters, may be almost beyond civilized people — not out of their own deficiency, either physical or moral — but from the exigencies of common sense. Just as Dickey's comments on the seemingly pastoral life are scathing in their satire, and the doctor echoes them, so his notion that civilization *has* brought humanity pervades the "After" section. His experience has brought him new strength in his own minor art; he adds to his friends; he has recognized that Drew, in his understanding of and ability to play music, and to believe in morality, was the strongest of them all. Tom Sawyer relinquished his fantasy, or at least Huck Finn did. So too did Ed and Lewis (but Bobby, in contrast, searched only further and further, finally going, so people said, to Hawaii). And the "deliverance" that Ed expected to find in some imaginative escape was finally to be his not by leaving reality, but by immersing himself in it.

> I went downtown. The main thing was to get back into my life as quickly and as deeply as I could; as if I had never left it. I walked into my office and opened the door wide so that anybody who wanted to look could see me there, shuffling papers and layouts. (280)

There are other borrowings — partly satiric, partly poignant — from Twain, especially from *Huck*: the gold imagery, suggesting first the treasure and then the piles of gold in Huck's imagination, gold which, at the close of his novel, Huck is ready to give to Tom, if only he can leave the Widow Douglas. The search for freedom, Huck's ideal, about which Ed wonders on September 15, "Is this freedom?" Huck's use of the truth-lie imagery ("I never seen anybody but lied one time or another"[2]), which becomes the moral center of

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[2] Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (N. Y.: Grosset and Dunlap, 1918), p. 1.

Deliverance. Huck's yearning for his "old rags," rags that Ed finally gives up to be burned, and for blood, this aplenty in Ed's far-from-romantic experience. There are also owls, "who-whooing about somebody that was dead," owls in *Deliverance* who return to Dean's tent the night before his death; conspiratorial friendships, considerably darker in the adult context Dickey gives them; and a plain and simple wanderlust:

> All I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change, I warn't particular. (3)

The wisdom of *Deliverance* is that this Huck-like quest, without purpose or direction, is shown to be futile. "How come? How come you to be doing this, in the fust place?" the skeptical inlanders ask Ed. And there is, of course, no answer: "Oh," I said, hesitating and not really knowing the answer, even now. "I guess we just wanted to get out a little" (261).

Reminiscent of Twain too is the important relationship between Lewis and Ed, a hero-worship situation at the beginning, based on Lewis' physical prowess and daring, become by the end of the novel a recognition between equals, a shift of power not unlike that between Tom Sawyer and Huck. Tom's rhetoric in his case, the "right" way to adventure, to dare, was Lewis' "All-American" myth, male as muscle-building, sexually-prowling animal, predator known by his feats of strength and conquest, of whatever kind. Just as Huck's innocent and incisive acts topple Tom Sawyer's reliance on literary ritual, so the horrifying events of the real wilderness life (not that of villagers playing dulcimers) destroy the modern men's expectations — and it is particularly, if grotesquely, appropriate that, since so much of this kind of male identity is located in sexual prowess, here sodomy is the means to the men's initiation.

The sodomy is also the cause of the first murder, as Lewis reacts in a typically masculine pattern when he kills for the crime (that Bobby's "injury" turns out to be minor compared to those of the other three is another ironic comment on the impact of the situation). Only Drew questions the validity of Lewis' murder; only Drew has, this early in the novel, accepted his responsibility, its pain and its rewards. That acceptance is to be the deliverance of both Lewis and Ed, and their lives show their maturity in living them. Ed has new relationships, continued love for Martha, satisfaction from his son Dean. And Lewis "limps over from his cabin now and then and we look at each other with intelligence, feeling the true weight and purpose of all water. He has changed, too, but not in obvious ways. He can die now; he knows that dying is better than immortality. He is a human being, and a good one" (283).

The three days of Dickey's *Deliverance* have seemed like an eternity, and in some ways they are. But they give Ed, and Lewis, and perhaps Dickey himself, the kind of freedom from the stereotyped male image, and from the pride, that blinds so many would-be powerful men. It is no simple journey;

rather it is a contemporary descent into hell, modeled on the exploration-of-self through exploration-of-river that images a peculiarly American, masculine quest for identity:

> Why on God's earth am I here? I thought. . . . Something or other was being made good. I touched the knife hilt at my side, and remembered that all men were once boys, and that boys are always looking for ways to become men. (78)

SHADOWS

My shadow sheds its own pure light.
As you come closer, its translucent
shade darkens blue and trembles to-
ward the shape it needs to be, some-
thing I once was becoming perfect, free.

My mouth fills with the language of
the spectrum. Sunlight blinds our
backs and thighs. Our eyes soften.

But you never reach the edges of our
hands hovering above the tips of blades.
Light shortens. I can feel myself
fade and vanish in the rustle of grass.
You are the light my shadow sheds.

A. POULIN, JR.

THE LAST WINTER OF THE WAR

Daniel B. Marin

Regularly Lippy, Dan's neighborhood nemesis, met him with a "Sieg Heil" and sharp clack of boot heels. Mamie said, "Pay no mind." Dan avoided the street, but found, fingered in the snow of the front yard and on the dusty hood of his father's '36 Plymouth, ominous swastikas. Mamie said, "Look for trouble, you find it." Dan kept to the house, except for school. It was the last winter of the War.

But even at school, beyond the reach of Lippy, who went to the Junior High across town, Dan sat sheepish and fearful in Miss Green's fifth grade. And at recess he ran in the middle of the pack, anxious to match his stride and voice's pitch to those of the other boys. Led by Jack, squat, tough, relentlessly blue-eyed, and Big Rich, Jack's fleet "lieutenant," they hounded the girls over the schoolyard's gritty snow. The girls scattered squealing wildly, until chunky Miss Green came out to call the boys off or the bell rang. It was afterward, unbuckling his boots in the cloakroom's wet heat, that Dan caught the quick little glances of special scorn, as the girls flocked about Jack and Rich, whispering. Mamie said, "Just you go about your own business and let others go about theirs." Calm, knowing, unmovable, she sat shelling beans at the kitchen table. Brown whale of a woman.

Their business was what he feared. Rich's hard shoulder drove into his side and he tasted the schoolyard's icy grit. The squeals of the girls ceased. Jack said, "Hey, Jew, what are you doing?" When he scrambled up they ringed him, with hostility that all at once focused and magnified the pinpoint of crucial difference. Standing before them in the cold, white sunlight was a Jew, strange pretender in their territory, treacherous wolf in sheepish wool, at last at bay — watch out for those sharp Jewish teeth. The girls giggled excitedly as Jack wedged his squat body forward.

"Kike traitor."

"Watch your mouth." How weirdly small the voice in Dan's constricting throat.

"Who you talking to?" Jack said pushing close.

"You," Dan managed.

"I'll handle this, Rich."

Rich backed off to the circle of spectators. "Give him one for me, Jack."

"Give him one for me," the girls all shouted.

"Jew." The word smelled of licorice.

Dan braced against the push of Jack's body and against the threat of his blue eyes. The circle closed in upon him and the heavy taste of damp wool and leather pressed into his mouth. He couldn't draw air.

Jack was shouting: "Give me some room. How can I fight him with you guys on my back? I can't breathe." And when they shuffled back, Jack started

moving around him, in and out, faking punches, flashing black-gloved fists in a deft menacing whir.

Dan knew the ritual. He was to strike the first blow. When he did, however lightly, Jack would step back, smile grimly, and say, "All right, buddy, you asked for it," then move in punching. All would see that the Jew deserved what he was going to get, and Jack would see that he got it.

"Come on," Jack said. "You're the guy who talks big, you're the guy who's looking for trouble." This, too, was part of the ritual: the chance to back down, to tell them that he wasn't the one who wanted trouble. Then the fight could dissolve into talk about who wanted trouble in the first place. But Dan's voice snagged somewhere down in his throat and the chance passed. Jack grabbed his jacket and yelled in his face, "What are you waiting for, chickenliver kike?" Without thought Dan hit him flat on the jaw.

Jack got up slowly, feigning fearful surprise. He had what he wanted. They had all seen how it was. "Okay, kike, didn't you ask for it?" He turned to the spectators: "Didn't he?"

They played out their part:

"Bust his Jew nose."

"Hit him."

"Bust his Jew ass."

And again the girls giggled.

But just as Jack came back around to him someone yelled, "Greeny," and there was the familiar chunky shape jerking toward them over the snow and the bell ringing the end of recess.

"Okay," Jack said, face pushing close the licorice words, "we're going to finish this after school. You got a beating coming, buddy. We know where you live."

"Okay, buddy," Dan said.

They charged past Greeny and raced for the side door. Once more Dan ran in the middle of the pack, as though nothing had happened. In class Jack and Rich whispered together in the back of the room. Jack touched his jaw and grinned at Dan. Dan rubbed the knuckles of his quick right hand and grinned back, pretending that he, too, itched for the fight. Meanwhile the girls snickered. After school, when Jack sent Rich over to set things up, Dan told him his own gang would be waiting in his back yard, "in case anybody still wants trouble."

Rich sneered. "Get your Jew gang ready."

So: their business? To pick him out. Were there outward signs he could not suppress? The scar on his jaw, ripped two winters ago in a sledding accident? Some thin discord, nasal echo of remote times and foreign places, perhaps as he recited the Lord's Prayer or the Pledge of Allegiance? The light sweat of hesitation that slid from his brow as he did a sum on the blackboard? Never mind. They scented dangerous difference. Go get your Jew gang ready.

And as always Lippy lurked by a tree listening for the squeak of Jewish

boot soles on the sidewalk's snow.

"Sieg Heil."

Clack.

With mysterious purpose he slipped into the woods at the bottom of the street, while fear swelled up in Dan like a hot bruise.

Had he counted on somehow getting Mamie out there to help him? Mamie said only, "Fear is half the battle."

Fine thing for Mamie to say. Mamie, who fearlessly wielded her clothes-poles to break the backs of the terrible blacksnakes that each summer crawled out from under the side porch — despite his father's telling her repeatedly that he couldn't keep on buying her new poles every week — Mamie feared not. She weighed three hundred pounds. She claimed she drew strength from the ground she walked on. Was there a being, natural or unnatural, that could lift her off it, or would dare try? "I wish he would," she said in her level alto voice. Mamie herself wasn't going to fool with anything unless it gave her cause, as did the unfortunate and misguided snakes, but she certainly could and would, she declared, lick any man, beast, or devil foolish enough to fool with her. Nothing alive, or dead, would stop her from that. She said to his father, "Then you better find a way to keep those blacksnakes out of my path," and went on breaking snake backs and poles. And his father went on bringing new poles home in the Plymouth until, as Mamie said they would, the snakes grew wise and kept more to their own dark regions. So when Dan stood among his classmates intoning the Lord's Prayer, Mamie's invulnerable brown hulk shaped for his uninformed imagination the final mysterious phrase: as he saw it, Mamie was "the power and the glory forever and ever." She could say, "Fear is half the battle," because before she so much as thought to raise a hand, her battle was half won. But this wasn't her battle and she had work to do.

