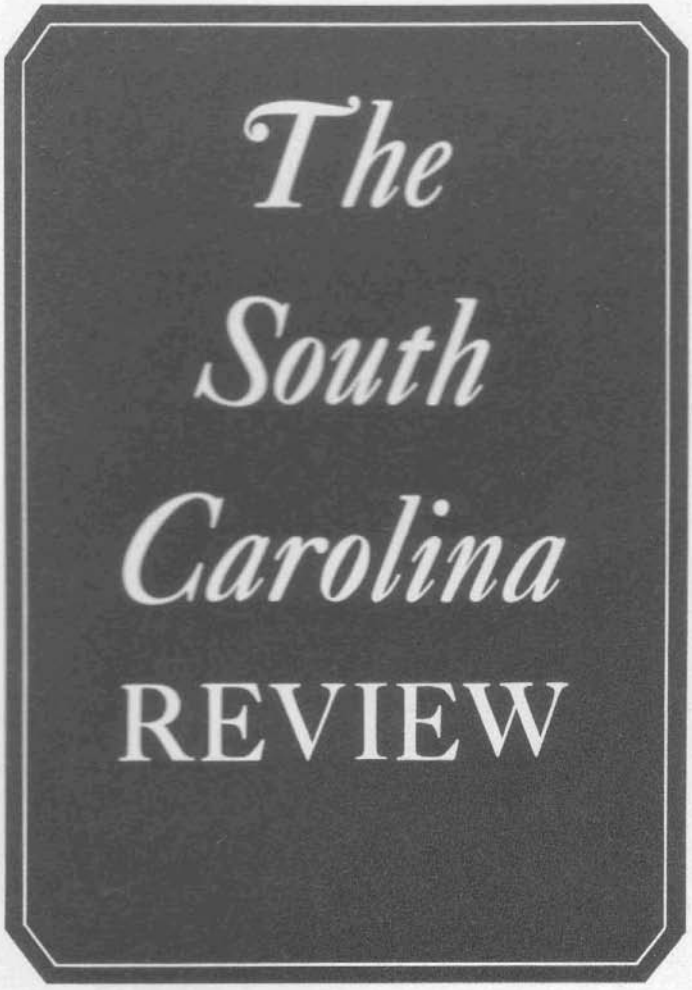

NOVEMBER, 1978 VOL. 11 NO. 1 $1.50

The South Carolina Review

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.

This project is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D. C., a Federal agency.

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

THE SOUTH CAROLINA REVIEW is indexed in *Index of American Periodical Verse.*

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

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

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

ISSN: 0038-3163

THE SOUTH CAROLINA REVIEW

November, Nineteen Hundred Seventy-Eight

The South Carolina Review

VOLUME 11, NUMBER 1 NOVEMBER, 1978

CONTENTS

CONTENTS—Continued

NOTE

The editors of *SCR* are pleased to offer readers of this issue two stories by distinguished American writers, Flannery O'Connor and Eudora Welty. Both stories appear in the following pages with introductions by Jan Nordby Gretlund of Aarhus, Denmark, whose assiduous scholarship on them was done while he was at the University of South Carolina as a Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies. Each story is a work of considerable literary merit, while at the same time having a textual history of interest to all scholars of American literature. (F. D.)

FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S "AN EXILE IN THE EAST": AN INTRODUCTION

JAN NORDBY GRETLUND

Among Flannery O'Connor's manuscripts at Georgia College, there is a sixteen-page carbon copy of a typescript titled "An Exile in the East." Flannery O'Connor's name and address are on the first page, and an unknown hand has added: "early draft of / Judgement Day." On November 15, 1954, O'Connor included the story in a list of short stories that she sent to Mr. Robert Giroux for *A Good Man Is Hard to Find.* As this list now appears, the story has been lined out. It was replaced by "Good Country People," a story Flannery O'Connor had finished and sent to Mr. Giroux in time to have it included in the collection. Accepting it, Mr. Giroux informed Flannery O'Connor on March 3, 1955, that he had pulled "An Exile in the East" from the collection to make room for the new story. "Exile" was not pulled, however, until the material was already at the printer's. It was taken out, as Robert Dunn has put it, "at the last possible moment not by choice but by necessity."[1]

"An Exile in the East," published here for the first time,[2] is of considerable value for several reasons: "Exile" was written between "The Geranium" and "Judgement Day," the two stories which bracket O'Connor's career. "Exile" evolved out of "The Geranium," first published in 1946 and the first story in the typescript of O'Connor's master's thesis, and "Exile" eventually became "Judgement Day," her last story, which was published in 1965 in *Everything That Rises Must Converge.* In publishing "An Exile in the East" *The South Carolina Review* offers its

[1] *The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin,* V (Autumn, 1976), 116-117.

[2] Minor typographical errors have been corrected.

readers the chance to trace O'Connor's development of a piece of material over nearly twenty years.

In retrospect it can be accepted, as Mr. Robert Giroux has suggested, that "Exile" is "an intermediate version"[3] of "Judgement Day." But in 1954 Flannery O'Connor considered the story a finished version, one which she was ready to include in *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*. Moreover, "Exile" is significantly different from both "The Geranium" and "Judgement Day." Therefore "An Exile in the East" has a claim not just as a manuscript version of a familiar story, but as a story in its own right.

"Exile" belongs to O'Connor's middle period. It was written between "The Displaced Person" and "The Artificial Nigger," at a time in her life when she was physically as well as she would be, and when she was at her peak as a writer. Her growth as a short story writer manifests itself in her continued use and development of certain thematic elements. In "The Geranium," "An Exile in the East," and "Judgement Day," short stories from three decades, Flannery O'Connor emphasizes different aspects of the same concerns. She often uses the same elements in the three stories, but she employs them with a different effect in each story. The passages considered below work well within the structure of the stories of which they are parts, but an analysis of these similar passages clarifies O'Connor's shifting emphasis on the thematic elements common to the three stories. The "Exile" passages often avoid the sentimentality of "The Geranium" and virtually all the melodrama of "Judgement Day." Besides, "Exile" manages to show something profound about life in the South and in the North, without some of the heavy symbolism of the first story and without some of the manifest theology of Flannery O'Connor's last story. Above all, "An Exile in the East" treats the racial theme in greater depth than the other stories.

In stressing O'Connor's sociological theme in "An Exile in the East," I am calling attention to an often overlooked side of her genius. The idea is not to obscure O'Connor's Catholicism, which manifests itself in all her stories. Indeed, the religious symbolism characteristic of the later O'Connor short stories is present already in "Exile." There is no conflict between the sociological and Christian themes in this story; on the contrary, it is O'Connor's Christian mind that makes her turn to the racial conflict at a time when a crisis in racial relations is developing.

If we consider Flannery O'Connor's entire writing career, there is a development from an early stereotyping tendency to the triumphant allegorizing of the last years. What has been less obvious, perhaps, is

---

[3] "Introduction," *Flannery O'Connor: The Complete Stories* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), p. xvi. All page references to "The Geranium" and "Judgement Day" are to this edition.

that O'Connor went through a middle period where she wrote highly realistic stories. "An Exile in the East" belongs to that period. Let us consider some of the similar passages in the three stories.

New York: No Kind of Place

"The Geranium" p. 6[4]

Old Dudley would have liked to have explained New York to Rabie. If he could have showed it to Rabie, it wouldn't have been so big—he wouldn't have felt pressed down every time he went out in it. "It ain't so big," he would have said. "Don't let it get you down. Rabie. It's just like any other city and cities ain't all that complicated."

"Exile"

Sometimes he would sit and imagine showing New York to Coleman. He didn't imagine further than their walking down the street and his turning every now and then to say, "Keep to the inside or these people'll knock you down. Keep right behind me or you'll get left. Keep your hat on," and the negro coming on with his bent running shamble, panting and muttering, "Just lemme get away from here, just lemme get back where I was, just lemme offen this walk, just lemme be back where I come from, why you brung me here?" and him saying, "It was your idea. Keep your eyes on my back. Don't take your eyes off my back or you'll get lost."

"Judgement Day" p. 541

When he was safely back in the apartment again, he had imagined going over it with Coleman. He had to turn his head every few seconds to make sure Coleman was behind him. Keep to the inside or these people'll knock you down, keep right behind me or you'll get left, keep your hat on, you damn idiot, he had said, and Coleman had come on with his bent running shamble, panting and muttering, What we doing here? Where you get this fool idea coming here?

I come to show you it was no kind of place. Now you know you were well off where you were.

I knowed it before, Coleman said. Was you didn't know it.

In "The Geranium" Old Dudley, who develops into Tanner in the later stories, is tricked into going to New York by his romantic idea of the big city. In "An Exile in the East" he goes north to gratify his daughter's "hog-wild" desire to take him back with her. In "Judgement Day" a certain Dr. Foley, who is black, buys the land Coleman and Tanner are squatting on and attempts to blackmail them into running a still for him. Tanner, who will not work for "a nigger," feels forced to go forth. This sub-plot serves to heighten the racial tension considerably.

[4] See note "3" above.

In all three short stories the old man has a great desire to escape from New York. The rejection of New York as a place to live is an integral part of the plot already in "The Geranium," but in that story Old Dudley wants to show New York to Rabie, his black friend, primarily to make it seem less threatening to himself. In the corresponding passage in "Judgement Day" the dialogue between the friends does not ring true. These men have been together for thirty years, and this influences what they say and what they do not say to each other. It is only in "An Exile in the East" that the two men talk and behave consistently in accordance with their common knowledge of life in a small Georgia town. Coleman's despair at being in New York, as Tanner imagines it, is brought out in "Exile." Four times he cries "Just lemme," and we hear how deeply disturbed he is among city people. Tanner's concern for Coleman is convincing; he is genuinely afraid that Coleman will get lost in the crowd.

The Postcard

"Exile"
Since he had been up here he had got one post card from Coleman that said, "This is Coleman. X. How do boss. Coleman", and the other side was a picture of a local monument put up by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Coleman had marked the X and got somebody to write the rest of it for him. Old Tanner had sent him a postcard in return with, "This place is alrite if you like it. Franklyn R. T. Tanner," written on it. The other side was a picture of General Grant's tomb. He kept Coleman's card stuck behind the inside band of his hat.

"Judgement Day" p. 542
When he had been here a week, he had got a postcard from Coleman that had been written for him by Hooten at the railroad station. It was written in green ink and said, "This is Coleman —X— how-you boss." Under it Hooten had written from himself, "Quit frequenting all those nitespots and come on home, you scoundrel, yours truly. W. P. Hooten." He had sent Coleman a card in return, care of Hooten, that said, "This place is alrite if you like it. Yours truly, W. T. Tanner."

In both "Exile" and "Judgement Day," Old Tanner receives a postcard from Coleman and replies with a postcard. It seems natural in the "Exile" text that Coleman wants his name to appear at the bottom. This may be the first time he has ever sent a postcard, and he insists on doing it right. That he has already marked the card with his X makes no difference. It is important what the pictures on the cards are. A comic tone is struck in "Exile" with pictures of a local monument in Georgia and of Grant's tomb, and the irony enriches the story. In "Judgement Day,"

however, we are not told what the pictures are. It is, of course, as important for Tanner to get his name at the bottom as it is for Coleman, and in "Exile" he does so in true splendor. The last sentence of this "Exile" excerpt, which is not in "Judgement Day," shows that the postcard from Coleman is his treasure in a hostile environment. The nature of their relationship is obscured in "Judgement Day" by three references to Hooten, the station master of Corinth.