Dan went back outside, where the November wind snatched at his breath. Instead of Mamie he got Butch, who lived next door. Butch was a year younger than Dan, and not much of a fighter.

"We're going to bust their asses," Dan told him, leaving open the question of how many others were going to help them do it. Butch looked doubtful, but didn't contradict him. Slowly he put on his jacket. Over in Dan's back yard he hung onto the crab apple tree's first limb, ready to climb. Not much of a fighter. Still, if he wasn't Mamie, Dan considered, he was better than nobody.

"There they are," Butch said.

From where they watched under the tree, the ground sloped down past the line of clothes Mamie had hung out that morning and along the porch side of the house to the fence dividing the back and front yards and then down across the front yard to the privet hedge that shielded the property from the street. There, scarcely visible through the hedge, the dark shapes bunched,

separated, bunched — Jack's gang. Already they were outnumbered, maybe three to one, but Dan figured he and Butch could make a stand at the gate in the fence between the back and front yards. If he could count on Butch to stay there.

"Lay off that limb," he told him.

"Where are our guys?"

"Coming."

"They better get here fast."

"Don't worry so much."

"We need more men," Butch insisted, and started pulling himself up into the tree.

"Where are you going?"

"To see what they're doing."

"A lot of good you'll be up a tree."

He let himself back down. "If our guys don't get here soon, we're in for it."

"If they don't," Dan said, "we'll get Mamie."

"Maybe you better go get her then."

Dan concentrated on the dark shapes behind the hedge. Occasionally some branches would be pulled apart, a face would appear and look up at them, then disappear.

"Just shut up and quit worrying. Or are you going to chicken out?"

"No," Butch said.

Nevertheless, he hung onto the limb.

The wind began to blow a trace of new snow as it pushed around in the tree and whipped and snapped the line of clothes, and more dark shapes joined those moving behind the hedge. When Butch again suggested, "Maybe you better go get her," Dan knew that he had to do something right away or Jack and his men were going to come up across the front yard, through the gate into the back yard, and surround them. And Butch was ready to climb that tree, or go home. But if he could get Mamie to stand there with them, so Jack and his gang could see her, just that would be enough. So he said, "Okay, keep out of that tree and holler if they look like they're getting ready to charge," and trotted down toward the back door, ducked under the line of frozen clothes where the poles waved crazily in the wind, and went on into the house, through the unheated pantry and into the stove-warmed kitchen.

Mamie sang at her work at the stove: "I looked over Jordan . . ." — hauling the sound up from somewhere unreachable, way down inside her, as she stirred something in a pot, her heavy, brown elbow moving foward and back, forward and back in the ponderous rhythm of her song — "I looked over Jordan and what did I see. . . ."

"Mamie."

The song sank away, but the elbow held the rhythm — forward, back, forward. . . .

"What? What you want now?"

"You. You've got to help us."

"Help who do what? Didn't I tell you when you were in here before. . . ."

"Butch and me. We need more men."

"Do I look like a man? Now I have work to do."

"Just stand there and let them see you."

Her face turned, her body turned, stretching her apron's old print across her chest, until one placid eye focused on him. "Stand where so who can see me?" The eye held him. "Don't I have enough to do standing here? If somebody needs to see me they can come in here and look."

"They're going to attack now," he said.

"Who's going to attack who?"

"Jack's gang. They're going to attack us."

"Tell me what business I have fooling with any attacks."

The eye let him go and she turned back to the pot. "A band of angels . . ."

"But all I have is Butch. If they just see you."

She covered the pot and turned to him again. "Ain't no one going to attack you without cause. What cause you give them?"

"No cause. They called me names."

"What cause you give them to call you names?"

"No cause. I was just with them."

"And who told you to be with them?"

"No one," he said.

"If no one told me to be with someone who didn't want me to be with them," she said, "then I wouldn't be with them." And moving off toward the dishes cabinet, she added, "Now you better go do whatever it is you have to do so I can do what I got to do in here."

"How can I fight a whole gang?" he yelled.

"If you got a fight to fight, you best quit this yelling and go fight it. Nobody's paying me to do any fighting around here."

"Yellow, yellow."

But she merely said, without even turning, "I ain't yellow either — that's for sure."

"Chickenliver," he breathed.

"What?" She reached into the cabinet. "What?"

"Nothing."

"Well," she said, bringing the dishes across to the table, "you go on. Because when you get back I'm going to wash out that mouth with brown soap so it'll be clean enough to eat with."

"I won't be back."

"You'll be back when you get hungry," she said.

Fine driving snow filled the sky. Butch stood up in the tree hollering:

"They're coming. Come on, they're coming." When they saw Dan, Jack's gang, eight boys now strung out in a line at the bottom of the front yard, hooted and jumped and shook their fists in the rushing white air. Dan snatched Butch down off the limb.

Butch was shivering. "Where's Mamie?"

"In the kitchen."

"Now what do we do?"

Maybe, if what had just happened in the kitchen had not happened and if Mamie had not been waiting with the awful brown soap, he would have simply let Butch climb the tree or go home or do whatever he wanted and himself gone back into the house, into the nice warm kitchen, pretending it was only another day, too cold to stay outdoors. But that pretense wasn't any longer possible. No, nor those others, after what had happened in the schoolyard. There could be no more fearful matching of stride and voice, useless hiding of what he was and might be revealed to be. Looking down through the swirling snow at the eight boys lined up in front of the hedge, he knew what he had to do, what Mamie after all had just told him he had to do: fight this fight with everything he had, with anything he could get hold of — sticks, stones, whatever. And fight it not to keep from losing — he'd done enough of that in the schoolyard — but to win. He'd see if he could win.

He said to Butch, "What we'll do is get those clothespoles and meet them at the gate." And they ran down and each got one of Mamie's poles and stood in the gateway with the poles at ready when Jack gave his signal. As they came howling up across the front yard, Dan thought one thought: hurt them as badly as he could, hurt them, hurt them so they know it.

"Come on," he yelled. "Come and get us."

Rich, screaming curses, fist in the air, came ahead of the others. With a motion Dan never knew he had, he chopped Rich down, mid-stride, on the side of the neck. Rich rolled franticly in the snow. "Sonofabitch has a log." Dan jabbed him in the chest and then in the back as he scrambled out of range. The rest, halted behind Jack out of reach, pulled Rich to his feet.

"They really want to get rough," Jack said.

"You're damn right," Dan shouted.

"Goddamn Jew," one of them said.

"Come here and tell *me* that."

They just stood watching him. Maybe Jack would give up the fight, shout a last insult, and lead his men away. But no, that wasn't likely.

"We've got to get those poles," Rich said.

"Come get it." Dan hefted the pole, inviting him.

"Okay," Jack said. He signaled the gang to spread out. "Now move in slow. When they swing, grab for the poles."

The line crept forward. This time Rich hung back and let Jack move in first. Dan swung. Jack went for the pole, missed, jumped back. Dan got set to swing again.

"We can't hold them off much longer," Butch whispered. "There's too many."

"We've got the gate," Dan said. "As long as we stay right here we're all right."

Now Jack had to figure out what to do. He took the gang back down to the bottom of the yard, where they all hunkered down in a knot by the hedge, except Rich, who stood watch, in case Dan and Butch tried to charge them before they mapped out their plan. It didn't take them long. They broke out of the huddle with a whoop and formed a line and started up toward the gate. At first they came with careful steps and arms raised to fend off the poles. Then at a signal from Jack they ran, then stopped and moved forward slowly. Dan thought Okay, and got set to hurt someone, no matter how they came. Now they came on, Jack in the center, Rich on the far right, crouching, stalking, their breath jabbing out into the snow. Of course Jack wanted Dan to swing the pole before they were in reach, but he held back and held back, and let them get close. He watched for Jack to give the signal.

Screaming they charged. Dan swung at Jack's head. The pole pulled heavy, was loose, was grabbed again closer up, so he couldn't wrench it free. "Got it, got it," the grabber yelled. Dan shifted it out in front against the push of their bodies. "Hit them, Butch, hit." But Butch's abandoned pole was clattering against the fence palings while Butch ran in panic somewhere behind him. Jack's face, reddened by the wind, strained close to Dan's. "Kike, kike." His hot breath exploded over Dan's jaw. He let go of the pole with one hand and hit at those words, at the face, the hard cheek bone. The pole pinned Jack's hands to his stomach and Dan hit again: the nose; there was blood. Dan hit again, bringing his knuckles down on top of the head. With his hands pinned down, Jack was helpless, frantic. Dan would have hit him again and again, until his hand fell apart, but the pole caught in the gateway, bowed, and snapped, releasing them upon him, screaming, punching, grabbing however they could.

He swung half of the pole he still had as he went down and got Rich across the eyes and heard the yell of pain. The pack of struggling bodies pressed him down and pressed Jack down on top of him, his blood-streaked face against Dan's. Dan spit and butted and worked the pole-end in under Jack's collar against a bone there until something inside Jack split off and moved. Jack screamed. "Off, off. My chest is busted in." Flailing at Dan, they piled off.

But Dan wasn't done. He was going to kill someone if he could and he came up through the tangle of boys wielding that half of clothespole in a murderous arc, whirling at the scattering shapes with mad spinning energy. On all sides they fell away and he whirled, wild with the intension of his own motion, and going oblivious, in the rushing white, to all distinction of color, form, earth, air.

Something reached in and held him: a hand, an arm, a voice: "Boy, boy." Mamie held him by the arm. The gang was going. They lugged Jack down

across the front yard, around the hedge, and moved on up the street. Mamie said, "Lay down that pole. They're gone now." Breathing heavily she reached across him and took it. "Come on. You've done enough fighting now. You've done the best you can do." She turned him.

He had forgotten about Butch, who now climbed out of the tree and came down to where Dan and Mamie stood. "I have to go," he said, but paused, as if waiting for Dan to release him.

"Okay," Dan said. "It's okay." And Butch went out the gate, tracking the new snow toward his house. It hadn't been Butch's battle had it? The bilious taste that pushed up from Dan's stomach he swallowed back and abruptly, in his stillness, he saw himself— so small beside Mamie, so bruised, and open to stinging wind and snow, to whatever might skulk out from the darkening woods to finger fresh swastikas for him to find.

"Pay no mind," Mamie said.

Did she read his thought?

Her heavy arm, grey from the cold, lifted him, hitched him up over her soft, striding hip, and he let her carry him home.

THE JUNKYARD TRACTOR-DRIVER DEFIES HIS DEATH

It is a mild hunger, a space winking at the center.
I have seen it in newsreels,
grainy over-fast footage of ballplayers & infant refugees,

it opens like a mouth, breath of lumber abandoned in full sun,

and my wife & child are bent warmly together
telling made-up pointless things of
what grows hungry & lean in the weeds of the junkyard, what
thrives on maggots & spilled semen
& things that rot in private, turning new again.
They want lunch before
I am ready, they want the a.m. radio in the Chevrolet
& oily sandwiches in cellophane & a rest,
I want the mouth at the center, that yawns,
sleepy in the sun, tasting the decay of me, the grease & bone.

I piledrive the caterpillar into the heart of it, master
of forward & reverse, lift & release.
They see my bandana flutter back
like a moth, fighting up-draft, see my eyes jerk open wide
& hands fly up, they are on their feet.

Next time I will be the same,

a wiry statue of shingles & pitch & broken two-by-fours
that stalks down the pile scowling
to where the woman & child wait
in bright colors, hungry, full of smalltalk, hot
in the sun that is hottest on junk.
My tractor will crouch behind idling, growling.
I will be what my family

needs of me, a man that comes from his name-calling death

more compact, denser, a provider
of doggedness & silence, devouring stale sandwiches.
They will see me coming

as if from the graininess of a long distance, in a lens,
jaws chewing the grit & weeds of his death.

They will open their small hands to me
& smile: the one who squats peaceable on an overturned bucket,
the other tumbling in bright dust: they will
stop chattering, & smile, saved.

PHILIP PIERSON

EDGES

Broadheads must be sharp.
And I have honed them:
File,
stone,
strop.

The slice of flesh from my knuckle
proves;

I look for the edge and there is none.
That proves.

Three blades, identically:
File,
stone,
strop.

The rest is ready:
Eyes,
bow,
string.

* * *

This ache —
this mild tearing between the shoulders —
is ancient.
Egyptians had it.
This stinging cramp in the fingers
from bowstring, slipping away,
English knew at Agincourt.

And now I have it.

The string whispers, now, and now, and now.
And this paper deer, trapped in lithography,
accepts the innumerable flashing shafts.

His head, turned toward me,
lifts a bony crown.

I loose the last of the arrows
and a sixth shaft hangs from his heart.

The release is getting slick —
more than slick —
it is magic.

Ah, I have no scruples
against tearing the heart from this paper deer.

As I walk to the target, I carry the bow, belly-up,
and it taps my leg at each step,
prodding:
Can you? Can you? Can you?

I pull the first of the shafts backward,
out of its tunnel in straw.
The point catches paper,
tearing.

Ah: Can I?
People ask me:
How can you?
How could anyone?

The second shaft, backing out, is stubborn,
having hit a solid braiding of straw.

I pull harder.

The answer comes
with a new twinge of the ache.

* * *

Up here, the air rarefied,
I the only god who can breathe it,
look upon this forest
from this tiny platform, wood and steel,
its single sawtooth edge bitten into the tree,
a chain wrapped around the tree,
holding the teeth tight.

Vertigo lasts a minute,
goes as quickly as deer,
appearing by magic,
gone, flag flashing.

Mind talks to me:

I have trimmed away interfering branches.
I can aim in all the directions pointed at
by 315 degrees of a circle
(the tree robs me of 45).

That makes untold acreage
where deer are safe
from me,
my arrows,
my invisible edges.

The angle radiates forever.
A deer can walk from miles away in that zone
to my tree.

He can snort at me, if he will.
He can scrape — and rutting is here —
his antlers against my tree,
and his hide will be whole,
his heart unpunctured,
his spine one piece.

I will lose the venison.

All daydreams,
this talk about angles, this slice of pie.
It has passed the time. Joke.

Nothing moves in this forest except
the stars, the moon,
the leaves with breezes.

This waiting before daylight is lonely,
this watching the edge of the moon
drift west and fade
as the big star who feeds us all
begins changing the looks of the eastern horizon.

Sun creeps in and kills the moon and the stars,
illuminates, enlivens the dew,
burns it away, hydrologically.

God: nearly time.

I remember the angle of safety,

the piece-of-pie joke my mind told,
a remnant of Miss Gianini,
Geometry I.
Myself, then, powerful in puberty,
studying the legs in my row, next to me.

Rutting.

Studying, when she came
from behind her desk,
the legs of Miss Gianini,
herself geometry.
Solid geometry.

That was another joke
my mind told me
while waiting:

For the bell,
for the lunchroom walk,
for the slide of a knuckle
down Mary's left buttock.

She lifts her books
to the locker.
Slam, the hasp clasps,
Mary a careful girl —
with her books.

I shake off the dream, return to the stand,
high school a world away.

Birds awaken.
They do it in seconds,
from silence at 4 a.m.
to screaming thousands at 4:01.

It is time.

Killing the deer will be
artificial truth, science,
like knowing the sun feeds all of us.

The tree's shelf fungus lives from the sun,
without any chlorophyll help,
not its own, anyway, but the tree's.
And photosynthesis is another long story.

Chain:
Shelf fungus,
tree, leaves, chlorophyll,
darkness, light, shadow, sun,
fill in the blank.

Another widening V of relationships.

And me,
on my own shelf, grown in steel,
on the side of this tree
in the not-light, not-dark of dawn.
Waiting.

I've logged how many hours
in trees like this,
waiting?

Enough to build a small ship?
To fletch two thousand arrows?
To grow apples from seed?

In my time served in trees,
I've seen one deer,
drawn the bow at none,
stuck none.

And the one, running scared,
never saw me, nor cared, nor knew I was there.

I wonder, in tree, what scared him,
what put me in the way of his fleeing.

Another hunter perhaps,
who fell from his perch in leaning
out for a shot,
impaling himself, his own liver perhaps,
on a broadhead duller than mine.

The maladroit's image entertains me
in waiting. I see his skeleton,
ages old, anodized shaft caged
in the ribs.

The man, then, feeding the grass,
the tree, the deer.
The deer.

* * *

Ah, it's too deliberate.
It should be shaky,
but it is not.
The release is slick, like
fat in the pan, hot.

I hear the feathers.
Shouldn't he?
But he does not.
He does not quite.
He does not quite whirl in time.

God. He catches it,
and carries it.
Banderilla too deep.

I wait.
He bleeds.
The edges are the thing.

HAROLD WILEY

TWO POEMS BY EDWARD WILSON

A PHOTOGRAPH OF MANDELSTAM AT 31

Somewhere in that room steam
begins to puff like breath from the spout
of the kettle on the hissing primus.
Soon a friend will offer you a biscuit and hot tea.

But first the shutter of the camera in his hand
must slam shut like a cell door
so we can see how already your captive face
is turning away, how shadow dusts your forehead,
how well your eye has mastered the exile's stare.

Here, no one believes we can say anything
dangerous enough to be locked up for.
Our stomachs are full. Snow does not
lean on our houses. Even so,
we have tracked you word by word a little way
across the steppes

and sit now, tonight, remembering how you say *bread*,
a loaf you've earned.
Say *stove*. We will huddle around.
Hand us the word *glass*
trembling as if it would spill out of itself.

THE MINER

He gripped the banister and plodded up the stairs
like a narrow-gauge engine on a grade.
I hardly noticed and pushed past with a jar
of fresh pond water to label and drip on a slide

in my makeshift lab, the unused office
off the waiting room. But I forgot the microscope
and listened when he sat with his back to the rippled glass
door, counting his breath like change in a sock.

And I followed when he shuffled after the nurse.
Under the shirt he was as white as her uniform
except for a blue-black mark, no bruise,
but the tattoo a lump of coal stamped on his arm.

My father joked but their eyes swung far
apart when his stethoscope touched ribs. Listening hard,
my father watched something under the floor.
The miner looked out the window and examined the clouds.

SUSSLOV

HENRY H. ROTH

Ellen was always wrong. Never once had she snagged Susslov's hulking figure — how could she possibly mistake his hideous snout, those clever sleepy grey eyes and those elitist sneering bloodless lips? Yet twice, three times a year, dining in a restaurant or strolling through a new chintzy created indoor shopping mall, Gregory's wife would appear greatly flustered and exclaim, "Isn't that your Susslov, your friend Ivan Susslov. . . ." Gregory always answered impatiently, "He is *my* flutter from the past . . . why keep looking for him? In dreary clothes and battered walking shoes, Susslov may indeed reappear from some unexpected direction but I will be the one to spot him. I am the chosen. Only I am Ivan Susslov's friend." And defensively she would blurt out, "You only talk prim and priggish when we discuss Susslov." Soon though she forgets the entire shabby discourse, having spied a new boutique or some new dessert — all very real and substantial and correct sights.

However, just as suddenly, at home in the panelled den or the sunny kitchen or in their feather bed, Ellen would mar the pleasant mood — "I think he's funny, strange and mysterious. And Ivan unsettles you, sometimes you even look frightened when I mention his name. Remember when he brought a bouquet of white flowers."

"His second visit when we still lived in the city, of course I remember."

Susslov had bowed, smiled only at Ellen. Long, lemon-shaped face coated in yellow benevolence, the weird nose lunging forward as if to taunt, teeth still jagged and rotten, hissing, grinding out a fearful noise; Susslov kept grinning like a sly shark and presented his bouquet to Ellen with a courtly, silly flourish. Still she was very charmed.

And Susslov, never forgetting his eternal role as wisdom guide for all of us (in high school he, the most gifted of the many gifted children in our special class), sniffed, drew in his breath and exhaled the information that white flowers were always the proper gift no matter whether a good or evil halo circled the hosts and their home, white flowers could only please or soothe. . . . Gregory had happily shrieked, "God, Ivan, you believe in that voodoo stuff, it's a witchcraft religion." Susslov stared gloomily at Gregory but spoke softly to Ellen (his sedate tone more like that of the kind wise doctor Chekov so favors), "Oh my dear I sensed and was correct, you have a splendid sweet aura. The ghosts delight in you and they will appreciate the white

flowers. God, but you have a gentle and content light dangling over you."

Ellen squealed, "You can see it and actually see it — how marvelous!"

"How about a drink, Susslov?"

"A glass of red wine without ice," he ordered curtly.

In school Susslov was not the menacing or pathetic figure. Though possessing a proud and substantial bearing he was noticeably uncomfortable and even unsuitable for all inter-personal and school confrontations and the result was that all who came into any sort of contact with him initially cringed but inevitably became restless and moody. Susslov himself was most relaxed under sluggish leaden clouded days; most genial before windy, windy chilly afternoons — almost coltish as the fierce air (giving off more than the hint of sleet, snow or heavy thudding rain) playfully kicked him about. . . . He was most visibly content and benignly philosophical observing a winter twilight glazing the outdoors with a smooth silver lacquer . . . and Susslov efficiently animated when a substitute teacher appeared, and as is the custom the class wolfishly attacked and Susslov became the teacher's benefactor, parrying the class's venom and not always illhumored wish to lash back at dumb authority — Susslov's heroic stances were not kiss-ass gestures but simply the honorable thing to do before clear injustice — but for most teenagers it was always difficult to feel sympathy for a teacher lodged in the victim's role; however all the students clearly or secretly detested him.

Susslov's parents had bribed their way out of Vienna even after the Fascist takeover, proof of their cunning wealth and good fortune was that they still made it safely to America; both parents easily and very profitably continued their professions — the father, a skilled neurosurgeon and professor, and the mother, a clinical psychologist. . . . Ivan Susslov, the brilliant son of gifted parents moved among his parents' friends with the ease of the son to the manor born and glided among his peers with the annoying diffident ease of foreigners in benevolent strange lands where success is inevitable and without great challenge. We had all gathered together in a special school setting for the most academically promising. Susslov spoke several languages fluently and at thirteen was the tallest, wisest and smartest child; none of the students had the temerity to often challenge Susslov in verbal combat, but everyone longed to hand Susslov somehow, some miraculously how, a hiding that would stall — if only for a day — his dallying, preening before each subject as if it were his own private mirror.