The Imaginary Homecoming

"Exile"

He saw the train getting in early in the morning and Coleman waiting on the platform where he had written him to wait for the body. He saw Hooten, the station master, running with the rattling baggage wagon down to the freight end of the train. They would shove the coffin off and inside he would feel the fresh early morning air coming in through the cracks of the pine box but he wouldn't make a noise yet. The big train would jar and grate and slide on off until the noise was lost in the distance and he would feel the baggage wagon rumbling under him, carrying him on back up to the station. Then they would slide the coffin onto the platform where Coleman was waiting and Coleman would creep over and stand looking down on it and he would make a small noise inside and Coleman would say, "Open hit." And Hooten would say, "Why open it? He's as dead as he's ever going to get," and Coleman would say, "Open hit," and Hooten would go for a hammer and all the time, he would be feeling the light cool early morning air of home coming

"Judgement Day" p. 546

In his dreams he could feel the cold early morning air of home coming in through the cracks of the pine box. He could see Coleman waiting, red-eyed, on the station platform and Hooten standing there with his green eyeshade and black alpaca sleeves. If the old fool had stayed at home where he belonged, Hooten would be thinking, he wouldn't be arriving on the 6:03 in no box. Coleman had turned the borrowed mule and cart so that they could slide the box off the platform onto the open end of the wagon. Everything was ready and the two of them, shut-mouthed, inched the loaded coffin toward the wagon. From inside he began to scratch on the wood. They let go as if it had caught fire.

They stood looking at each other, then at the box.

"That him," Coleman said. "He in there his self."

"Naw," Hooten said, "must be a rat got in there with him."

"That him. This here one of his tricks."

"If it's a rat he might as well stay."

"That him. Git a crowbar."

through the cracks of the wooden box, and Hooten would come mouthing back with the hammer and begin to pry open the lid and even before he had the upper end pried Coleman would be jumping up and down, not saying anything yet, only jumping up and down, panting like a horse, and then the lid would fly back and Coleman would shout out, "Hiiiiiieeeee!"

Hooten went grumbling off and got the crowbar and came back and began to pry open the lid. Even before he had the upper end pried open, Coleman was jumping up and down, wheezing and panting from excitement. Tanner gave a thrust upward with both hands and sprang up in the box. "Judgement Day! Judgement Day!" he cried. "Don't you two fools know it's Judgement Day?"

In "Exile" we never lose the sense of a New York that presses down on Tanner. As he makes his way up the steps of the tenement house, he dreams of going home in a pine box pretending to be dead. There is no similar passage in "The Geranium." In "Judgement Day" the homecoming episode is a melodramatic scene full of excited dialogue. But in "Exile" Coleman is too excited to participate in any conversation. All he can say is "Open hit," and he repeats it so convincingly that Hooten does. The climax of "Judgement Day" is Tanner's cry of "Judgement Day! Judgement Day! Don't you two fools know it's Judgement Day?" It is a climax of a clearly religious theme. In "Exile" the emphasis is consistently on the Coleman-Tanner friendship. Here it is Coleman who cries "Hiiiiiieeeee!" expressing his joy at seeing his old friend again. It is as natural for Coleman to react in this way, as it is for Tanner to be quietly happy. Why should it be his intention to scare his friend by crying, "Judgement Day!" The "Exile" phrase "the light cool early morning air of home" reveals why Tanner is thinking of risking his life to go home. He wants to die in Corinth, Georgia, where he has lived his life, and where his friend will bury him properly. This is in his mind and not some joke.

In "The Geranium" Rabie, who develops into Coleman, is married and lives in the basement of a boarding house. Dudley lives in the same house, and it is his job to protect the women in the boarding house. The strength of "The Geranium" is that it portrays the early period of the friendship in such great detail that we are convinced of the possibility of normal relations between blacks and whites. The weakness of "The Geranium" relationship is that Dudley's function in the boarding house and Rabie's married life preclude the development of the friendship. The two men in the tin and crate shack of the "Exile" story are dependent on each other in a way unthought of in the boarding house. For forty

years they have stayed together voluntarily. Tanner knows that he has been "on a nigger's hands" for a long time, but he has not thought of it that way until his daughter points it out. In Tanner's mind they share the burdens of their everyday existence equally. He has had Coleman on his hands for many years earlier in their lives, and he still provides his share by giving Coleman shelter. The element of sharing the burdens is toned down in "Judgement Day," where Coleman is *paroled to* Tanner, and where the shack belongs to both of them.

If Tanner is a product of his time and place, his daughter is a product of a more frightening time and place. In all three short stories her prejudice is the greater. The one thing she is afraid of is that Tanner will "go getting friendly" with the blacks next door. Tanner refuses to learn the lesson his daughter preaches because his life-experience has taught him a different lesson. His belief in positive relationships with blacks is so strong that he suffers for it. In the "Exile" manuscript it is clear *why* he believes in the possibility of a friendship with the black tenant, and we are not permitted to forget *why* Tanner differs from his daughter.

The Sawmill Incident

For this lengthy but crucial scene, I suggest that the reader turn first to the "Exile" version below, and then consult the "Judgement Day" passage, pp. 536-539 in *The Complete Stories*. The meeting at the sawmill between Tanner and Coleman is a central episode in both stories. There is no corresponding episode in "The Geranium."

On a first reading the renditions of their first meeting appear very similar, although the episode is longer in "Judgement Day." But a collation reveals how different the passages are. The basic plot is the same, and phrases from the "Exile" text are repeated in "Judgement Day." But the added negative lines about blacks and the deleted positive aspects give the episode in "Judgement Day" an entirely new emphasis. The blacks in that story are a sorry crew. We are told that they don't have much time between them and the darkest Africa. They behave as if "a new Lincoln" had abolished work, but they can be threatened into work with just a pen knife. Such stereotypes are absent from "An Exile in the East".

"Judgement Day" also offers a negative impression of Coleman. His eyes are "small and blood-shot," and Tanner believes there is a knife on him "that he would as soon use as not." We are asked to accept a huge clown with a hanging jaw and "muddy liquor-swollen eyes" as a serious challenge to Tanner's authority.

In "Exile" Tanner has not had Coleman "on his back" for thirty years, he has been "putting up with him" for forty years. In "Exile" it is not Tanner who "first sees" Coleman; instead the wording is "they had

first come across each other." The choice of words is important, for it shows that in Tanner's mind the impression of Coleman was one of fear and respect from the start. This explains why the other members of the crew just watch; they recognize that Coleman represents a serious challenge to Tanner's authority. The "Exile" manuscript, unlike the "Judgement Day" text, explains why Coleman hangs about at the sawmill. He wants to be accosted by a white man, and he is willing to wait a week, "because he has never been accosted before, only ignored."

In "An Exile in the East" Coleman is a human being with human motivations. He is in perfect accordance with Flannery O'Connor's definition of a black man in the South:

> The uneducated Southern Negro is not the clown he's made out to be. He's a man of very elaborate manners and great formality, which he uses superbly for his own protection and to insure his own privacy.
>
> (*Mystery & Manners*, p. 234)

When Tanner faces Coleman in "Exile," he does so with authority and intelligence. We can understand that Coleman is awed by the white man with the whittling hands. This is only possible in "Judgement Day" because Coleman has been reduced to a clown. Notice that in "Exile" Tanner reaches his immediate goal, Coleman is going to work for the mill, and he is going to get the others back to work.

Another difference between the stories is the emphasis on a mysterious power in "Judgement Day." Tanner does not know what his hands are doing in that story. His "quaking" hands work "constantly, violently" —but he never looks at his creations, and if he did, he could not tell what they were. It is an "invisible power" which carves the wood. When he faces Coleman his knife moves as if "directed solely by some intruding intelligence." In "Judgement Day" the presence of the mysterious power is clearly more important than the theme of a racial confrontation. The mysterious and probably religious element is not as dominating in "An Exile in the East," although this story is open for a theological interpretation, as is any other Flannery O'Connor short story.

In all three stories the old man's prejudice is evident. In keeping with his background, he is disappointed with what appear to him to be strange blacks. In Tanner's mind it is irrelevant that he himself would rather live in a shack with Coleman than in New York with his own daughter. The idea is firm in his mind; he will not accept that his daughter lives next door to blacks. This is the irony of his position; there is no logic in his racial emotions. But in spite of his prejudice, he is looking to the black man for skill and friendship in all three stories. The good-natured black tenant of "An Exile in the East" is removed from the world

of racially motivated violence. It is, however, impossible for Tanner to accept his mocking, patronizing, and condescending attitude; and it almost kills the old man. But the black tenant cannot be blamed; he is as kind as he knows how to be. He accepts this strange old man from the South, and he tries to communicate with him.

There are several passages in "An Exile in the East" which have no parallels in either of the two stories. But even in the passages which most closely resemble counterparts from the other stories there are almost no repetitions of whole sentences; only a few phrases are repeated verbatim. When I have chosen to talk about these parallel passages, it has been to bring out Flannery O'Connor's diverse treatments of similar elements in the three stories. On one hand, the differences mark O'Connor's eagerness, especially in her later work, to emphasize her Christian themes. On the other hand, the differences remind us that Flannery O'Connor was not exclusively a religious allegorist.

In "An Exile in the East" the social context is necessary, believable, and vividly described. The Georgia setting and characters are rendered with an eye for detail that makes them more than a backdrop for abstract themes. "Exile" shows two men caught in a conflict between rural and urban ideas. The two old men seem equally expendable in the North and in the South. The religious concern of Flannery O'Connor is implicit, resting in the theological foundation which informs the story. "Exile" is illuminated by her religious knowledge. This story reminds us that Flannery O'Connor could be sociological as well as theological, that, indeed, she could accomplish both themes at once, as she did in "A Stroke of Good Fortune," "The Artificial Nigger," and "Everything That Rises Must Converge."

I would like to thank Mrs. Regina Cline O'Connor and Mr. Robert Giroux for their kind assistance and great interest in allowing "An Exile in the East" to be published. As always the help of Mr. Gerald Becham, Curator of the Flannery O'Connor manuscripts, and the staff of the Ina Dillard Russell Library at Georgia College has been invaluable. (J. N. G.)

AN EXILE IN THE EAST

FLANNERY O'CONNOR

Old Tanner lowered himself into the chair he was gradually molding to his own shape and looked out the window ten feet away at another window framed by blackened red brick. The brim of his black felt hat was pulled down sharply to shade his eyes from the grey streak of sunlight that dropped in the alley. He was a heavy old man and he had almost ruined their chair already. He had heard the son-in-law, in his nasal yankee whisper, call him "the cotton bale in there." He would have liked to be thin to be less in their way. He didn't eat any more of their food than he had to but no flesh had fallen off him since he had come. He was still walled up in it. Since he had been here, he had only got pale, or rather yellow with brown spots, whereas at home, his spots had been red and purple.

His daughter wouldn't let him wear his hat inside except when he sat like this in front of the window. He told her it was necessary to keep the light out of his eyes; which it was not: the light here was as weak as everything else. He had bought the hat new to come here in and whenever he thought how he had actually been that foolish, he would catch both arms of the chair and lean forward, gasping as if he could not get enough air. His face was large and bloated and his pale grey eyes, far under the hat brim, were as weak as the sunlight. His vision reached as far as the other window ledge across the alley and stopped. He never tried to look into the other window. He waited every morning, sitting here, for them to put their geranium on the ledge. Nothing else they had could interest him and they had no business with a geranium as they didn't know how to take care of it. They put it out every morning about ten and took it in at five-thirty or so. It reminded him of the Grisby child at home who had polio and was set out in the sun like that every morning to blink. These people across the alley thought they had something in this sick geranium that they didn't know how to take care of. They let the sun slow-cook it all day and they set it so near the edge that any sudden wind could have done for it. At home where the sunlight was strong, the geraniums were red and tough. Every morning after breakfast he sat down in the chair in front of the window and waited, as if he were waiting for a performance to begin, for the pair of hands to put the geranium in the window. He pulled a large watch from his pocket and looked at the time. It was four minutes after ten.

His daughter came in and stood in the door, rubbing a yellow dishrag over the bottom of a pan while she watched him with her air of righteous exhaustion. She was lean and swaybacked.

"Why don't you go out for a stroll?" she asked.