So he would never be the child/man to draw many or any friends into his orbit; even teachers backed off and joined in the bullying process. If there was noise in the class, almost always Susslov was accused (rarely was he guilty); whenever tests were collected it was always Susslov's blue book (no matter where he sat, usually in the middle of the middle row) that was snatched away first — giving every other child additional seconds to fill in a paragraph or nail down the final math solution. Once during a physics lecture the instructor singled him out for a lengthy vitriolic tongue lashing for whispering during lab

— Gregory confessed he was the guilty party, not Ivan who sat three seats away, and the teacher let him off with gentle disapproval. After class Susslov ambled over, thanked Gregory and pompously defined courage, as confessing even when no one cares. But Susslov thanked him and became his friend. They both took the same subway home and Susslov, first making it seem accidental, then showing it to be a definite ritual, met Gregory in front of the lockers each afternoon. Gregory had several rowdy companions for the ride back home; Susslov's presence was tolerated and barely noted.

"What do you think of Ivan Susslov's nose?"

"How did you know I was thinking about him?"

"You have this sexy frown and your eyebrows tepee together."

"You're terrible."

"Very well, but what about Susslov's schnozz?"

"I don't think anything of it."

"You're kidding, you must be kidding, you gotta be kidding . . . you, who see him everywhere but in our cedar closet — in Sears, in Bams, and Steak Houses and the Legion Parade — have lost sight of his proboscis."

She laughed, "He definitely has a nose, I know that."

They had all searched for flaws in Susslov's enigmatic smug exterior, and found a nose. . . . There Susslov is now, long arms weighed down by two packed briefcases, and here again those beady questing dozing eyes, thin bitter lips; an unblemished complexion save for the endlessly long and curved ski nose packed with king and peasant sized blackheads.

"Don't you remember the blackheads lining those nostrils, god, the pores, the dirty scummy pores, that man still collects."

"You're terrible, really terrible. You tease him even now. Why does he frighten you so?"

All dove into caricature; the more literary bullies dubbed him the Austrian Cyrano without even a mock girl friend; the more vulgar described the discrepancy in size between his massive nose and midget penis. Susslov responded with some dignity to the attack, lunging forward through the school corridors waving his briefcases, flailing away as if the taunting words were muggers and he sniffed loudly, his nose the mighty prow beating off scornful waves. . . . Maybe Ellen was correct. Susslov scared everybody. He knew something or rather was past knowing; he seemed to declare, forget the journey you are about to embark on, there's nothing there, the promised lands, the wealth and promise are all cheaply manufactured illusions; but it was our future, the only journey we could possibly take and we hated him for giving up the chase but tagging along as sneering guide. . . . Maybe that's it/maybe that's not it.

"Will you bump into him again?"

"Sure."

"He's still teaching at Princeton."

"At Princeton, New Jersey, a professor of philosophy."

"You could write him there."

"But I won't."

"I think he's fascinating. *I'd like to see him again and soon.*"

"Maybe tomorrow at the supermarket checkout counter."

"Gregory, he was your only friend at that school. Susslov's your only anchor to growing up."

"Anchors weigh you down."

"They're also required on every ship."

"I'll write him someday and definitely will meet Susslov again, never fear. He'll be freeloading supper once again. I know he used to hang out at the roof garden of the Museum and look for stray intellectual runaways."

Ellen didn't believe him but twice Gregory had spotted Susslov's eyes cradling each young lady milling about the Museum area; once Susslov had confessed to his indifferent success at landing females.

"I'll write Ivan and offer an invitation if you don't," she challenged.

"Fair warning," he replied.

"Did you tease Susslov too?" Ellen often asked.

"Only once."

"Once is too much, he must have been so lonely in America as a child, so isolated. . . ."

"Hey, he had a mommy and daddy."

"You know what I mean."

"No I don't. All us teenagers were isolated, moody, feeling superior and inferior. Look at how our own children delight in being sullen moody, and then they're euphoric."

"Ivan was yanked from a native land to a second strange country. It's not the same and you shouldn't have tricked him once . . . see how you recall the incident, that proves you still feel guilt."

"Nuts. It only proves I've an excellent memory. And besides on all other occasions I treated Ivan Susslov with respect and sometimes even courteously. . . . I still let him ride with me on the subway and shared my candy. He wasn't big on sharing, I do recall."

"You've told me so often how he introduced you to foreign films and art."

"Ok ok. But he's not my saint and I'm not his Judas. Susslov did introduce me to Rene Clair and Vigo and Renoir and the Museum of Modern Art. I've told you the story countless times."

"And you hated him for it."

"You make me repeat these stories like some little kid who keeps waiting for her favorite part."

"I think it's touching that he had so much to offer even then."

"I was only rotten once and it wasn't that bad."

"I don't want to hear it."

"Christ, you've heard my confession dozens of times."

"Sneaking out of the subway, then as the door shut and the subway pulled away, you and your pals raced down the platform hooting, howling and pointing at Ivan. . . ."

"Ok, it wasn't hilarious but teachers screwed him deliberately, he won no senior awards except for a state scholarship whose graders didn't know him."

"He's been brutalized."

"Sometimes he invited nasty attention."

"Ivan doesn't . . . he doesn't, you never said that before. . . ."

"When we delve into Susslov, god how he corrupts our equilibrium. I do hate him, a little."

But there were other times Gregory had not confessed to Ellen — a host of small rebuffs — but the New Year's Eve debacle surely topped the list of indignities. They were to see two Renoir films, dine at a French restaurant, then go to Times Square and be swept up by dumb revelers and finally prowl about the streets looking for girls and then head home. But Gregory suddenly got a better offer, an invite to a party in his neighborhood. He accepted with alacrity, tried to call Susslov but the wire was busy and then neglected, half forgot, to call back.

The next day, a tight voiced Susslov called.

"Where were you, Gregory?"

"I'm sorry. I tried to call you yesterday but there was no answer."

"Strange, I was home, my parents were home."

"I mean the phone was busy."

"You should have called back, Gregory."

"I'm sorry. How was Times Square without me?"

"You're a swine."

"Huh, are you nuts."

"You're a dirty swine. I looked forward to New Year's Eve."

"It's a free country schmuck. Go away, Susslov, go far away."

Susslov kept insisting he was a dirty swine until Gregory hung up.

Anxious to confess something, Gregory told Ellen an oft repeated dream, a clear sexual dream; Ellen's cheeks were flushed and her blue eyes more enormous than ever as she sat at his feet and he minstreled.

"It takes place in a massive old fashioned urinal decked out in mod disco colors — the wallpaper is silver, the lights dazzling, there are no pay toilets and the contest is Fitzgerald and Hemingway all over again, sternly judging their manly tools — only I'm there with ninety-nine others squaring off against a triumphant Ivan Susslov. Everyone is a clear loser as they all clear out including me; Susslov begins to piss and the sound is like Niagara Falls."

Then Ellen surprised him, "I once went to lunch with Susslov."

"You."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He asked me."

"Should I ask what else he asked?"

"Nothing. Ivan seemed relieved that I expected nothing more. Once he saw I was not ready to be bedded he was incredibly humorous and charming and relaxed."

"What if he had asked you to bed?"

"I don't know."

"But he didn't."

"No. Do you think I made up the story?"

"About not sleeping with him?"

Ellen smiled. "About having lunch."

Think the stupid irredeemable scene/fantasy often enough, then the damn scene/fantasy pops up like an unwanted jack in the box culled from some dummy's attic. When Gregory entered his house one normal late afternoon he saw Susslov and Ellen huddled together on the love seat. They had been crying, both however seemed damn glad to see him and they hurtled forward. . . . Alertly Gregory searched their clothes for hints of sexual disarray, Ellen pulled him into a cubicle revealing that Ivan had been summarily dismissed from the university. "He's been denied his next professorial rank. He put up a fuss and they fired him." Then Susslov was at his other elbow poking, "I'm sorry to impose, dear friend. I've just put my beloved little house up for sale and am aimlessly driving about and discovered myself near your suburban village," Susslov shakily lit up a Camel and continued, "My life in America is over."

Unshaven and disheveled yet absurdly menacing, puffing on his Camel, his unwieldy nose sniffing the air as if detecting a clue to supper on new life — Susslov, angry and vulnerable and it seemed high school revisited. Ivan stayed the night (a first); both invited him to stay longer but Susslov only mumbled, "Loose ends, everything must be tied, bundled, wrapped up and mailed out."

Ellen said, "Please visit again soon — let's make it next Sunday." Gregory nodded in approval. Susslov smiled grimly. And sent a postcard several days later . . . *plans altered, can not come Sunday, will try and see you before I exit.*

Across a tiny chipped plastic table in a very small spicy smelling Cuban restaurant on the upper West Side the two ex high school chums faced each other. A pensive Susslov reassured, "This is a fine greasy spoon." He confessed, "I have become something of an underground gourmet. You know it's been almost eleven months since I slept in your den."

"Of course we wondered whether you were still around, I'm glad you called today."

"I live, have lived only a few blocks from here. Order either the fried

chicken or shredded garlic beef, you will be enchanted." Susslov signalled a good humored slightly mustached waitress and in fluent Spanish ordered an outstanding meal. Neither man really talked until the flan and espresso were served.

Susslov absent mindedly rocked back and forth, "I leave this afternoon for Berlin."

"Why?"

He laughed heartily. "To die there eventually like my parents."

"Your parents are dead."

"Oh, some time ago. Once I graduated Columbia they returned to Europe. They were never at peace with your country's pace."

"And you?"

"I had great trouble at Princeton, in fact a scandal of sorts erupted. My chairman repeatedly fouled all my advancement opportunities. Finally I challenged him to a duel."

"You're kidding."

"I slapped his face, offered choice of weapons but the swine only fainted. I rarely kid, Gregory, if ever."

"The duel was over ranking, not a woman."

"Correct."

"Were you ever married?"

"Never."

"Ivan, to leave everything is dizzying; there must be memories here . . . ."

"One carries memories like luggage."

"I'm sorry you're leaving. I should have brought Ellen."

"No. Charming Ellen would only cry and say what a sad and sorrowful life I lead."

"You can always come back."

"The rot is played out. Genug!"

"I've not always been kind or helpful."

"Ah, Gregory, my friend, you have been fair. That memory I carry with me."

"You'll meet many new and interesting people."

"They'll turn away."

"We're all getting old, Susslov, try and curry their favor."

"I doubt if I know how to curry feelings."

Gregory paid the bill; outside he again wished Susslov good luck, this time the man declared luck was not in his vocabulary. Susslov shook hands firmly and quickly strode down the dirty street, paused and shouted over his shoulder, "Order the fried chicken next time." Seemingly oblivious that Gregory might still be watching him, Susslov began pulling battered white flowers from the recesses of his pants pockets. Walking slowly he flipped the

flowers into the gutter down a sewer and along the sidewalk. Then he reached into his corduroy sports jacket and like some spastic senile magician reduced to one trick kept yanking out, kept jerking out more and more useless limp petals and stems. He shrugged and eventually disappeared from sight. The wind had been silenced, the sun was at its sweetest and the broken flowers lay still and lifeless everywhere, like strewn bits of a corpse patiently awaiting the embalmer and the master jigsaw technician.

The editors invite articles on two topics we shall feature during 1979 — (1) American poets and American poetry at the end of a decade (with emphasis on post-modernist techniques and themes), for the Spring 1979 issue, deadline, January 15, 1979; and (2) the literary achievement of 1929, fifty years after, for the Fall 1979 issue, deadline, September 1, 1979.

TWO POEMS BY MARJORIE HAWKSWORTH

LIKENESS

I have created a beast.
He has eyelids like green leaves
and his hands are full of intrinsic seeds
like those of the fig or the strawberry.

The beast and I are in love.
He licks the moons from my fingernails
and sheds enough hair to make me a bed.
His hair is milkweed down.

He stands on his three legs
like a tripod of gold
and the lenses of his eyes
pinch light to take my picture.

In the picture my fangs are white
and my tail — permanently crimped —
a streak of lightning.

A FREE RIDE

Four porters
are carrying my bed downstairs
and I am in it.
They make no effort
to keep me from sliding.
I have propped my soles
against the footboard
and am hopeful that the mattress holds.
Where did they come from?
Turbaned like rajahs in a "B" movie
they talk to no one —
not even to each other.
They seem glad though
that I have stopped screaming.
Four identical faint smiles
gleam from corner to corner
of my improvised sedan.

Perhaps they are taking me to the Bazaar.

JAMES DICKEY'S *THE EYE-BEATERS:* "AN AGONIZING NEW LIFE"

RONALD BAUGHMAN

That James Dickey's *The Eye-Beaters, Blood, Victory, Madness, Buckhead and Mercy* marks the emergence of a new Self is suggested by lines from two of the book's poems, "Living There" and "The Cancer Match": "Old Self like a younger brother, like a son, we'd come rambling . . ." and "Internally, I rise like my old self/To watch . . . O Self, like a beloved son."[1] The new Self that appears in this volume is, in one sense, the culmination of Dickey's long exploration of transformation, reincarnation, and what H. L. Weatherby perceives as "exchanges of identity."[2] In *The Eye-Beaters*, however, the Self is no longer principally a medium for viewing and attempting to connect with the Not Me, the Other, but is instead the center of the poet's scrutiny. The new Self emerges in this volume in response to the writer's perception of constant, devastating change. As Robert Hill states, "For Dickey, life is moving and absolutely uncapturable."[3] Yet, in the five books preceding *The Eye-Beaters*, the chaos is primarily external, and the constant failures to connect with the Other are countered by a core of emotional stability in the Self. *The Eye-Beaters* presents a Self which is undercut by pervasive internal and external changes: age, disease, uncertainty, terror. And if this new Self is ultimately unable to triumph over the terrible confusions within and without, it does secure the "glory" of the struggle for an even momentary truth.

Three of the volume's poems — "Knock," "Diabetes," and "The Cancer Match" — introduce the dilemma of the old Self and function as a transition to the new. In *The Eye-Beaters*, things fall apart because the Self of Dickey's world begins to break down spiritually and physically. The terrifying unknown adversary which besets him in "Knock" represents an external violator of the speaker's privacy and security. Simultaneously, such internal forces as disease and age take their toll in "Diabetes" and "The Cancer Match." "Sugar," the first of the two poems composing "Diabetes," reveals that the protagonist, dying of the ordinary sweets of life, agrees to follow the doctors' advice of moderation and exercise to delay death a little while. In "Under Buzzards," the second poem of "Diabetes," and "The Cancer Match," however, the narrator dramatically opposes acquiescence to disease and death. "Under Buzzards" shows the speaker smashing his medical paraphernalia on the mountain rocks and risking his life for "how/Much glory is in it." In "The

[1] James Dickey, *The Eye-Beaters, Blood, Victory, Madness, Buckhead and Mercy* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 17 and 31-32.

[2] H. L. Weatherby, "The Way of Exchange in James Dickey's Poetry," *Sewanee Review*, 74 (Summer 1966), 669-680.

[3] Robert Hill, "James Dickey: Comic Poet," *James Dickey: The Expansive Imagination: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Richard J. Calhoun (Deland, Florida: Everett/Edwards, Inc., 1973), p. 143.

Cancer Match," although the doctors give up hope for him, the narrator asserts, "But they have no idea/What hope is, or how it comes." Instead of giving in to cancer and to hopelessness, the protagonist pits whiskey against disease and glories in the battle waged inside himself. As he assumes the role of passive but desperately interested bystander, another voice speaks within him: "Internally, I rise like my old self/To watch . . . O Self, like a beloved son." This voice, rising Phoenix-like inside him from the breakdown of the old Self, marks the emergence of the Self who is fiercely unwilling to submit to terror or despair but who also clearly recognizes the isolation of his stand.

As part of his struggle to assert order in the midst of chaos, the poet reassesses his persistent themes of war, family, society, love, and nature, all of which are ultimately examined through his evolving perspective. The new Self faces a set of baffling conditions: he survives combat but finds only a troubled peace; he loves his sons but realizes that they must eventually leave him; he returns to his boyhood home and friends but discovers a sense of dislocation and strangeness; he achieves a union with nature only to find that the moment cannot last; and, finally, he looks back at his life and experiences a feeling of total alienation. Yet, although these "Variations on Estrangement" lead inevitably to isolation, the new Self determines to continue its search for order amidst uncertainty.

Dickey turns to one of the seminal events in his experience — war — to dramatize the changes wrought on that subject through the vantage of the new Self. "Victory" chronicles its narrator's survival of combat, offering in symbolic terms his momentary triumph over death. The speaker goes through a ritual transformation into a new life by having a snake-skin design tatooed onto his body. Although the snake is a figure from Dickey's underworld who typically brings death rather than life, the creature in "Victory" is ironically defined as the "new prince of peace." The image suggests that the narrator's new life and peace will always carry the imprint of death, for the snake design consumes the life of the speaker until their "hearts/Beat as one." That the protagonist is "Delirious with survival" indicates both the joy he feels in being alive and the confusion he will confront after the war. Though the poem concentrates on the renewal of life, the speaker's personal victory carries a double edge: he survives, but death continually threatens.

This death-conscious rebirth of the Self influences the protagonist's relationships with his family after he returns home from the war. As he joins his sons in play in "Messages," the narrator realizes the harrowing proximity of life and death. "Butterflies," the first poem in "Messages," dramatizes the "pure abandon" of the father and son: they share the seeming purposelessness and joy of flitting butterflies. Yet the tenor of happiness is subtly contrasted to another form of play, gambling. Gambling is obviously not pure abandon; its risks, its potential failures undercut the notion of unfettered pleasure. The game metaphor assumes more complex implications when the father sits in a "hearse" of cowbones, dresses in the death skeleton, and uses the "whole

undealt decks/Of thin bones, like shaved playing cards" of the dead cow. Just as the ants crawl in and around the cow's skull, so do the butterflies travel over and around the boy sleeping in the posture of death. The image of the dead animal begins to control the concept of play between the father and son, counterpointing the joy of their game.

The companion poem to "Butterflies" is "Giving a Son to the Sea," and the works juxtaposed form a statement about both the continuity of life and the brevity of child-like joy. "Giving a Son to the Sea" focuses on the boy's play in the sea, the location of the drowned and the shark, again recalling Dickey's figures from the underworld of death. As he watches his child swim, the father visualizes his son's pioneering a new existence for man in the sea, "An agonizing new life." The future possibilities of both death and life commingle in the speaker's mind as he remembers the boy's message of love, concealed in a toy bullet and fired at his father's heart when the child was six. The boy's message and method of delivery contain at once the jubilation of his love for his father as well as the implication of a son's symbolic destruction of his father, comparable in some ways to the poet's destruction of the old Self as he creates the new. Just as the speaker in "Under Buzzards" strives for glory, the father hopes as well that both he and his son will survive despite the constant gamble with death. Yet, as he watches the boy swim, he realizes that he must eventually relinquish his hold on his son, that their lives together form only an all-too-brief bond.

The eventual separation of father and son is enlarged upon in "Two Poems of Going Home." In "Living There" and "Looking for the Buckhead Boys," the protagonist realizes a profound sense of homelessness and isolation, the overwhelming estrangement of a man from the people and places in his past. The Self that in "Victory" is born of memory and travels "South" in the narrator's mind completes its journey when the speaker in "Living There" stands before his boyhood home and is shocked by the transience of his life. The alterations wrought on his old home are like the changes occurring within himself, and he reminisces with his "Old Self like a younger brother, like a son" about the losses he feels. The distance the protagonist perceives between himself and his wife and sons is forlornly expressed as he refers to them as "Those people" whom he manages "for a little while." He realizes the irony that his sons will someday return to their home and experience nostalgia for the place where he now feels himself a stranger. The speaker is caught unreconciled between two worlds, and he acknowledges his inability to "keep everything/Or anything alive."

Lighter in tone, "Looking for the Buckhead Boys" treats a similar theme and acts as a transition from the writer's family poems to those about society. The opening line establishes a pattern of imagery that informs the theme: "Some of the time, going home, I go/Blind and can't find it." The protagonist's blindness suggests his inability to relate the present state of Buckhead to his recollections of his home. The narrator's attempt to resurrect his past and his

youth — to win "away from" and "at home" — meets with only partial success.

As he revisits his youthful haunts in Buckhead, the speaker feels bewildered; he wanders the town like a forlorn Prodigal Son, an image which strikes an ironic note. For though Buckhead is his personal heaven, the speaker returns not in poverty but in affluence, and instead of receiving a festive welcome, he feels lost and confused. Mr. Hamby, the hardware merchant, supplies the narrator with information about those in "The Book of the Dead . . . the 1939/North Fulton High School Annual" and reveals that most of the Buckhead Boys have met with trivial success, if not absolute failure. The speaker's one chance of resurrecting his youth, of defeating time and death, resides in Charlie Gates, who operates a Gulf station on the outskirts of town.

Edged with desperation, the protagonist attempts to wind the clocks back to 1939 by searching for Gates. When he needs fifty cents worth of gas, the narrator drives to the Gulf station and wins "at home/In the last minute" when he finds Charlie and thus partially succeeds in establishing his past. But Charlie, who has been literally half-blinded by goal-line lime in his eye, cannot clearly see the speaker, who is symbolically half-blinded by the memories in his mind. There is between the two men an emotional gulf, suggested by the brand name of Gates's station, that the narrator wants his old friend to fill, just as he wishes Charlie to fill his car. Significantly, the protagonist must phrase his spiritual need in "code," hoping that Charlie will understand; he wishes Gates to supply him with the "contents" of their past, and he desires to tell Charlie of his affection but cannot. The code is that of a man who wants to say everything but knows that he can say nothing. The narrator leaves his hometown recognizing that "Those people," his sons and Charlies Gates, cannot fill the gulf, and he feels both resentment and despair about his thwarted attempts to connect with his sons, his past homes, his lost youth, and his old friends. He remains out of touch with them and consequently with himself.