He didn't answer. He set his jaw and looked straight ahead. A stroll. He could barely manage to stay upright on his feet and she used the word *stroll.*

"Well huh?" she said. She always waited to be answered and looked at as if something could come of answering her or looking at her.

"No," he said in a voice that was wavery, almost reed-like. If his eyes began to water, she would see and have the pleasure of looking sorry for him. She enjoyed looking sorry for herself too; but she could have saved herself, old Tanner thought, and shifted his weight so abruptly in the chair that the spring on one side gave a raucous creak. If she'd just have let him alone and not been so taken up with her damn duty, let him stay where he was and not been so taken up with her damn duty, she could have spared herself this.

She gave the pan one more lingering rub and then left the door with a sigh that seemed to remain suspended in the room for some seconds to remind him that it was actually his own fault he was here; he hadn't had to come; he had wanted to. This thought tightened his throat so quickly that he leaned forward and opened his mouth as if he had to let air into himself or choke. He unbuttoned his collar and twisted his huge neck and then his hand fell, shaking at the wrist, on the mound of stomach that lay in his lap.

He could have got out of coming. He could have been stubborn and said to her that helpless or not helpless he'd spend his life where he'd always spent it, send him or don't send him a check every month, he'd continue on as he'd continued on before. He had raised up five boys and this girl with sawmilling and farming and one thing and another and the result of it was the five boys were gone, two to the devil and one to the asylum and two to the government and there was nobody left but the daughter, married and living in New York City like a big woman, and ready, when she came home and found him the way he was, to take him back with her. She was more than ready, he had told Coleman, she was hog-wild. She was thirsting to have some duty to do. When she had found him in a shack made entirely of tin and crates, but large enough for a cook stove and a cot and a pallet for the nigger — and the nigger, she said, that filthy Coleman, half the time in there drunk on the pallet — when she had seen this, his deplorable conditions, she had shivered all over with duty.

"How do you stand that nigger?" she had wailed. "How do you stand that drunk stinking nigger, right there beside you? I can't stay in that place two minutes without getting sick!"

"I'd been dead long since if he hadn't been waiting on me hand and foot," he said. "Who you think cooks? Who you think empties my slops?"

"You don't have to live like this," she said. "If you ain't got any pride, I have and I know my duty and I've been raised to do it."

"Who raised you?" he asked.

"Righteous people though poor," she said. "Where'd you get that awful nigger anyway? Why's he stay with you? You can't pay him. He's the one feeding you. Do you think I want to see my own father living off a nigger? The both of them eating stolen chickens?"

"I give him a roof," he said. "This is my shack. I made it myself."

"It looks like you made it," she said.

It was true that he had been on a nigger's hands more or less but he had not thought of it that way until she appeared. Before that Coleman had been on his hands for forty years. They were both old now, him sewed up in a wall of flesh and the other twisted double with no flesh at all. Between them they made out. It was his shack and if he ate what the nigger could find for them to eat, he was still providing the roof and giving the orders.

Since he had been up here he had got one post card from Coleman that said, "This is Coleman. X. How do boss. Coleman," and the other side was a picture of a local monument put up by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Coleman had marked the X and got somebody to write the rest of it for him. Old Tanner had sent him a postcard in return with, "This place is alrite if you like it. Franklyn R.T. Tanner," written on it. The other side was a picture of General Grant's tomb. He kept Coleman's card stuck behind the inside band of his hat.

At home he had lived in a shack but here she didn't even live in a house. She lived in a building with more other people than could be counted living in the same building with her and that building in the middle of a row of buildings all alike, all blackened red and grey with rasp-mouthed people hanging out their windows looking at other windows with other rasp-mouthed people hanging out looking back at them. And this was the way the whole city was. It kept on going on this way for miles around itself.

Sometimes he would sit and imagine showing New York to Coleman. He didn't imagine further than their walking down the street and his turning every now and then to say, "Keep to the inside or these people'll knock you down. Keep right behind me or you'll get left. Keep your hat

on," and the negro coming on with his bent running shamble, panting and muttering, "Just lemme get away from here, just lemme get back where I was, just lemme offen this walk, just lemme be back where I come from, why you brung me here?" and him saying, "It was your idea. Keep your eyes on my back. Don't take your eyes off my back or you'll get lost."

She might say he was living off a nigger but he had been putting up with that nigger for forty years. They had first come across each other forty years ago when Coleman was twice his present size and known for a trouble-maker, a big black loose-jointed nigger who had been hanging around the edge of his sawmill for a week, not working, just stirring up the other hands and boasting. He had known it was no nigger to hang around his sawmill and not work, no matter how big or black or mean. He was a thin man then and he had some disease that caused his hand to shake. He had taken to whittling to steady the hand and he managed his sawmill niggers entirely with a very sharp pen knife. This Coleman finally got them all discontented enough to sit down on the job — six niggers off in the middle of the woods, against one white man with a shaky hand — but the other five were willing for the trouble to be between him and Coleman. They were as sorry a crew as he had ever worked. They were willing to lie back against the sawdust pile and watch and the big black one, Coleman, he was willing to lean against a tree in full sight and wait until he was accosted, because he had never been accosted before, only ignored. He thought here was one white man afraid of him and with good reason as this didn't appear to be much of a white man, gaunt and yellow-grey and shaking in the wrist. The others had been content just to sit and wait and so they sat and waited and he was in no hurry himself he remembered and the nigger against the tree was in no hurry and if they all wanted a show, they could take their ease and wait until he was ready to begin it.

He had eyed that nigger once and then he had started hunting on the ground with his foot for a piece of bark to whittle on. He had found two or three and thrown them away until he found a piece about four inches long and a few inches wide and not very thick and then he had begun to cut, making his way closer to that black leaning nigger all the time but not paying him any attention. His hand with the knife in it probably worked as fast as an old woman's with a tatting needle and it must have looked wild to the nigger. He finally got up to him and stopped and stood there in front of him, gouging two round holes out of the piece of bark and then holding it off a little way and looking through the holes past a pile of shavings into the woods and on down to where he

could see the edge of the pen they had built to keep their mules in. He began to carve again with the nigger watching his hand.

He rounded the holes from inside and out and the nigger never quit watching his hand. "Nigger," he could have said, "this knife is in my hand now but it's going to be in your gut in a few minutes," but that was not what he had said. He had said, "Nigger, how is your eyesight?" and he hadn't waited for any answer; he had begun to scrape around with his foot on the ground, looking for a piece of wire. He turned over a small piece of haywire and then another shorter piece of a heavier kind and he picked these up and began to prick out openings on either end of the bark to attach them to. When he finished he had a large pair of pine bark spectacles.

"I been watching you hanging around here for about a week," he said, "and I don't think you can see so good and I hate to see anybody can't see good. Put these on," and for the first time he had actually looked up at that nigger and what he saw in his eyes was more than pure admiration, it was a kind of awe for the hand and the spectacles. That nigger had reached out for the spectacles and had put them on his nose and attached the wire bows behind his ears in a slow careful way and then he had stood there, looking as if he saw the white man in front of him for the first time.

"What you see in front of you?"

"See a man," the nigger had said.

"Is he white or black?"

"He white."

"Well you treat him like he was white. Now you see better than you been seeing?"

"Yesshh."

"Then get to work," he had said, "and get these others to work because I've took all I'm going to take from them," and the nigger had said, "Is these my glasses now?" and he had said, "Yes, what's your name?" and the nigger had said, "Coleman."

He had been able to make the spectacles in a few minutes but he could not carve now at all because his hands were too swollen. By the time he had left home, he could not do anything at all but sit and he had been fool enough to think it would be better to sit in a new place. He couldn't even fire a gun anymore. Coleman's hands were twisted but he could still hunt. Coleman still had plenty he could do. All he himself could do was sit. The geranium was late today. He pulled out the watch again and looked at the time. It was ten-thirty and they usually had it out by ten. The shade of the window where they put it out was always

halfway down so that he never saw anything but a pair of arms thrust it out on the ledge, sometimes a man's, sometimes a woman's. The man always put it too near the ledge. It was the only thing he had seen growing since he had come to the city. At home any woman could have set it out in the ground and made something of it. We got real ones of them at home, he wanted to holler whenever the hands stuck it out on the ledge. We'd stick theter thang in the ground, Lady, and have us a real one.

He put the watch back in his pocket. Outside a woman shrieked something unintelligible and a garbage can fell on one of the fire escapes and banged to the concrete. Then inside, the door to the next apartment slammed and he heard a sharp distinct footstep clip down the hall. "That's the nigger," he muttered, "yonder he goes somewheres," and he sat forward as if he might get up suddenly.

The nigger lived in the next apartment. He had been here a month when the nigger moved in. That Thursday he had been standing in the door, looking out into the empty hall when a big light brown bald-headed but young nigger walked into the next apartment, which was vacant. He had on a grey business suit and a tan tie. His collar was white and made a clear cut line across his neck and his shoes were shiny tan and matched his skin — he was the kind rich people would dress up for a butler but there were no rich people in this building. Then he had seen the manager of the building come up the steps and go in the apartment behind the nigger and then he had heard, with his own ears, the nigger *rent* the apartment. For sometime after he had heard it, he still didn't believe it. Then when it finally came down on him that the nigger was actually going to rent the apartment, he had gone and got the daughter by the arm and brought her to the door to listen. The voices were still going on in there, the manager's and the nigger's and he had held her by the arm in the door while they listened. Then he had shut it, and stood looking at her.

Her big square face had cracked in a silly grin and she had said, "Now don't you go getting friendly with him. I don't want any trouble with niggers. If you have to live next to them, just mind your own business and they'll mind theirs. Everybody can get along if they just mind their business. Live and let live," she said. "That's my motto. Up here everybody just minds their own business and everybody gets along. That's all you have to do."

He had stood there, hardly able to endure looking at her. Then he had raised his hand and tried to tighten it into a first. He had felt the breath come wheezing into his windpipe and he had said in a throaty squeak that should have been thundery, "You ain't been raised thataway!"

He had had to sit down before he could say anymore. He had backed onto a straight chair by the door. "You ain't been raised to live next to niggers that rent the same as you. And you think I would go taking up with one of that kind! You ought to move. You ought to get out of this building and go where there ain't any. You ain't been raised to live with renting niggers just like you. You ain't been raised thataway!" Finally he had realized that he was moving his mouth but that the sound had stopped coming out.

She had stood there repeating, "I live and let live, I live and let live," as if she were trying to remember a better argument she had and couldn't. Then it hit her. Her face looked as if she had discovered gold. "Well, you should squawk!" she shouted. "You should squawk! You living in the same room with that nasty stinking filthy Coleman!"

He couldn't endure to look at her. Every day he thought he couldn't endure it through the day if he had to look at her one more time.

He did not get out of the chair. The nigger's footsteps died away, and he sat back. The daughter was making a clatter in the kitchen. She was always banging something. All he could do anymore was sit and listen to her noise and wait on the flower to be put in the window. He pulled out the watch again, impatient with the people across the alley. He wondered if something could have happened in there. He didn't care anything about flowers but he had got in the habit of expecting this one to be put out and they ought to put it. The first day he had seen it, he had been sitting there thinking that if he could ever get out of the city far enough, a truck going South might pick him up. He would probably be dead by the time he got halfway there but it would be better to be dead halfway home than to be living here. And then while he was thinking this, a hand had appeared with no warning and put the pale pink flower in the window across the alley and he had reached forward as if he thought it were being handed to him. After that they put it out every day. He put the watch back in his pocket.

The daughter came in and leaned on the door facing again. She was never satisfied until she had got him out of the chair. A doctor had told her if he didn't use his feet he would forget how. "Listen," she said, "do me a favor. Go down to the second floor and ask Mrs. Schmitt to gimme back the pattern I lent her. Take it easy and the stroll'll do you good."

She would stand there and wait until he pulled himself out of the chair and shuffled off. It was better to get up and go than to have to turn and look at her. He didn't want to leave until they put out the geranium but he leaned forward and caught the arms of the chair and hoisted himself up. Once standing, he pulled the black hat lower on his

face and then moved off, watching his feet under him as if they were two small children he was encouraging to get out of his way.

He was always afraid that when he went creeping out into the hall, a door would open and one of the snipe-nosed men that hung off the window ledges in his undershirt would ask him what he was snooping around for. The door to the nigger's apartment was cracked and he could see a dark woman with rimless glasses sitting in a chair by the window. She didn't look like a nigger to him, more like a Greek or a Jew or maybe she was a red Indian, he didn't give a damn what she was anyway. He turned down the first flight of stairs, gripping the greasy banister and lowering his feet carefully one beside the other onto the linoleum-covered steps. As he set each foot down he felt needles floating up his legs. The nigger's wife could be a Chinese for all what he cared; she could be part giraffe.

A white woman, drinking something grape out of a bottle, passed him on the flight of steps and gave him a stare without taking her mouth from around the bottle. He had learned that you don't speak to them unless they speak to you and that they don't speak to you unless you're in their way.

After he had gone down two flights of stairs, he found the door he was supposed to go to and knocked on it. A foreign boy, ten or twelve years old, opened it and said nobody was at home and gave him an appraising look out of one eye before he shut it again.

Going up the steps was harder for him than going down. He was one flight from the street. He could go down one more flight and be in the street and then he could keep walking straight in front of him until in maybe a month he would be outside the city. He did not have any money and he would not ask the daughter for any. In other plans he had made to run away, he had decided to sell his hat and watch. He stood for a few minutes on the second floor, looking down the last flight of stairs and out into a crack of street, before he turned and started back up again. The trip back to the room would probably take him half an hour. Every time he got himself up a step, he might have just lifted a hundred pound sack, he thought, and if he could do that he was good for something but he was not good for anything because he was not a hundred pound sack. In one plan he had made to run away, he had imagined that he would pretend he was dead and have his body shipped back and when he arrived he would knock on the inside of the box and they would let him out. Coleman would stand there with his red eyeballs starting out and think he had rose from the dead.

Thinking about this appealed to him so much that he began to imagine it as he pulled himself up one step after another in the blank

hall. He saw the train getting in early in the morning and Coleman waiting on the platform where he had written him to wait for the body. He saw Hooten, the station master, running with the rattling baggage wagon down to the freight end of the train. They would shove the coffin off and inside he would feel the fresh early morning air coming in through the cracks of the pine box but he wouldn't make a noise yet. The big train would jar and grate and slide on off until the noise was lost in the distance and he would feel the baggage wagon rumbling under him, carrying him on back up to the station. Then they would slide the coffin onto the platform where Coleman was waiting and Coleman would creep over and stand looking down on it and he would make a small noise inside and Coleman would say, "Open hit." And Hooten would say, "Why open it? He's as dead as he's ever going to get," and Coleman would say, "Open hit," and Hooten would go for a hammer and all the time, he would be feeling the light cool early morning air of home coming through the cracks of the wooden box, and Hooten would come mouthing back with the hammer and begin to pry open the lid and even before he had the upper end pried Coleman would be jumping up and down, not saying anything yet, only jumping up and down, panting like a horse, and then the lid would fly back and Coleman would shout out, "Hiiiiiieeeee!"

Old Tanner shouted it into the hollow hall. His high voice made a piercing sound that echoed shrilly on the other floors and then in the quiet that followed, he was aware of the clipping footsteps that had been coming all the time behind him. He slipped and grabbed the banister and then turned his head just enough to see the big light brown bald-headed nigger back of him, grinning.

"What kind of game are you playing, Pardner?" the big nigger asked in a well-oiled yankee voice. He had a small trimmed mustache and a tan tie with brown flecks in it and his collar was white.

Old Tanner turned his head again and remained bent over, looking at the floor and clenching the banister with both hands. His hat entirely hid his face.

"Ah wouldn't be playing Indians on these steps if ah were you, old pal," the nigger drawled in a mock Southern accent. "Now ah sho' nuf wouldn't be a-doing that," and he patted old Tanner on the shoulder and then went up the steps. His socks had brown flecks in them. Once around the bend, he began to whistle "Dixie," but the sound stopped as he shut his own door behind him.

Old Tanner turned his face to the opposite wall without unbending. There were two trickles of water running over his tight cheeks and he

leaned farther forward and let them fall on the steps as if his head were a pitcher he was emptying. Then he began to move on up the steps, like a cotton bale with short legs and a black hat. Finally he got to his own door and went in.

The daughter was nowhere in sight. He moved to the chair by the window and lowered himself into it. His face was expressionless but water was still coming out of his eyes. After a few seconds, he realized a man was sitting in the window across the alley. The shade was up all the way and the man was sitting in the window in his undershirt, watching him, head-on. He was leaning out, his upper lip twisted, as if he were trying to decide if the old man were actually crying.

"Where is thet flower?" old Tanner piped.

"Fell off," the man said.

The man couldn't see too much of old Tanner's face because the black hat almost covered his eyes but he saw his mouth begin to work as if he were talking. Then in a second, a high voice came out of him. "You shouldn't have put it so near the ledge!" he said.

"Listen, I put it where I please," the man said. "Who're you to be telling me where I'll put it? Maybe I knocked it off? Maybe I'm sick of the damn thing?"

Old Tanner hoisted himself out of the chair and leaned over the window ledge. The cracked pot was scattered on the concrete at the bottom of the alley. The pink part of the flower was lying by itself and the roots were lying by the paper bow.

"I seen you before," the man in the window said. "I seen you sitting in that chair every day, staring out in the window into my apartment. What I do in my apartment is my business, see? I don't like people looking at what I do." He paused a minute and then he said, "I don't like people watching me."

It was at the bottom of the valley with its roots in the air.

"I only tell people once," the man said and stood up and pulled down the shade all the way.

"REMEMBER HOW IT WAS WITH THE ACROBATS"

JAN NORDBY GRETLUND

In Eudora Welty's outstanding short story "Powerhouse," there is a passage which it is hard to understand fully without the necessary context:

> When any group, any performers, come to town, don't people always come out and hover near, leaning inward about them, to learn what it is? What is it? Listen. Remember how it was with the acrobats. Watch them carefully, hear the least word, especially what they say to one another, in another language—don't let them escape you; it's the only time for hallucination, the last time. They can't stay. They'll be somewhere else this time tomorrow. (*A Curtain of Green*, pp. 255-256)

Who are the acrobats the reader is supposed to recall? The passage is obviously meant to suggest *any* performers; but for the readers of Welty manuscripts it brings back a short story called "Acrobats in a Park."[1] Both stories treat of the life of performers and the mystique of performers.

"Acrobats in a Park" was written so early that "Powerhouse" had not even been thought of, according to Miss Welty. (But it was not published until 36 years after the appearance of *A Curtain of Green.*) There is no intended *connection* between the stories. It would be wrong to assume that "Acrobats in a Park" *explains* a passage in "Powerhouse." As Miss Welty has put it:

> The line in Powerhouse that says "Remember how it was with the acrobats" is an allusion (glancing, merely) to performers in general, to travelling artists, and no particular acrobats or particular anything-else should be inferred. There is a more interesting connection . . . this is that both stories were "inspired" by the world of travelling artists and performers and their transient appearance in a small town.[2]

The credit for the rediscovery of "Acrobats in a Park" must be given Mr. Kenneth Graham and the French magazine *Revue Delta.* Mr. Graham first saw the story in the Mississippi Archives in 1967; and in No-

[1] First pointed out by Alfred Appel, Jr., *A Season of Dreams: The Fiction of Eudora Welty* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), p. 163.

[2] Miss Welty's letter to me of June 13, 1978.

vember of last year *Delta* published "Acrobats in a Park" in their special Eudora Welty issue.[3] Mr. Graham not only got the story published at long last, he also wrote an interesting impressionistic analysis of it called "Performance and Catastrophe" for the same issue of *Delta.*

When *The South Carolina Review* offers the story below, however, it is not only the first American publication of "Acrobats in a Park," it is also a different and a later version than the one published in France. What most people have overlooked is the fact that there are *two* versions of the story in the Mississippi Archives, although Mr. W. U. McDonald, Jr. has made this known in his "Annotated Finding Lists" in the *Bulletin of Bibliography.*[4]

The earliest version of the story is in a folder titled "Earliest Tries at Stories: 30's" in an autograph notation. There are eight stories in typescript in the folder. Four of the stories have now been published, if we include "Acrobats in a Park." The folder also contains an autograph list of tentative dates of composition.

The earliest version of the story is dated "1934(?)." It is a combined original and carbon typescript of 11 pages, with a few revisions and additions. This is the version *Revue Delta* published. The carbon pages and the revisions indicate that there has been at least one earlier version. Of the seven other stories in this list only one is earlier: "A Ghost Story," which is dated "1930(?)."[5] "Acrobats in a Park" may be Miss Welty's second story. The version in this folder is the earliest and the first to be published, so I will call it the "A version."

There is another undated, perhaps even more interesting list of short stories among Miss Welty's papers in Jackson. This list enumerates eighteen early stories. Seventeen of these appeared in *A Curtain of Green,* Miss Welty's first collection of short stories, in 1941. "Acrobats in a Park" was the one short story which was not collected. It is entry No. 13 on the list in question; it is the only entry without a date; and it has been lined out in pencil. This later "B version" of the story is bound with the other typescripts of the stories in *A Curtain of Green,* which shows how closely "Acrobats in a Park" was associated with that collection. The B version also consists of eleven fairly clean pages, but every page differs from the corresponding page of the A version. And every page of the B version is in original typescript. From the list and the bound typescripts, it may be justifiable to conclude that "Acrobats in a

[3] *Delta,* No. 5, November 1977. Published by Mr. Claude Richard, at Université Paul Valéry, BP 5043, 34032—Montpellier Cédex, France.

[4] Vol. 24, No. 2 (1963), 44-46. And Vol. 31 (July/Sept. 1974), 95-98, 126, 132.

[5] Not to be confused with "The Ghosts," which was the original title of "The Burning."

Park" was considered for *A Curtain of Green* and that it was replaced by "A Worn Path." This story, which was finished in February 1941, has been added in an autograph note to entry No. 13 in the above-mentioned list.

Miss Welty is not certain of the exact composition date of "Acrobats in a Park." But it seems clear that she did work on the story after the suggested "1934(?)." On July 1, 1940, Cleanth Brooks, at that time one of the editors of the *Southern Review,* sent Miss Welty this note:

> I am returning "Acrobats in the [*sic*] Park." For me, it just doesn't quite focus, and in fairness to you, I should have admitted this to myself and sent it back to you weeks ago.[6]

There are 53 differences between the A version published by *Delta* and the B version published below. Most of these are changes in punctuation, but there are some substantial changes as well. Miss Welty has worked on five sentences, five phrases, and seven key words.

The general effect of the changes has been an improvement in style. Some irrelevant details have been cut. A passage in the A version reads:

> At first they eat busily, *with none of the confusion of most large families,* and then none of them can eat any longer. From the town a clock is striking only eleven. Traffic rolls around the park behind the trees, a heavy *fire* truck passes, *blowing its siren,* and one of the wine bottles trembles and tips over on the ground, spilling. No one hurries to stand it up again, until Nedda gives a belated, sharp cry.

In the B version the underlined words have been deleted. These changes reflect the tendency of all the revisions towards a greater thematic concentration on the Zarro family.[7] But there is no change in the basic plot.