One poem, significantly entitled "Mercy," suggests that love may offer succor against alienation, fear, and anger. "Mercy" presents the thematic commingling of life, death, and love; it extends the hospital setting which appears frequently in Dickey's earlier poetry and which conjures up the image of the diseased Self in this volume. To find comfort for his physical and emotional needs, the speaker ventures to Mercy Manor, the nurses' dormitory that is both "whorehouse/And convent." The House Mother, who appears as both Madam and Mother Superior, establishes the dual services, sexual and emotional, that Fay offers the narrator. Accepted as part of the hospital location is the "long cry" of "mortality," a wail that is a scream of death as well as a plea for life. In the final scene the girl is both the "queen of death" and "Alive, and with me at the end," equally the end of the speaker's life and of the orgasm that gives the narrator the "mercy" he desires. He wishes Fay to be both an attentive death-bed nurse and a passionate lover.

Any hopes that Dickey's new Self might have envisioned for love in

"Mercy" are shattered in "Blood." Here the narrator's plea for mercy manifests his terror rather than his sexual desire. The speaker awakes in the middle of the night, much as he does in "Knock," to discover "Blood blood all over/Me and blood." The possibility that the protagonist either has awakened into a scene of violent murder or has himself committed mayhem while drunk gradually alters to the prospect of the menstrual blood of the girl who shares his bed. The poem suggests a metaphorical "brotherhood" in blood and a symbolic "opening" of the woman through love as the speaker becomes the comforter and healer to a bleeding woman. However, the disquieting questions that initiate the poem, "What did I say?/Or do?" are not completely answered, and the speaker's long cry for "Mercy./MERCY!" remains a shout of great fear and confusion.

The motif of the hospital used in "Mercy" and that of blindness employed in "Looking for the Buckhead Boys" are fused in the last of the poems about the Self's relationship to society, "The Eye-Beaters." Like the Yeatsian public man among school children, the narrator of "The Eye-Beaters" moves through an institution for blind youths and questions his guide and himself about what the blind see. The speaker carries on an internal debate between his "Reason" and "his invention," with Reason concluding that the children who beat their eyes to force light into them finally "see nothing." Reason insists upon a purely factual interpretation of the children's hospital predicament. Invention, however, allows the speaker to hope that the children perceive "the original/ Images of mankind" and that they survive through their own imaginations. As the blind youths are returned to their wards, the protagonist hears their long cries, not for mercy but rather for "pure killing fury pure triumph pure acceptance." The children's intense screams drive the narrator to reject the reality of Reason; he responds instead to their primitive call because what the youths "see must/be crucial/To the human race . . . they must be thought to see by what has caused is/causing us all/To survive." The protagonist's Self understands that he escapes spiritual death through his invention, his art, and that these blind children confront the darkness by similarly gambling for light and life through art. The survival of both involves the conscious effort to adopt the stance of "the/sheer/Despair of invention": both must create life out of their own darkness when in reality there may be nothing to see.

In "sheer Despair" over the limitations of invention and his failure to achieve emotional bonds with members of his family, old friends, or lovers, the speaker sometimes turns to another form of the Not Me, nature. Although Dickey's narrator achieves at least a momentary connection with the nature in "Pine," he finds, in "Apollo," further evidence of man's alienation. The darkness of the blind children and of the artist in "The Eye-Beaters" is juxtaposed to the universal void portrayed in "Apollo." As the astronaut looks back at earth, he wonders, "What hope is there at home." Instead of receiving a positive answer, he remembers, "helplessly coming/From my heart," Gray's "Elegy," which asserts man's anonymity and isolation, comparable in

many ways to the estrangement felt in the new Self.

In "Pine," Dickey searches the physical and spiritual qualities of a single tree to secure the Self's oneness with nature. The speaker moves through various layers of a pine into a brief moment of its ethereal "glory." In Part I, the narrator experiences a primitive, sensual response to the wind in the tree; the wind creates a series of aural images in the speaker's mind which in turn cause the tree and the protagonist to assume amorphous shapes: "Low-cloudly it whistles, changing heads/On you. How hard to hold and shape head-round." When the narrator breathes in the air that has blown through the tree, he changes into a pine-like figure, "Tarred as a stump and blowing/Your skull like clover." The speaker further unites himself with the tree in Part III: "another life of you rises,/A saliva-gland burns like a tree." He eats a wafer of bark and wonders whether that part of the tree that he absorbs into his body will be passed on to his future children. The narrator ignores the bitterness of the pine's taste, enduring different pain as he climbs into the rough-barked tree to its top where he embraces "It all": "A final form/And color at last comes out/Of you alone putting it all/Together like nothing/Here like almighty." The protagonist achieves his "glory," however momentary; he becomes the tree through the "presentational immediacy"[4] of "successive apprehensions" involving sound, taste, and feeling.

The poet's deepest scrutiny of the new Self occurs in *The Eye-Beaters'* final poem, "Turning Away." The poem surveys the writer's major subjects as the speaker goes through the different "Variations on Estrangement" announced in the subtitle. The narrator now fully comprehends the chaos in his personal life as he experiences the final breakdown within the Self. Standing before a window and examining his reflection superimposed on the meadow scene outside, the protagonist views his image as that of "a king starting out on a journey/Away from all things that he knows." He tries to come to terms with himself in his face-to-face encounter with what he has been, is now, and could become: "Something for a long time has gone wrong,/Got in between this you and that one other/And now here you must turn away.//Beyond! Beyond! Another life moves. . . ." What has gone wrong involves the speaker's attempts to reconcile the disparate pieces of his life, his inability to make "all things that he knows" fit together into a controllable unity. The other life that beckons to him is the Self that in the past found renewal or escape through transformation, reincarnation, or exchange of identity. Now, however, the narrator realizes an insurmountable barrier between the old Self and the new.

Throughout the poem, the speaker visualizes himself as a soldier; such a portrait, however, becomes an ironic one, for he is an embattled man who loses his emotional wars. Survival of such combat becomes a form of torture rather than unequivocal renewal. The reflected Self that he scrutinizes is "separated-out": it sees but will not verbalize its "nerveless vision/Of sorrow."

[4] "The Poet Turns on Himself," *Babel to Byzantium: Poets and Poetry Now* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), p. 290.

The narrator observes in his reflection the hair on his face and neck curling back to choke him into an "Iron-masked silence," much as the conditions of his life suffocate him. He stares deeply into his own eyes, looking "like a desperate boy's," and sees the ghostly image of his youth, his present, and his future. As a terrified middle-aged man, the protagonist can hope only to secure a "helmet of silent war/Against the universe and see/What to do with it all." His vision, and consequently his ability to control his universe, is impaired; like the speaker in "Looking for the Buckhead Boys," he is symbolically unable to see and is thus unable to reconcile his past and his present. Yet, he adopts the demeanor of a soldier who must "Prepare to fight/The past." He wishes to think of his "Life as a thing/That can be learned" but eventually realizes that it cannot, "When this much is wrong."

One of the narrator's primary battles involves the agonizing estrangement within the bonds of marriage. Behind him he hears his wife weeping as he considers whether or not "to desert" his loved ones and to join "The most ineffectual army the defiant, trembling/Corps of the unattached." His marriage has become "So many battles" between two "Dead armies" who have "loved-too-long." The protagonist cynically sneers at the bromides that a marriage manual asserts, yet he wistfully entertains its moral as a possible construct for himself: "change; form again; flee." True union within his marriage is, however, impossible. He thus imagines gaining a freedom that would allow him to establish a larger family encompassing multitudes of other women. The speaker conceives of a society of women that would fulfill his longing for love and for children; he would "breed" women of all races and times to create that new society. But the sorrow expressed by his wife's weeping will not allow him to leave her; his quandary within his present family foreshadows defeat in his possible future relations with other women: "Despair and exultation/Lie down together."

As if for relief from human complexities, the protagonist turns to nature to view "the latest masterpiece/Under the sun." But instead of affording connection as in "Pine," nature stands mute to the speaker's appeal for succor: "Every stone within sight stands ready,/To give you its secret of impassivity, its unquestionable silence." The meadow scene reminds him that these farms were once battlefields where men with "wounded eyes" fought; now the speaker sees the meadow strewn with "inner lives" of men much like himself who wish to resurrect themselves but who fail, of men who struggle against the confusions of their lives but lose. Though its baptismal rains have regenerative powers, nature gives the protagonist only "silence": "an enormous green bright growing No," that becomes its final turning away from the speaker.

Unable to find comfort or direction through his old Self, through love, through his family, through visions of a new society, or through nature, the narrator returns to the mirrored image of the new Self. Portrayed earlier as rising within the speaker "like a younger brother, like a son," the new Self has suggested hope for renewal. After reviewing "all things that he knows,"

however, the speaker comprehends a deep despair resulting from his inability to heal his various wounded relationships. "Turning Away" begins by suspending the new Self between returning to loved ones and deserting for a new life, between a desperate confusion about the past and a longing to achieve a more fulfilling future.

The protagonist recognizes the complexities of his condition, a recognition which could lead to an "Iron-masked silence" causing "A deadly, dramatic compression" within the heart. Such a surrender to despair, however, would be suffocating. Instead, the speaker's comprehension of personal chaos compels him to drive for order. Finally, he remains "on guard" rehearsing what he "will answer/If questioned" about his life. The new Self realizes that it may be able to learn, like the earnest young heroes of Caesar's *Wars*, the answers concerning life, but only "Later, much later on."

Dickey's new Self in *The Eye-Beaters* feels caught between the worlds of its past and its present, belonging to neither and plagued by age, disease, and fear. To combat his isolation, the narrator seeks connection with his sons and with old friends but discovers that the gulf between them and him cannot be crossed. He seeks mercy from his aloneness through love and finds only a temporary comfort undercut by looming death. The Self does find a moment of "exultation" when the speaker apprehends the physical and spiritual characteristics of a pine tree and achieves a long sought union with nature. His final stance, however, involves a series of estrangements, an ultimate turning away. The poet could resign himself to artistic stasis, a complete "Iron-masked silence." But it is a tribute to Dickey's personal courage that the writer's new Self does consciously keep examining his life, even if understanding and control seem impossible. What could easily end up as a weary surrender to the void of confusion becomes instead the poet's struggle to forge order from chaos. Turning away does not mean giving up; it does mean undertaking new perilous quests in which one must risk everything to gain self-understanding, if only for a little while.

YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN: WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET

In her husband's eyes
body and soul
buried in the pitch
Puritan dark

Faith seems to fall
for the devil
who can ribbon

a pink dream
out of the pale
tether of the dead

and knot the shadow
of his lust with hers
in the endless scorch
of an unearthly love

whose sight threw
Young Goodman Brown
into fleeing the
coven-treed woods
in screams that
burned his seeing
clean of believing

Until home in the clear
cold morning light
he found his Faith

still the girl
of his dreams
just as he had
left her there

a pink ribbon
in dark possession
of her raven hair

CHUCK SULLIVAN

DESIGN AND FOCUS IN JAMES DICKEY'S *DELIVERANCE*

LINDA TARTE HOLLEY

James Dickey's *Deliverance* has been received as a novel of rugged adventure apparently modeled after the novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs.[1] Dickey is frequently associated with the "more life" school, and Ed Gentry, the main character of the novel, is called "a new Mr. Vibrancy, a hunter, stalker, killer."[2] Others see Ed as at least capable of exercising a latent cunning that allows him to save his life and the lives of his friends. He is "eminently *safe*" (like Melville's narrator), a man who survives because he remains what he has always been — "methodical, cautious, down-to-earth."[3] He is a man forced "to find in himself a cunning beast of prey that will stalk and kill its quarry: another man."[4] Those critics who admire Ed's mental astuteness define his success as the triumph of animal cunning or practicality. However, Ed's imagination — not simply physical fitness, animal cunning, the instinct of survival, or common sense — brings the real deliverance. The proof lies in Ed Gentry's vivid sense of design and in the structure of Dickey's novel.

With an artist's eye for harmony and detail, Ed looks for meaningful design or arrangement. He sees the key to such satisfying design in concentration on the subject — a pretty girl, a deer's eye, an owl, a deer, a river, a cliff, a victim. Through concentration on the physical, the eye of the imagination brings the matter to be observed into a frame. The "frame" makes clarity possible by excluding extraneous matter.

Ed is a photographer who has worked up a respectable establishment designing layouts for magazines. We first see him leaning forward in an effort to imagine, with the eye of a graphics consultant, a single detail from within the expanse of lines, shades, and shapes defined by the map on which Lewis has plotted their trip. He sees the map "as though it were a layout,"[5] lacking design but with a kind of harmony that holds his attention. He, accordingly, tries to "make out a deer's eye in the leaves" because he knows the "world is easily lost" without careful focus. While the four men bend over the map, Lewis marks an X on the spot toward which they will make their way, going down the river to a part of the Georgia country soon to be covered by water.

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[1] Warren Eyster, "Two Regional Novels," *Sewanee Review*, 79, (1971), 469-474.

[2] Benjamin DeMott, "The 'More Life' School and James Dickey," *Saturday Review*, March 28, 1970, pp. 25-26, 38. The "more life" school includes Gide, Mann, Yeats, Rilke, Camus but appears to have degenerated.

[3] Donald W. Markos, "Art and Immediacy: James Dickey's *Deliverance*," *The Southern Review*, 7 (1971), 949.

[4] Daniel B. Marin, "James Dickey's *Deliverance*: Darkness Visible," *The South Carolina Review*, 3, No. 1 (1970), 49-59.

[5] James Dickey, *Deliverance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970), p. 11. Subsequent references in the text will be to this edition.

Ed quickly clarifies his relationship with Lewis by describing him as a man with drive and the desire to be immortal; and, what is more significant for Ed, Lewis has a focus, a principle. That is not to say that Ed believes in Lewis' theory of survival through fitness but that he admires the results — a tightening and drawing together of information, muscle, and equipment into the clarity of organization. Ed's policy, in contrast to Lewis', is to find something he can do and then to "groove" with ease.

Ed's "grooving" has produced a capable staff. When he walks into his office immediately after the study of the map, he has a strange sense of clearly defined, self-motivated design:

> It was the first time I had thought to notice that the hall was inside a larger hall, part of the length of the building. . . . Never before had I had such a powerful sense of being in a place I had created. . . . The arrangement of heads and fingers and glasses would not be like it is, at this moment, if it were not for me. (pp. 16-17)

Ed's sense of gratifying design within the frame of his own creation is fleeting, however, because an "enormous weight of lassitude," under which he moves through routine tasks, gives him the familiar sense of being someone else. We perceive the sense of weary dissatisfaction in Ed's description of himself as a ghost going through the motions, a figure whose outline is vague. He lacks a clarifying focus and sees no meaningful design, but the river experience brings these things to him.

Both the structural and metaphoric patterns of the novel emphasize the importance of Ed's focusing imagination. Ed's sense of moving mentally "deeper in" runs parallel to the physical movement of the novel. The parallel relationship is made clear when we note the change in Ed's state of sleep in the three sections within the frame of the story.

> September 14:
>
> There was something about me that usually kept me from dreaming, or maybe kept me from remembering what I had dreamed; I was either awake or dead, and I always came back slowly. I had the feeling that if it were perfectly quiet, if I could hear nothing, I would never wake up. Something in the world had to pull me back, for every night I went down deep, and if I had any sensation during sleep, it was of going deeper and deeper, trying to reach a point, a line or border.
>
> This time the wind woke me, and I dragged upward and tried, with the instinct of survival, to get clear of where I had been, one more time. (p. 25)

This is the first of several occasions when Ed comments on an inward point toward which he moves, perhaps toward death, he suggests. Upon Ed's second awakening, in the woods, he more explicitly indicates that sleep takes him deeper in toward a deathlike state:

> I kept waking, and waking again, but when I was alive for good, the screen wire of the tent-front was gray and steady. . . . I lay with the flashlight still in one hand, and tried to shape the day. (p. 93)

These two "awakenings" illustrate Ed's lethargic state of mind and re-emphasize the weary vagueness he had described:

> The feeling of the inconsequence of whatever I would do, of anything I would pick up or think about or turn to see was at that moment being set in the very bone marrow. . . . It was the old mortal, helpless, time-terrified human feeling, just the same. (p. 18)

However, there is a change in Ed's heavy sleep when he takes the lead from Lewis and has made part of his climb up the cliff. He has climbed "full of wonder" (p. 162), has "concentrated everything . . . to become ultrasensitive to the cliff" (p. 163). When, having almost lost his hold but having apparently "split the stone" by sheer force (p. 165), Ed rests in a crevice of the cliff, he says it is "as though I were in a sideways grave" (p. 169). In his gravelike crevice, "belly-up" (p. 173), Ed sees the river with a new clarity though his eyes are closed:

> The first words I really remember were said very clearly. What a view. *What* a view. But I had my eyes closed. The river was running in my mind, and I raised my lids and saw exactly what had been the image of my thought. For a second I did not know what I was seeing and what I was imagining; there was such an utter sameness that it didn't matter; both were the river. (p. 170)

At last Ed sees the river in a way he has never seen a thing before:

> But it was not seeing, really. For once it was not just seeing. It was beholding. I *beheld* the river in its icy pit of brightness, in its far-below sound and indifference, in its large coil and tiny points and flashes of the moon, in its long sinuous form, in its uncomprehending consequence. What was there? . . . I felt wonderful, and fear was at the center of the feeling: fear and anticipation — there was no telling where it would end. (pp. 171-172)

Having lost the vagueness of routine, Ed's imagination begins to work in the dark as he rests in his "grave."

> I wanted to give myself something definite to do when I got to the top, and lying there, I tried to fix on what would be the best thing and the first thing to do when I got there. (p. 173)

Then, on September 16, having been delivered from the threat of the mountain men as well as from the weight of lassitude that had dogged him, Ed "lay awake all night in brilliant sleep" (p. 240). Finally, Ed truly sleeps — "around on the other side of death" (p. 263).

When Ed stands in the tree, found by him through careful calculation and amazing fortitude, waiting for the man he will murder, when he watches the man move into the frame of pine needles, then into the frame defined by the string sight of his bow, he knows a satisfaction for which the reader might have been prepared from the early sections of the novel. "We were closed together, and the feeling of a peculiar kind of intimacy increased, for he was shut within a frame within a frame, all of my making" (p. 191).

The focus is adjusted once more with a horrifying clarity in the innermost frame of the novel when Ed finds his victim dead. Sexual implications underline that thrust forward to a point Ed had been urgently seeking, even in his sleep. The exhilarating freedom to do anything to the victim of his design (cut off his head, cut off his genitals, eat him) leaves Ed spent and gratified: "the ultimate horror circled me and played over the knife. I began to sing. . . . I finished, and I was withdrawn from" (p. 200).

Dickey's "Before"-"After" frame establishes the structural and thematic patterns of the novel. The "frame" of the novel eliminates extraneous matter (the routine of Ed's office) just as the string sight on the bow brings the target into a peculiar clarity. And this first and apparently mechanical structural device is only the outermost of a series of frame-within-frame patterns in the novel. The frames take the reader by stages "deeper in" until we see Ed achieve the kind of creative focus he seeks and needs — physical focus on the mountain avenger and intellectual focus on the core of his own being. First, in the routine of office and family Ed concentrates on a strange gold slice in the eye of a model who would become "the half-conventionally-beautiful focus of a thousand decisions and compromises" (p. 10) to appear in a trade magazine. When his wife offers her "practical" love-making, he sees at the center of her back the gold eye shining "not with the practicality of sex, so necessary to its survival [as practicality is to Lewis' survival], but the promise of it that promised other things, another life, deliverance" (p. 28) — a promise within a promise, an urge to go to some undefined point deeper in. From the moment Lewis marks the spot on the map, Ed moves in his mind's eye and then in his canoe toward that undefined point. The drive to the river is the first stage of the narrative counterpart of Ed's psychological movement toward clarity, for the towns they pass through grow smaller and smaller; the road drops and finally slides down a bank; Lewis and Ed walk down until Lewis stops and pulls leaves out of the way so that they can look "out — or in — through the ragged, ashen window he made" (p. 70): then they see the river. At this culmination of the first stage of the trip, we see the first of two "windows" through which Ed looks. The frame of the string sight within the frame of pine needles is the second window, and through it Ed finally will focus on his victim.

Two important scenes in the novel function as intermediary structural elements that show Ed attempting to bring into focus the objects of his concentration. The first is a mental focus; the second, a physical one. The owl scene (pp. 87-89) shows a psychological act of concentration during which Ed

becomes a "mental traveler" in the same way that Coleridge or Keats does, for he is "with" the owl. When the night-prowling owl's claws suddenly tear through the tent, Ed, lying in his sleeping bag, shines his flashlight on "one knuckle of a deformed fist" and says aloud, "Those are called talons" (p. 88). This careful looking and naming are the rudimentary stages of the focus with which Ed attends the bird on its hunt. Ed follows the hunting owl all night in an urgent Keatsian disinterestedness: "I imagined what he was doing while he was gone, floating with him as well as I could, there in my weightlessness" (p. 89).

Although context and result are different, Ed once again strains for focus when he wakes on the morning after his "flight" with the owl. Whereas we had seen Ed in his mental and weightless floating with the owl the night before, the morning scene presents his attempt at physical focus within the weight of a blurring fog. "The river was running with a heavy smoke of fog" (p. 93) as Ed leaves the others sleeping while he, in his underwear "exactly the color of the fog," stalks a deer. "I concentrated on getting into some kind of relation to the woods" (p. 94). But at first he "didn't have any idea of really hunting. I had no firm notion of what I was doing, except walking forward carefully, away from the river and into more and more silence and blindness" (p. 94).

His equipment, we were earlier told, is a hodge-podge of things gathered here and there whenever he saw them. He had purchased a good rope because Lewis had once said no one should go about in the woods without one. He had bought his bow upon Lewis' recommendation, and his wife had helped him arrange a string sight.