The story is about the Zarro family, and the love they show for each other in the face of tragedy. One day when Ricky, one of the sons, breaks his arm because of added weight at the top of the Zarro Pyramid, Beppo, the father, suddenly seems too old to perform as an acrobat. The new "weight" he must carry is the knowledge that Tina, his sister-in-law, is pregnant. Tina, the outsider, has violated the family unity. Everybody knows this as Bird, her husband, is impotent. The security within the family wall has been destroyed. When the pyramid topples, it is a symptom of the fall of family unity. The tragedy is underlined by insights into

[6] Quoted with Miss Welty's permission.

[7] Miss Welty has chosen to restore the line "with none of the confusion of most large families" to the B version, as it works towards the concentration on family solidarity.

the minds of Ricky and Bird. On top of all this it is perhaps implied that old Beppo is not the father of the young daughter in the family.

In spite of these problems the family unity triumphs. Tina, who all along has worried least about the future of the Zarro family, restores the lost unity. At the ending of the story the family moves on, "Beppo at the head, Nedda at the foot of the little procession."

The truly interesting element in this story is the emphasis on family unity, a theme which has been of a major importance to Miss Welty in novels like *Delta Wedding* and *Losing Battles*. In "Acrobats in a Park" the family unity overcomes both "incest" and infidelity. When I visited Miss Welty in Jackson in February 1978, I asked her about the story.

Q: Among your manuscripts in the Mississippi Archives, there is a short story called "Acrobats in a Park." It is a good story about family unity, why did it take so long to get it published?

Welty: Nobody would buy it. I haven't thought of it in a hundred years, but I was reading the *Delta* publication while I was waiting for you. It is a very strange story. It is not like my other work in that it is a "literary" story. It is set, though, in a real park, the park down there near the Governor's Mansion [Smith Park], the way it looked before they landscaped it. But I think the acrobats in it must have come out of Picasso.[8] The whole thing is entirely imaginary, and I think it is literary. I think I was trying to write mighty pretty stories. I had forgotten what I did with it, as if someone else had written it. But I remember writing it, and sending it out, sending it out and sending it out. And everybody sent it back. I am surprised I kept it. I threw away most things like that. But when the Archives wanted to have my things, I found a set of unpublished stories and threw those in.

Q: The concept of "a family" seems to be very important in your work.

Welty: I didn't mean to brush over what you said about the family. "Acrobats in a Park" certainly is the most *concrete* example of family unity.

---

[8] Picasso's paintings of the Saltimbanques, a family of acrobats, painted in 1905.

ACROBATS IN A PARK

Eudora Welty

The Zarros, a family of acrobats, are eating their lunch in a little park in the center of town. It is a day late in October when the wind suddenly falls and the sun makes still objects warm to the touch.

The Zarros belong to a circus which performed in Jackson the night before but left at dawn without them. The van in which the Zarros live and travel can be seen from here if one stands tall enough, down the hill below the town, solitary on the circus grounds near the river bridge, a worn, red van painted in tall letters with the name Zarro.

In the brilliant light and the almost-blue shadow of mid-morning, five of the six Zarros lie flatly in something of a square about the red silk cloth and the paper bags. A chinaberry tree, turned the color of a lemon, casts a round shade, and the old man is sitting erectly against its black trunk. Further away are tall straight trees just turning gray or pink, and around the entire park is a screen of thick magnolias, all of the same height, which are dark green like olive trees. Around behind the closed trees lies the horizontal plane of the city, with a dome and a steeple and far away on a hill an observatory with the lid raised.

It is very still in the heart of the park. This is an old park, with pedestals bearing small concrete dancers on whose heads birds alight, a deeply shaded band pavilion, a fountain basin planted over with streaked banana plants. The leaves are falling slowly everywhere.

The family is very quiet in the park. There is Beppo, the old father; Nedda, the mother; the two young men who look nearly alike, Bird and Ricky; the child, Betty; and the outsider, a young woman. This is Tina. Her hair is blonde; she is most plainly a member of another acrobatic family who has married into this one. Bird is her husband.

Their bodies are smaller and more long-waisted, darker, more hairy, more specifically outlined and developed than is becoming to the non-committal "street clothes" they are wearing now. Their anatomical structure is both obvious and strange in such subduement. Ricky looks strangest of all, for his right arm is in a sling. It is only the old father who has dressed himself like an acrobat.

Beppo is old. Over the chinaberry roots, he draws his short legs up in their dusty dark-red velvet trousers, his silk-sleeved arms enclose them, his brown skimming fingers lock together. He has no words to say. Betty, his little girl, buttering her bread, watches him jump up again in the very

next moment, to take another of his looks around. She cannot help observing that her father is really a little pigeon-toed, tipped too far forward in his posture, as if something flicks him from behind. She has noticed it for the first time this morning.

Nedda has spread a lunch upon two of Beppo's large silk handkerchiefs on the ground. It is everything they accumulated walking through the town from the circus grounds—sausages, fruits, buns, ice cream in cartons, hot tamales sold by a Mexican. They have brought along several unlabeled bottles of a dark wine. Near them in a tree are ripe persimmons which Beppo has noticed.

At first they eat busily, and then none of them can eat any longer. From the town a clock is striking only eleven. Traffic rolls around the park behind the trees, a heavy truck passes and one of the wine bottles trembles and tips over on the ground, spilling. No one hurries to stand it up again, until Nedda gives a belated, sharp cry.

Bird feels Tina's stocking-foot touch his upper arm. He opens his eyes enough to look down the round surfaces of her body to her eager face.

"Look," she says smiling, the hint of malice in the protuberance of her tongue between her white teeth. She notices everything. "There."

She points with her foot beyond the statue to the little round, columned pavilion. It is not empty after all.

"In the merry-go-round?" asks Betty.

They all rise on their elbows and discover a shabby young man with his back to them standing alone inside. He makes a gesture, and they can hear his voice. He seems to be delivering a lecture to the empty park.

"People!" they hear him cry beseechingly. He throws out his arm in the loose sleeve.

Tina's eyes shine. They all look back at her and sink again under the tree. Bird watches Tina's head turn slowly as her eyes find all that may be seen through the trees—a clock tower, part of a white wall, a square with reflecting windows and electric lights burning behind them, the pale garden back of the governor's mansion where convicts, colored men in stripes, rake the leaves almost motionlessly, and opposite, the tall dark Catholic church with its cross.

"A nice place," says Tina, and they all look at her again, as if to them all she has become simply unbelievable.

Now and then someone enters the park, but no one has stopped except a boyish girl who came early and read on a bench. At intervals she would sniff very loudly, but she never lifted her eyes from her page. Before long she got up and went away.

A lonely man strolls through the park and looks at them almost angrily. The park, his prominent eyes seem to say, is not an undesecrated

retreat; everyone seeks it, everyone—even, at last, acrobats. In the next moment he tells them that he is on his way to the cemetery to lay the chrysanthemums he carries on his friend's grave. But he has obviously never spoken to anyone else of this. He walks on in shame.

Another man who comes down the walk stares at the acrobats and says disgustedly to his little dog which hurries to keep up with him, "Now what would those carnival people be doing in this park?" After he has led the dog to a tree, he turns and looks back at them again from a distance, as if, thinks Beppo nervously, some disintegration had scattered them there upon the public property, and he expects to see things even worse when he looks again.

A little girl bounds into the park and stops dead-still. She remarks, "I'm going to play on the Maypole while Mama goes to confession."

The Maypole is an iron staff with small rusty handles on iron chains dangling from a wheel on top. After one long, absorbing look at the Zarros, who say nothing, the little girl walks up to the Maypole and begins to swing and run around it, winding herself up.

Betty rises and takes a step toward her.

"Perlino!" cries her mother.

Betty stops almost before she is called. She realizes herself that this day is some unusual, in-between time, that they should all only wait quietly and not play or be rough, although they have never been inside a park before. She contents herself with avidly watching the little girl, who wears a red dress, a blue hat, and glasses.

Perlino is a baby-name which Nedda sometimes calls her youngest child, after a little prince in a fairy tale who was manufactured of almond paste. She smiles. She has a very short upper lip, although enough to show a narrow mustache. She lies back without waiting to see if the child obeys. Nedda is indifferent now. Her physical pleasure is over: the rest is nothing. Sometimes in the van at night she wakes all the others and cries, to see whether she has not lost their attention forever. They stop and get her something good to drink. But in the daytime she is silent and uncontemplative, and in the performance she now stands beside the formations or beneath the trapezes, her arm fatly curved, her forefinger out, in a permanent gesture of assumed wonder and helpfulness, and of course she takes the final bow.

Ricky's allowing his arm to break during last night's performance, Beppo's sudden-coming old age, Bird's impotency which she has so often lamented, Tina's contempt, her literal obedience to her, poverty and the stranded days to come—and now, today—all these things are alike facts, like her own weight. Perhaps after a little while it will all come out all right.

"Bring Mama a plum," she mutters to little Betty.

Bird, who lies listening to the shabby man in the pavilion, lays the paper of plums under his mother's tiny-nailed hand.

He has to reach across Ricky. And suddenly Ricky feels tears in his eyes. He loves his family. He has always been aware of the difference between Bird and himself. Pity, modesty, horror, reactions against the unwelcome spectacle of hope and penalty, and even an unwilling secret exultation have been steadfastly dormant in his love for his brother. Now he feels like crying.

"Give me a plum too," he says.

"Do you hear him over there?" demands Tina. She looks from the pavilion to Bird.

I do not want the child, thinks Ricky angrily, in a sentence, as if he were about to speak. I will abandon him, in a town, a town like this.

"You are feeling good today, eh, Tina?" inquires old Beppo timidly. Perhaps it will be a man child, he thinks, and to the sound of a fanfare the image of the "Zarro Wall" rises again on the shoulders of a third stately, unsmiling boy.

Ricky props himself against the hard, ribbed trunk of the chinaberry tree. He holds his sling across his chest and watches the clumsy child tangle herself in the playground trapeze.

Ricky's is a perception of the physical world that is constantly betrayed by changes. In the world of Zarro, performing under a dome, he has always been aware of the contributing structure and function of every person and every movement, the pattern and timing of arms, legs, ropes, and catapults, the dimensions of his allotment of performable space, the speed, the balance, and pure objective figure of his life. . . . Never before has he felt at all appalled at the intimacy between his performance and his life, between the routine and the desire, having thought they were one.

The more they have added to the act, the more ardently have his energies flowed. To keep working, the Zarros have been gradually forced to adopt every form of acrobatics—trapeze, feats of strength, balancing, juggling. From the first, Ricky has been quick to do them all. There is even the moment now when, to tango music, Bird and Ricky throw Tina back and forth between them across the stage, a sequence for which Nedda has made all three of them red sashes out of silk handkerchiefs.

The little girl swings herself noisily and cheerfully, stumbling in the dusty rut that runs around the iron pole. She looks back over her shoulder at the frowning Ricky, sticking out her tongue.

From where she is lying Tina calls, "Let's see you hang by your heels."

Ricky thinks, what if this, now, were the end of Zarro? He looks up wonderingly at the black and yellow vault of the chinaberry tree, but he is aware of the bodies behind him on the ground. It is they who are the foundation and support of his world. He knows the body of each member of Zarro to its limit of potentiality and vulnerability. He knows how good an arch each body makes. He knows how far it can stretch, how small and compact it can make itself. All his life the rise or decline of these surrounding figures has gone on about him, displaying the strength with which weight is borne, the probability and extent of hesitancy, the timing of contact, the lightness of falling. Practically and demonstrably he knows the pride of each body. . . .

Tina keeps calling out, "You are poor. You are no good! Let's see you hang upside down," until the child blushes darkly.

Ricky hears old Beppo sighing, and he knows that the integrity of the Zarros actually took the form of an occurrence of a certain time each night: the "Zarro Wall," when all motion and relationship was lifted and directed toward one critical moment, built in the rigid time-worn combinations, in profile, and borne onward in routine to its finish with the flags of all nations.

Last night, when his arm did not hold, he saw old Beppo walk from the toppled structure blinking his eyes, all his features dim and diminished, as if he had been discovered in a hiding-place hitherto impregnable.