> The string sight gave the effect of framing the target, at least to me, for it isolated what was being shot at, and brought it into oddly intimate relation with the archer. Nothing outside the orange frame existed, and what was inside it was there in a terribly vital and consequential way; it was as though the target were being created by the eye that watched it. (32)

By the time he has gotten his equipment together and begins walking in the fog, he feels the thrill of his situation, an "electric current" when "hunting and pretending to hunt had come together" (p. 95); the idea and the fact seem to fuse. Now he is really looking and listening, he says, while "a good many things came together in my legs and arms and fingers" (p. 95). But not everything comes together now. The deer, but a "ghost of a deer" (p. 96) in the fog, comes, and Ed misses him because what he had felt coming together in arms, fingers, and legs is not enough for clarity and focus. Throughout the novel Ed seeks the sharpness of the creating mind and eye, and the string sight is a paradigm and instrument of the situation he finally creates. If we recognize these two attempts on the part of Ed to give some meaning to what he sees by concentrating on a detail — the owl's talons, the deer in the fog — the personal impact of the adventure becomes increasingly clear.

Ed's inability to focus or to concentrate — he tells Lewis that he was thinking of him when he missed the deer — is apparent again in the rape scene: He cannot face the man who holds him at gun point; later his eyelids "cloud" the forest; "something kept blurring the clear idea of Bobby and myself and the leaves and the river." The man Lewis had shot would not "concentrate" in Ed's vision. Trying to make some sense of what has happened, Ed "stepped back and looked at the whole scene again, trying to place things" (p. 117). When the four men move through the woods to bury Lewis' victim, Ed describes their action as "trying to make good a senseless complicated pattern of movement between the bushes and trees" (pp. 133-134). Finally the body is hidden in the "general sloppiness and uselessness of the woods" (p. 136).

But the tone of the novel changes with the change in Ed when the four men leave the murdered mountain man in the mud. The change is not simply from the early tone of adventure to one of danger. Nor can the shift be explained by the clear physical fact that the injured Lewis is no longer the leader. The first look at the X on Lewis' map, the perceptive view through the framework of his office, the penetrating look into the model's eye and reappearance of the image in the middle of his wife's love-making, the physical penetration into the Georgia countryside, the concentrated flight with the owl, the blurred half-focus on the deer in the fog — these steps in Ed's progress, alternating between physical and mental attempts to frame and clarify, bring us to a turning point in the adventure. Until Drew is shot and their canoe turns over, Lewis has represented a clearcut principle for Ed. But the principle is one-dimensional and inadequate since it is based exclusively upon the physical. Because something more than the practical process of physical survival is required, Lewis no longer exercises over Ed the authority he once had. Ed "felt separated from the others and especially from Lewis" as the river sound changed, "getting deeper and more massively frantic and authoritative." Now Lewis' voice has "very little being at all" (p. 121).

"I got on my back and poured with the river, sliding over the stones like a creature I had always contained but never released" (p. 144). This experience recalls that silent voice, felt in his office, "that was different from his usual silent voice" (p. 17). Now he is clear-headed; his face feels calm; "There was something to act out" (p. 151). Some other person speaks for him out of his own mouth, and finally he stands "in the most entire aloneness that [he] had ever been given" (p. 161). Later, even the pain is good because it is "reality, and deep in the situation" (p. 169). When he had tried to kill the deer, he had felt as if pretending and hunting had come together, but the deer was only the ghost of a deer. Now, in order to stalk his second prey, Drew's murderer, he must again set in motion the kind of mental concentration he had exercised to follow the owl. Now he must literally focus on that spot, designated by his own imagination, where the murderer will come; and, for the sake of deliverance, the focus must be on the reality, not on the ghost of some reality. Just as Ed

had sought some element of design from the map where Lewis had marked an X, now, knowing that the world is easily lost, he must again focus — not on a deer's eye but on the mountain man.

As Ed begins the climb to take up his waiting and watching for the mountaineer, we begin to perceive the heightened sense of harmony and design he has repeatedly sought. Because he learns to concentrate on the cliff, a connection between the passivity of the cliff and the urgency of the climber brings Ed joy and "a deep feeling of nakedness and helplessness and intimacy" (p. 137). "I concentrated everything I had to become ultrasensitive to the cliff" (p. 139). The rock beneath him quivers because he "wanted it to quiver, held in its pulsing border, and what it was pulsing with was me" (p. 147). He moves over the cliff with a new sensuality of sight, sound, touch, taste:

> Then I would begin to try to inch upward again, moving with the most intimate motions of my body, motions I had never dared use with Martha, or with any other human woman. Fear and a kind of enormous moon-blazing sexuality lifted me, millimeter by millimeter. And yet I held madly to the human. (p. 151)

Ed's mind has turned the cliff into what Dickey has called a "magical arena" created by an "imaginative participation in the cosmos."[6] Dickey describes two steps in this kind of "creation": 1) bringing parts of the world together (we might call this "design") with the result that 2) the creator comes to self-definition (we might say "focus") through a flash of understanding. Pictures, images, or metaphors inside a man's head are owned by that man: "They are fragments of the world that live, not with the world's life, but with ours."[7]

So it is with Ed. "The river was running in my mind, and I raised my lids and saw exactly what had been the image of my thought" (p. 145). That kind of correspondence between imagination and fact is Ed's deliverance, the promise of another life. As he plots his deliverance, he says, "I could get there, in my mind. The whole thing focused, like an old movie that just barely held its own on the screen" (p. 173). But the image must and does become clearer: if he is to kill the man, it will depend upon the exactness of plan and delivery. Finally, "I had thought so long and hard about him that to this day I still believe I felt, in the moonlight, our minds fuse," his and his victim's; "the minds would have to merge" (p. 185). What the creative mind tries to do, Dickey has said, is "to discover relationships that give life: mental, physical, and imaginative life, the fullest and most electric sense of being."[8]

The art director-graphics consultant, in his tree practicing stillness, finally sees a man walking onto the sand with a rifle: "I had never seen a more beautiful or convincing element of design" (p. 189), and it was all of his own

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[6] James Dickey, "Metaphor as Pure Adventure," A Lecture Delivered at the Library of Congress, December 4, 1967, Library of Congress, Washington, 1968, p. 9.

[7] "Metaphor as Pure Adventure," p. 14.

[8] "Metaphor as Pure Adventure," p. 9.

making. The movement of the novel has taken us to the penultimate state of penetration because now both physical and mental energies are brought into the organizing influence of the frame and exist in that "terribly vital and consequential way" Ed finds satisfying. But the climax is the scene of "ultimate horror" and deepest penetration when the physical and mental focuses are adjusted to perfect awareness and clarity.

> If Lewis had not shot his companion, he and I would have made a kind of love, painful and terrifying to me, in some dreadful way pleasurable to him, but we would have been together in the flesh, there on the floor of the woods, and it was strange to think of it. (p. 154)

But *thinking* of it and the ultimate fusion of minds allow him to create a design. This creative act of design and focus takes up where Lewis' survival through fitness leaves off.

The practical and imaginative aspects of Ed's adventure create a balance (what Ed might call "harmony") between detail and general design. Ed focuses on a "deer's eye" on the map, and the process is repeated when he desperately clings to the "human" as he climbs the cliff. When he takes pleasure in the success of his violent plan, the pleasure comes from the fusion of physical coordination (sighting slightly below the object aimed at from a height) and the imaginative design representing the harmony of the whole. He says he can "get there," to the spot where he will kill, in his mind: "Oh what a circle . . . with the leaves waiting, the mind waiting, for me to draw it" (p. 174). The imagination achieves its satisfying design and focus because the practical details have been taken care of and disparate matter is given shape. Ed participates in the desire for "more life," and he admiringly imitates Lewis' regimen for physical fitness. But what he seeks and what his "initiation" proves is not a rugged individualism but the gift of aloneness in the midst of which the creative imagination gives meaning and harmony to disparate matter. He moves around to the other side of his death-like sleep where his senses come alive, not simply to the danger, but to the beauty around him and created by him. The practical instinct of survival prompts Ed to act, but the ultimate urge is toward harmonious design that goes deeper in and beyond the practical.

Ed had learned well from Lewis, picking up bits of information, as he collected equipment, at random and without design. Professionally, physically, intellectually, artistically Ed seeks to bring disparate elements of his life into focus: he had looked for a "decent ass" among the flow of noon-hour secretaries; he had attempted to create lay-outs with a design that would not leave him with the terrible lassitude of routine.

The river and the adventure it provides establish the narrative rhythm of the novel and the threatening context where physical strength is tested in the same way that it is tested in traditional initiation rituals. Ed tests more than physical strength and endurance, however. For him the horror, like the pain,

is good because it is reality and deep in the situation and because for once he *"beheld"* a thing. But what is more, Ed seeks, recognizes, effects, and moves through a clarity of design in reality so that he finally sleeps somewhere "on the other side of death." For he has a sense — deeper in — of touch, taste, sight, sound, sexuality, of the fullest and most electric sense of being that shrugs off the vague lassitude he had carried through his office and through the woods as he stalked the deer.

The tone of the novel intensifies as the canoe moves down the river and deeper into the gorge while the more abstract pattern simultaneously takes the reader from mental disintegration to integration until the arrow thrusts into the innermost frame, reminding us of the X Lewis had initially marked on the map. Ed has brought "parts of the world together," and the design works a change in Ed, what might be called a self-definition through a flash of understanding. He rehires George Holley, the intense artist who, Ed said, was unlike Lewis because he had the single passion to *create*. Satisfaction or harmony does not lie in the kill; in fact, Ed cannot think of anything to do with his victim. He certainly does not dance on him as Crane's exuberant hunter does after killing his bear. Instead, Ed's satisfaction lies in owning the river, a "personal, private possession" that "ran nowhere but in my head" (p. 275). As Dickey has explained elsewhere, Adam must have delighted in finding that he "owned" an image of what he had seen. Ed, knowing how easily the "world is lost," had understood that he must initially focus on a single *physical* detail. But ultimately, Ed's arrow finds its mark because his creative imagination has sharply defined the relationship between form and matter and has delivered him from lassitude and death.

THE PHOTOGRAPH

It must have been before my memory
Of such things. I cannot remember taking
It, or even having been there. But she is
There, sitting upon a bed, in a room I
Recognize as having once lived. She is
Young, and slender, and almost pretty.
And her pose — if that is what it was,
Displays a grace normally associated with
Fuller, less girlish frames. One hand
Holds a few strands of hair, and nearby,
The other grasps a large comb, placed
Almost in her lap. She is wearing a
Paisley dress, the zipper undone, it
Hangs loosely around her shoulders,
And her face is turned towards something
Beyond the photo's border. Who she is,
What she meant, the memory I thought to
Preserve, have all left me. Only the
Single attempt for something more than
This is held in my hands. I place it
Down upon a stack of others, only to
Pick it up again, determined to remember
More. But I know only that I was with her
In a room years ago, and that the sun
Filtering into that room faded instantly
Upon striking the floor. Only film exposed
To that light for a brief instant of time
Has kept her, relieved of sense, of any
Purpose but of being there. Intent in that
Time, but looking away.

M. S. OSAKI