"Let's see you hang from your knees, you," says Tina to the child.

It is easy to see now that she is pregnant. In this plain dress she is far too solid and round. Last night, it was a difference in the weight, the moisture and temperature of her body when she stepped into his hand that drove catastrophe into his very center. Forcing his eyes to the side and upward he saw her where she straddled the space between him and Bird, with little Betty just rising upon her back, and knew instantly. It burst in his brain, rebounded to his muscles—a sudden release, and an overwhelming sense of bliss.

Without warning the formation collapsed. All of them fell lightly, in one beat of music. The band played on. So inexplicable had it been that for an instant little Betty stood straight, with her mouth drawn down in open dismay. Then she bowed in her brief, awkward dip. Old Beppo came walking out like a little, hunched man. Bird took a step back and waited away from them. Tina's face shone . . . And Nedda's fat arm still gracefully drew attention to the spot where the formation had stood. Applause broke from the audience, the louder because an attempt had failed.

In the next moment, when they began again, Ricky discovered that his arm was broken. Bowing, he had run lightly off the stage, wildly applauded.

Now it is next day. Still Tina's pregnancy is not an open thing. Altogether without words, the troup has watched the broken arm set, and stayed behind the rest of the circus, walking through the streets and into the park. Beppo now and then touches Ricky on the bad arm, as if to comfort him for the inward violence which had been destroying him with its secrecy.

But Ricky is staring at Tina in the sun until his eyes literally hurt him. She is sitting untidily in the yellow leaves; she picks one leaf up and brushes her face and lips with it.

He is disturbed even now by any small careless deviation which she allows to touch her. This morning, the first one up, with her red comb she parted her hair an inch higher on her forehead. This too has altered her for him. A pattern over which his vision had begun another journey of recognition has shifted again before his eyes. His looking is a maze. In his incessant care, he can never quite find his way through a world which is being made so endlessly known to him.

The little girl's mother appears in the park. But she finds it useless to beg her child to leave the Maypole and the acrobats. With a calm, devoted expression she sits down on a bench to wait.

Tina smiles at Ricky, and so intense was his preoccupation with her lowered head that the change in her expression, the sudden approach, makes her seem a stranger.

"What is it?" he growls.

They all listen to hear what Tina will have to say to Ricky.

But still she will say nothing, and they remain wide apart.

All at once Nedda cries, "Why don't you go to confession? . . . Only across the street."

Whereupon the mother of the little girl gives Tina a challenging, fighting look from the bench.

Tina turns her eyes from Ricky's stiff lips, and stands up. She puts on her shoes. They see her walk away from them, off under the trees and lightly down the embankment out of the park. Glancing all about but never looking behind her, she crosses the windy street and walks up the steps of the church.

As she goes inside, Ricky closes his eyes and lies still. He hears no sound except the persistent screech of the chains and the short panting breaths of the little girl who will never stop playing.

Once there are footsteps marching. Loudly, in an almost military fashion, a pair of lovers walks toward them. Keeping in step, with their

arms around each other, their faces blank in double profile, they are completely absorbed. They walk past the silent acrobats, who look up at them. Like tightrope walkers, they look nowhere: their balance is maintained from another source as they walk in a straight line directly through the park.

Bird turns from the sight of the lovers, rolls over on the ground and sinks his broad head in his folded arms.

Bird in his childhood was called "The Little Bird" because he could be tossed through the air across the platform, from his father to his mother, so lightly, with his arms obediently held out like wings. Then he wore small blue or yellow silk dresses. Beppo would swing him about his head (a terrible smile directed from his younger face) until the sleeves would fill with wind, his body felt nothing, and his ears stopped up with a kind of thunder. Nedda would always catch him at the end and laugh.

. . . How fleeting it is! Bird lifts his head. Yet the lovers are still walking down the narrow walk, their arms clinging. He closes his eyes again, and the image of his wife which he always seeks comes tiredly to his mind.

She is through with her performance at last, under the great white beam. . . . His thoughts of her are never directed upon that moment filled with the roll of drums, but hastily upon the moment after. To think of her in the very balance and center of her danger (and to think of her now in the church) would be impossible.

She is taking so long. . . .

A little boy runs with a ball bat through the park and screams, "What's the time, Freddie?" And when the shabby man in the pavilion, giving a short, assertive nod, replies, "Long after six," he turns an eager face toward them, while the boy shouts with gratification. This must be a town joke, Bird supposes, to ask the afflicted man the time.

He digs his fists into his eyes to drive out the glare, and persists. . . . There is Tina . . . a microscopic figure of acute vision, held compressed between his fist and his brain, no larger than a being in a teardrop. She moves, is still. The performance is over. Abruptly, her legs crossed, her weight lightly on the left foot, the red round mouth opened, she holds out her arms and stands briefly in a sort of minute expansion, like something in bloom. There is a fleeting chord of brass—he can hear it—soft applause descends upon his wife, safety is hers, she bows her head and runs away, her hand lifted in farewell and promise: next time!

Betty wakes up restlessly, and turns her head. She has been sleeping against Bird's shoulder.

"There's a fly crawling on you, Mama."

Her mother does not answer.

Betty frowns. "Doesn't it tickle?" she asks.

But her mother does not answer. The fly crawls over her motionless hand and up her arm, and flies away.

What a long time Tina is having with the priest!

By now, the sky has clouded over, and soon it will rain.

Nedda, risen a little unsteadily to her feet, looking up at the moving trees and waits until the rain, after the waiting above the city, reaches down. A gentle drizzle falls. Careful, like a finger, the steeple remains lifted . . . She stands under the trees. The touched mysterious shapes of watertanks endure, and the finished bridge. At the top of a street the full dome is closed—so small, thinks Nedda, lifting her palm,—like a pigeon. The light softly lets go the swelling trees like women beside the startling clocked towers.

"Look," says Betty, taking her hand.

Far off, the small observatory casement where stars are seen draws inward soundlessly. At that moment the statue beside her, pockmarked like a beggar and bitten by the sun, turns black.

"It's raining in this town," says Betty. "That little girl went home with her mother."

"Come on," says Bird, starting toward the pavilion, where the shabby man looks out.

But no one moves.

They look at the dark, symmetrical church door under the arch. Ricky sprawls motionless, looking out over his bandaged arm, remembering with incomprehension and slow, unwilling deprecation his virtuosity in solo performances during the secret time.

Beppo has a persimmon. Squatting like a monkey, he bites into it. He crinkles his eyes and nods at his wife.

"All this—it has happened before," he says, and his face draws up from the taste of the persimmon.

A spasm crosses Nedda's dreaming face and all of a sudden she turns all the way round and laughs, clearly and thrillingly, like a young girl. It can be heard all over the park. Betty runs to her and climbs upon her breast.

The black door divides, the lighted side shows the pearly interior of the church, and Tina comes out. She has made her confession. She stands on the steps and reaches her hand into the rain. Ricky watches her: how she seems always to float down a stair! Then, looking over at them, she walks with her easy manner across the street to the park where they are waiting for her, standing, ready to go—Beppo at the head, Nedda at the foot of the little procession.

THE FIRST YOUTH OF FAUST

Ann Deagon

An intriguing title. Better in French, though—more subtle, more suggestive: La Première jeunesse de Faust. Where is it coming from, though, the whole idea? Something about that fine line of light between the drapes, how it draws the eye across the carpet fainter toward the dressing alcove and ends hard against a wadded towel. (Otherwise I'd never have known this motel faces east.) Does the light remind me of a knife slitting the juicy carpet? Or was it the timbre of that blond boy's voice last night, how it broke upward like a tenor aria?

Picture young Johannes at work in his father's shop: a butcher shop, I suppose. There are twin blocks squat and mythical as anvils. On the sawdust-covered floor shavings kick up like wayward curls. Under the meat-grinder dark splotches wait for the rats who tonight in the alley will crunch the woody pudding till they stiffen like barrels. The two butchers are muscular as blacksmiths. They are brothers. One plays football at the local high school, one was a truck driver until his rig jackknifed into a school bus. They are teaching Johann how to cut beef.

Davey thuds the quarter of beef onto the block while his brother selects a knife. "Okay, Jo," says Mack, "I'll show you how it's done." He begins to cut. Whenever he applied his hand, leaned forward with his shoulder, planted his foot, and employed the pressure of his knee, in the audible ripping off of the skin, and slicing operation of the knife, the sounds were all in regular cadence. Movements and sounds proceeded as in the dance of 'the Mulberry Forest' and the blended notes of 'the King Shau.' . . . Having finished his operation, he laid down his knife and said, "When I first began to cut up an ox, I saw nothing but the entire carcase. After three years I ceased to see it as a whole. Now I deal with it in a spiritual manner, and do not look at it with my eyes. The use of my senses is discarded and my spirit acts as it wills. Observing the natural lines, my knife slips through the great crevices and slides through the great cavities, taking advantage of the facilities thus presented. My art avoids the membranous ligatures, and much more the great bones.

"A good butcher changes his knife every year—it may have been injured in cutting, an ordinary butcher changes his every month—it may have been broken. Now my knife has been in use for nineteen years; it has cut up several thousand oxen, and yet its edge is as sharp as if it had newly come from the whetstone. There are the interstices of the joints, and the edge of the knife has no appreciable thickness; when that which is so thin enters where the interstice is, how easily

it moves along! The blade has more than room enough. Nevertheless, whenever I come to a complicated joint, and see that there will be some difficulty, I proceed anxiously and with caution, not allowing my eyes to wander from the place, and moving my hand slowly. Then by a very slight movement of the knife, the part is quickly separated, and drops like a clod of earth to the ground. Then straightening up with the knife in my hand, I look all round, and in a leisurely manner, with an air of satisfaction, wipe it clean, and put it in its sheath."

But Mack did not put his knife in a sheath; he flipped it hard into the other block, where it quivered beside a cleaver, one-third of whose edge was buried, though barely, in the greasy surface. In fact, Mack had hardly been carving oxen for upwards of twenty years, nor would the diction of the preceding passage have suited his style. "Well, kid," he said, "think you can get the hang of it?" That was all he said. On the other hand, who is to say how Mack viewed his art? Even Jo, despite the piles of library books under the creaky bed above the store, had not at that date read the works of Chuang Tzu. When she did, two years away, it was Mack who took instant shape in her mind, the sprawling stains on his butcher's coat wound into incongruous dragons.

I have given away the sex of Jo Ann too soon. I should have spelled it once Johanna, made some more subtle transition. Once I read at my grandfather's house a wormy novel by Dumas père whose cast included a Chevalier by the name of Anne. That would have pleased Jo, might even have made the transition from Jo to Ann a bit easier. Especially since a schoolmate once told her she looked like a dissolute French count. Right now, in the butcher coat with the string wound twice around her waist, she appeared at least androgynous—tall as the two males, not thick but sinewy like her father and grandfather. Only one thing missing to make her a proper son of the house. Actually she didn't often think of it that way, though she knew (having heard about Freud from her tenth grade English teacher) that she should. When she unpacked and laid out in the showcase what the customers called "land oysters" she felt some puzzlement but certainly no envy. And when Davey or Mack, tired after a heavy afternoon, would take off the neuter apron and stretch his linked muscular arms over his head, while below his thighs and their round load bulged to match —what she felt was not envy either.

What she felt was probably just about what I felt yesterday evening watching that grad student shove the heavy lectern to the edge of the stage and bracing it against his chest lower it inch by inch to the floor of the lecture hall. The absolute control in his arms and thighs, the intentness of his whole body put entirely to my purpose (I de-

manded full eye-contact with my audience). It reminded me in some obscure way of how they slaughtered cattle on the farm down in Centreville, where Jo Ann's father bought all that beef from one of his cousins during the war. After they felled the steer and cut his throat, they ran an axle between the tendons of his hind feet and strung it to the center of the A-frame. At first they'd hoist it only to shoulder height, and the man with the knife would work the hide down from hooves to head, while the others shouldered the frame higher, heaving the steer upward out of his skin. The steer's dead weight, the men's straining, made her shiver deep inside. She stood bracing one of the forward poles while her father with the hand-saw cut down along the backbone of the gutted cow and hacked the head away, leaving the two sides swaying together, strangely parted. Finally, leaving two ribs attached to the hind quarters, he sawed each forequarter through, letting it drop onto the slimy ground. At night, as the Chevrolet riding low and sluggish droned toward the city, she would slip off into sporadic dreams, bloody, fearful, but gladly dreamed.

But what has Faust got to do with it? Not that she hadn't yet encountered the tale—only it was Gounod's, not Goethe's script. Saturday afternoons the Emerson squatted on the drainboard plugged into the light socket over the cavernous sink, where she gladly risked electrocution scrubbing up meat trays to the strains of the Soldiers' Chorus. And standing off the brother butchers, who'd switch to the ball game the minute she stepped into the cooler or out back. "The opera? I don't give diddledy squat for no opera! You think you're the boss's daughter or something?" But once she'd discovered the shelf of libretti at the public library nothing could stop her from learning the whole thing. It was hard to decide, though, which part to play. The final tableau posed the problem nicely: "The walls of the prison have opened. The soul of Marguerite rises into the heavens. Faust follows her with his eyes, in despair; he falls to his knees and prays. Mephistopheles is half turned away under the luminous sword of the archangel." She could not find in herself any desire to rise into heaven. On the other hand, Mephistopheles (foiled again) poetic as he was lacked precisely a soul to risk. That left Faust. And Faust it was whose role she memorized and sang aloud hanging out aprons in the alley and in her head on dull days at school when her grudging teachers, knowing she knew all their answers, would leave her alone in her sullen excellence.

It used to be so simple in school—mine as well as Jo Ann's—to identify who what when where and why. Now it becomes more difficult. *Who* is obviously in the present case Jo Ann, but also Faust, not to mention a traveling lecturer on Modern Letters who is (*where*) in

some motel facing east while Jo Ann (in Birmingham) and Faust (on the stage of the Metropolitan if not the brink of Hell) play out their stories. *When* is between awakening and whenever the chairman of some department arrives to escort me (or should I say "her") to lunch; or in the—was it early forties?; or the fifteenth century, for that matter. Meanwhile it is always now as the soft carbon marks on white. The boy last night caught me in the mirror as I slipped my clipboard and pencil down behind the headboard. A look of puzzlement: he was wondering probably whether I intended to take notes on his performance —perhaps he even got as far as asking himself whether he was feeling offended or flattered. I myself have never cared to become an episode in someone else's autobiography, which is why I burn all letters. Jo Ann, however, saved all letters, even wrote long letters to and from others, letters for saving rather than sending, missives to the future. It was hard, in fact, for her to become accustomed to the actuality of the letters she now found herself writing.

Davey, having sneaked behind the check-out counter, snatched the long envelope from underneath her elbow and held it up to the dangling bulb. Lunging against his chest, hauling at his upraised arm, thick as her own thigh, she was staggered by anger and unforeseen lust. He let her hang there as he read loudly: "'Dean of Admissions, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts.' Why what you got to admit, Jo? That some kind of confession you writing? What's Rat-cliff anyway?"

"It's a fancy college for girls," said Mack from behind the meat counter. "The rat-girl wants to go to Rat-cliff." Both of them laughed and went on laughing as she clawed the envelope out of Davey's stubby fingers and shoved him fiercely from the counter. Then with some dignity she returned to the Intellectual Autobiography required for her scholarship application. She would include *Faust* but not the rats, though even then it occurred to her that the rats might well have shaped her intellect as much as opera.

She had been about eleven when she first saw, as she stood at the sink scrubbing aprons, the crazed eyes of rats watching from the holes where the water pipes came out of the crumbling plaster wall. She had cried out, but her father reassured her: "They just want water. The rat-man was here this morning." Right up to closing time, as she washed the towels and display pans, she watched them dart forward and shrink back, shaky with thirst and fear. Finally when she could bear it no longer, she retrieved two sardine cans the workmen had thrown down and filling them with water wedged them against the pipes where the rats could reach them without exposing themselves.

Standing over against the counter so as not to alarm them, she watched them drink. She was simply not prepared for how they died, bloated and in convulsions, two of them even falling into the sink. "It's just how the poison works, Joey," her father said. "It makes them thirsty and then the water kills them." He spoke kindly enough. But next day while she was at school he told the butchers, and from then on they'd called her the rat-girl.

As for Radcliffe, that must have been the result of a conference with her high school guidance counselor. She would have gone in to express her boredom and discomfort with school, and come out inexplicably with application forms for several prestigious colleges. The interview would have gone something like this:

Jo Ann: Knowledge worth having I fain would get me.
Counselor: Then you have reached the right place now.
Jo Ann: I'd like to leave it, I must avow;
I find these walls, these vaulted spaces
Are anything but pleasant places.
'Tis all so cramped and close and mean;
One sees no tree, no glimpse of green,
And when the lecture-halls receive me,
Seeing, hearing and thinking leave me.
Counselor: All that depends on habitude.
So from its mother's breasts a child
At first, reluctant, takes its food,
But soon to seek them is beguiled.
Thus, at the breasts of wisdom clinging,
Thou'lt find each day a greater rapture bringing.
Jo Ann: I'll hang thereon with joy, and freely drain them;
But tell me, pray, the proper means to gain them. . . .
Counselor: See that you most profoundly gain
What does not suit the human brain!
But first, at least this half a year
To order rigidly adhere:
Five hours a day, you understand,
And when the clock strikes, be on hand!
Prepare beforehand for your part
With paragraphs all got by heart,
So you can better watch, and look
That naught is said but what is in the book:
Yet in thy writing as unwearied be,
As did the Holy Ghost dictate to thee!

But if the Counselor was really Mephistopheles in an academic gown (as Goethe has it), what were the bargain's terms? We in our second youth know well enough what we've traded our soul for: the reviews, the visiting professorships, travel, the expectation on the faces of young strangers. But the young—what do they trade their youth for? It really was Wisdom, I suppose, that Jo Ann was after. Or perhaps what one might call a soul. At any rate, she sealed the bargain, stamped it, and dropped it in the mail. Then began the long wait.

There are, of course, more devils than one. The rat-man, had I chosen to employ him, would have fit nicely. He arrived like a circus, garbed in droopy elegance, pulling a wagon on which was set a squat barrel of poisonous powder. His behavior inside the store was superbly professional; in the back alley, though, where the children congregated, he was said to perform marvelous feats—producing dead (or not quite dead) rats from his hat and sleeves and the fly of his musty trousers. He could put a pinch of poison under his nose, snuff it up, and sneeze so that every toddler shrieked with terror and glee. They said he promised a ride on his wagon to any child who would venture behind the shed to look at his tail. No child had yet claimed the prize. Would Jo Ann have looked? But Jo Ann was in school every day, and the rat-man never came on Saturdays. There were, however, the summers. Perhaps it was then she spied between loose boards of the outhouse, and when the baggy trousers had let down, glimpsed some throwback to our waggish past, some dangling modifier of modern man. If so, she had long ceased to recall it, and I have been compelled to invent the circumstances.

The nearest thing to the grand illusionist that I can locate in Jo Ann's year of temptation was a dingy salesman from the Alabama Packing House who called once a month to collect ration tickets and take down the next month's order. He was a shy man who hid his talent, precisely because it seemed even to him something diabolical. The afternoon her father called her to the phone she had not heard it ring —nor had she heard the whispers and chuckles exchanged in the back room. "I think it's long distance," her father said. A sudden blush climbed up her throat high as her cheeks. Even as she took the warm receiver from his hand she could hear the small, incredibly far-off voice repeating "Miss Jo Ann? Miss Jo Ann?" across the still audible dial tone.

"Yes," she called into the mouthpiece, "Yes, this is Jo Ann."

"I'm calling from Rat-cliff," the voice said—or seemed to say. But the dial tone was so loud she couldn't be sure. Maybe they actually pronounced it that way, like German.

"I can't hear you very well," she shouted. "The connection is bad. Who did you say you were?" Instantly it hit her she ought to have said "whom"—or was "who" right after all? She'd been warned scholarships could be lost on a point of grammar.

"The Head Rat."

Ventriloquists speak with their stomachs; she was listening with hers, the words bypassing her eardrum and resonating against her diaphragm. A chill began to spread outward from the pit of her stomach. She lowered the receiver and turned to look at them all: her father at the cash-register, the two butchers behind the meat case, Mrs. Phillips at the produce rack, her grandfather at the front door chatting with the packing house man. They were watching her, exhibiting only a normal amount of curiosity. Yet everything was quieter than usual, tuned down. In fact in the unusual silence she could hear the tinny voice from the telephone calling her again insistently: "Miss Jo Ann! Miss Jo Ann!" She raised the receiver again to her ear. "The connection's so bad, Miss Jo Ann, I think I'll just mosey on down and have a little chat with you in person."

"But it's so far," she found herself saying.

"Why, no, ma'am, I'm just right down the street. You can stick your head right out the door and see me coming. I'll be hanging up now." She heard a strange clucking sort of click, and even though the dial tone went on she hung the receiver back on its hook.

From the door her grandfather was speaking: "Jo, I believe there's someone out there looking for you."

And as a matter of fact she could hear it herself, the far-off metallic voice: "Miss Jo, Miss Jo, come outside. I have a little something for you." She walked stiffly through the screen door onto the gravelly dirt between store front and street, followed by the entire company. It was as if she had walked onto the set of a Western movie: the same chill afternoon sun, the scattering of townspeople along the long street. But the challenging voice was now coming from above, apparently from the porch of their rooms over the store, though no one was visible. "Look out, Miss Jo, here comes your special prize," it said: and arcing over the porch rail came a package, about the size of a T-bone steak but rounder, wrapped in meat paper. It fell at her feet.

In the eerie silence left by the voice, she leaned over and picked it up. Her fingers, wiser than her ears, knew what it was. She turned to the little group of watchers. "There're a lot of rats around here today," she said coldly. "I'll dispose of this one." Holding it by one corner she walked steadily back through the store and into the alley, where she dropped the package into one of the garbage barrels. After she

had vomited she covered the remains with stray clumps of sawdust and returned to her counter.

There always comes, in the course of a life or a story, that moment when all the images come together, when rats and demons and meat-cutting converge. Whether these moments are tragic or comic depends on the key in which they are written. And time is the great transposer. This morning (in 1977) I am amused by Jo Ann's encounter with the ventriloquist. I play with it. I allow myself to wonder how much in reality an Academic Dean differs from a Head Rat; or whether a poisoned rat wrapped like T-bone might in some respects resemble a liberal arts education. ARTS and RATS are made of the same letters —we transpose to preserve decency. But a tale about one is bound to have some implications for the other. I'll leave that for my next lecture.

No hero tale, though—or heroine tale either—should be without a descent into hell, a perilous and prophetic encounter with the dead. When business got good (because of the country beef), they began to pack sausage and hamburger and distribute it to drugstores and cafes all over the city. The Green Pig (modeled on one of Jo Ann's toys—which she still keeps on her desk in remembrance) was their trademark. On Tuesdays and Fridays they'd close at five and the whole crew would go to work chopping, grinding, seasoning, and packaging the product. Sometimes Jo Ann operated the grinder, forcing the half-frozen chunks of pork or scraps of beef down into the grinder with a wooden plunger. Or else she would mix seasoning powder into the ground sausage, squeezing it through her numbed fingers. Or she would fill the 10-lb. paper buckets and wrap the 5-lb. patties in cello-phane with the green pig showing. Saturday was her day to drive the little Crosley (soon they would afford a truck), its back seat piled with packages of meat. She had learned the alleys and rear entrances of a couple of dozen cafes, all different, all the same. She knew the ropes. But between stops, the rattling car finding its way like a horse from street to street, she dreamed of further places than East Lake, West End, or Tarrant City.

She was, let us suppose, dreaming of Delos or Capri—some place surrounded by blue sea instead of red clay— as she careened along 19th Street North, the pavement a grey wake behind her, the sidewalks foaming at her window. On her right hand stretched a cemetery, like a Grecian isle with temple and tomb. Only, as she took a right turn onto 11th Avenue, almost feeling the spray against her face, she came up on a stopped funeral procession. No doubt the cars had slowed to a halt as the gates were opened and the hearse maneuvered through. At any rate they stood motionless, their tail-lights burning, all lined up like dominoes.

Her father had taught her painstakingly how to drive, and among other things had explained how to pump pneumatic brakes. She began to pump half a block away. No effect. (He had not explained that the little Crosley had only mechanical brakes.) On the still avenue she was the only motion, an irresistible force speeding jerkily toward a whole series of immovable objects. At the last moment before the crash, obedient still to her father's teaching, she was trying to memorize the license number of the last car. She even noticed how rapidly the figures grew in size as she neared them. When the impact rolled her from the car, instead of seeing stars she had the impression of being plunged into the spiral corridors of some dark meat-grinder, a confused and ominous roaring all around her.

Coming to almost immediately, she noticed first off the white buckets lying here and there, like the drums of ruined columns. Only some of them had burst and were oozing red. The cellophane-wrapped packages lay nearer the car, seeming terribly naked. Some of them too had burst open. Only after making this brief inventory did it occur to her to examine her own condition. She was lying on her stomach with one leg drawn up—the position in which she customarily slept. She felt, as a matter of fact, quite relaxed, despite various tingles that might later turn out to be pain. Only one thing disturbed her: under her bent leg along her lower belly there seemed to be something unfamiliar—something soft and damp. Reluctantly, by an effort of her right arm, she raised her head and shoulders from the pavement. Two men in black were crouching at her head. She followed their eyes to where a slow red stain was beginning to appear at the belt of her white slacks. Even as her mind jumped to their tragic conclusion, her knowing body began to shake with laughter, with hysterical jubilation as her thighs recognized the 5-lb. packet of ground beef. The cow was dead—long live Jo Ann!

She rolled over flat on her back laughing. The on-lookers, fearing at first she was in convulsions, were gradually caught up in her mirth. Raw meat at a funeral has got to provoke one response or the other, and as the occupants of the last few cars re-loaded Jo Ann and her packages into the blunt-ended jalopy, laughter had it over tears. And so Jo Ann, bloody but gaily resurrected, delivered her stock of slightly damaged hamburger (giving fifty cents off on the broken packets) and headed back to the store. Singing jubilantly out the now missing window Faust's welcome to youth: "A moi la jeunesse, à moi ses plaisirs!"

And what will be waiting when she arrives? "Boning a side of beef," said the old butcher who came in two days a week to help out with the hamburger making, "is not a matter of cutting off the meat. It's a matter of extracting the bone." An eye for structure, a fine-edged

knife, and one liberates the simple dynamic bone out of the directionless flesh. Process is everything. Jo Ann was about to begin the process. It takes, I calculate, about fifteen years of immersion in the academic to become totally skeleton. Then one begins to shop around for flesh. The truth is, the way things go, Mephistopheles is actually superfluous. We do it for each other: me and the blond boy, Jo Ann and the academic dean. And there on my desk winks the hard rubber green pig—which may or may not be the same as Jo Ann's, invention accident and memory being as hard to untangle in fiction as in life. But what was waiting for Jo Ann?

She saw it as soon as she stepped through the back door: pinned to the freshly scoured block by a slender boning knife. This time they pretended not to be watching as she walked to the block and jerked out the knife. With calculated bravado she slit the envelope with the fine blade, nicking her left thumb in the process. It didn't matter. Through the tiny circles of red she could still read the neatly typed future: "room, board, and full tuition."

NOTE: The quotation from Chuang Tzu is translated by James Legge and appears in *The Texts of Taoism* (New York: The Julian Press, 1959).

The passage from Goethe's *Faust* is translated by Bayard Taylor and appears in *Writers of the Western World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1942).

The stage directions from Barbier and Carré's libretto for Gounod's *Faust* are translated by the author.

THE INDIAN STOCKADE

(Rhode Island, 17th century)

The winter sun fires in its descent
behind the paling. In the marsh each reed
casts a spear of shadow to the east
along the ice. Hollows in the snow
fill with dusk. Darker than the rose
of evening, here and there another shade
dyes impressions in the wounded earth.

The single entrance of the redoubt lies
beyond a log felled across a ditch:
the trunk shimmers; its surface will not freeze.
Within the moat a knifeblade, broken, glisters
beside a powderhorn, its grains spilled
trailing beneath the sickle of a moon.

LEWIS TURCO

THE POETIC KNIFE: POETRY BY RECENT SOUTHERN WOMEN POETS

Mary C. Williams

The emergence of strongly talented women poets is one of the reasons why Southern poetry is in a healthier condition than ever before. Moreover, the distance between old-fashioned "feminine" poetry, in the sense of sentimental verse, and the powerful, sometimes outspokenly "feminist" poetry of some recent writers is indeed great. But from another perspective the span between "feminine" and "feminist" is short, for both terms often carry derogatory implications. Women still face problems in assuming the role of poet; as Ann Deagon writes,

> We who hunt the word,
> who nurse at breast that sharp malignancy the muse,
> still slash our bodies into music . . . .

Poetry for a woman may be a knife, sometimes used on others but as often on herself.

In *Naked and Fiery Forms: Modern American Poetry by Women, A New Tradition* (Harper Colophon Books, 1976), Suzanne Juhasz has pointed out that a woman has been an intruder in the realm of poetry, a realm whose traditions have been created and dominated by men. Although the quality of emotional sensitivity is perceived as feminine, other characteristics necessary for defining oneself as poet, such as independence, a desire to achieve, originality, a self-confidence and selfishness necessary to put art ahead of anything else, are thought of as masculine. And should a woman exhibit these characteristics, how does she fulfill her nurturing role as woman? And, moreover, if she elects the role of poet, how does she express her feminine nature? For, Juhasz says, since mid-century female poets do not any longer try to write poems that cannot be distinguished from men's (Juhasz, pp. 1-4).

In the South cultural activity has been seen as an embellishment on the life of a Southern lady, and poetry societies with largely female membership have flourished. But the poetry produced by their members has continued to be conservative and conventional, with emphasis on such subject matter as nature, love, death, and God, plus clever comments on incidents from daily life. Women tend to be isolated from the mainstream of poetry by limited experience as well as by societal attitudes, including their own. Whereas the anthology of contemporary poetry *The Lyric South*, edited by Addison Hibbard in 1928 when Southern poetry was a literary backwater, included sixteen women among its thirty authors, *Southern Writing in the Sixties: Poetry*, edited by

J. W. Corrington and Miller Williams in 1967, included work by only eight women out of thirty-six authors. One woman poet was represented among the twenty-three poets in Frank Steele's anthology *Poetry South-East, 1950-70.*

That contemporary Southern women poets are fully aware of the difficulties involved in defining themselves as poet and often display an ambivalent attitude toward their art is one of the things I hope to show here. My other aim is to suggest how, through the "I" of the poems, these poets respond to pressures to assume a conventional woman's role in a conservative society. (I do not mean to imply that all poems written in the first-person are autobiographical; however, I assume that the persona that emerges from the poems, unless obviously fictional, is closely related to the author.) In his introduction to Eleanor Ross Taylor's *Wilderness of Ladies* Randall Jarrell comments, "The world is a cage for a woman, and inside it the woman is her own cage." The extent to which this statement appears to be true or not of the work of a number of different Southern female poets is my principal subject. *

A woman who stands close to the lady versifiers in her acceptance of a traditional woman's life, yet is not really one of them, is Helen Bevington of North Carolina, widely known as essayist and writer of light verse in such volumes as *When Found, Make a Verse Of* and *Beautiful, Lofty People.* She does not find the world her cage; through travel and, above all, books, she has found her world nearly unlimited, a source of interest and pleasure which she comments on with wry grace. Inspired to write by the beauty of the North Carolina countryside, she writes formal verse, mainly about nature and various literary figures; in her poems can be seen the effects of education, intelligence, wit, intellectual curiosity, a keen eye, and a fine ear.

Although many of Bevington's poems cannot be identified as being composed by a woman, in others she draws on a stock of conventional feminine attitudes and experiences. Commenting on the beauty of the bust of Nefertiti in the Staatlichen Museum, she asks, "What girl would risk it, / Wearing upon her head a crown / In shape like a waste-paper basket?" ("A Visit to Nefertiti"). In her poem "The Oceans of Dr. Johnson," which begins,

* Of the poets discussed here, most are unarguably Southern. Helen Bevington was born and educated outside the South; however, she has done all of her writing in North Carolina, where she now lives. Though Alice Walker, born in Georgia, and Sonia Sanchez, born in Alabama, live in the North, their subject matter and attitudes are clearly related to their Southern heritage.

I never take a cup of tea
But I consider pleasurably
That, poured a twenty-seventh cup.
Dr. Johnson drank it up,

she explores with sensitivity and an obvious familiarity with tea-parties this incident in the biography of the Great Cham: the appalled hostess keeping count, the guest relishing the companionship of "the complacent hour, / The festive rite." By observing that perhaps Johnson prolonged his tea-drinking to stave off solitude, she adds poignancy to the charm, compression, and witty rhymes of a light poem. But by treating her material with some humor, Bevington maintains a detachment both from her subjects and the feminine world out of which she writes. As poet she speaks in the first person with friendliness but a certain impersonality. She could never keep a diary, she observes in an essay, because she "would leave out day by day the grievances and discomforts."

Bevington does not identify with women poets, whom she sees as eccentrics: "The writing of poetry, even in our time, has an odd effect on women. Or it may only be that odd women become poets." Thus, detached also in her attitude toward poets, Bevington shows again that one can avoid being in a cage by means of avoiding commitments. The restraint and discipline of the rhymes and forms of her poetry appear also in the way she presents her life and herself.

Julia Randall of Maryland, author of *The Puritan Carpenter* and *Adam's Dream*, is another poet who, secure in her feminine existence, uses traditional subjects and forms. She likes rhyme, including slant rhyme, and uses sounds skillfully. Though thoroughly conscious of the divorce between literature and life, she mixes the two in her poems, sometimes too liberally, for example, setting acquaintances in the A & P against Sir Thomas Browne, and the Chesapeake against the Wye ("Maryland"). Randall loves nature, and her poems speak of her precise eye for the Maryland/Virginia landscape. Both love of nature and love of God can free up the mind wonderfully; so it is with this poet. She is at home in the world and possessive about her own corner of it; as she writes in "Maryland," "No, it is not the local habitation . . . . / No, it is knowing them somehow for one's own. / Environs of the single history / That matters, and a force in it." Her subjects include such domestic commonplaces as Christmas shopping, the parking lot, the mail, spring cleaning; however, she is also extremely fond of writing poems which are fables or parables, often in ballad meter, in which both meaning and author are masked.

Though she is not caged, her view of her womanhood is limited. Not only does she see things with a conventional woman's eye ("I saw a windy kerchief / Ravelling on a bough"), she sees males with a conventional woman's attitude. She pulls out old stereotypes, "I wish / Women were not fond, and men were not foolish" ("For a Homecoming"), she alludes to heroes of Camelot like Lancelot, and she writes of gods "in feather, hoof and fire!" ("A Windy Kerchief"). In poem after poem these gods turn up to possess or be admired; the poet herself, it seems, can identify with Danae ("Danae"). The speaker in "A Ballad of Eve" found life unsatisfying in its peacefulness and passionlessness; she ate the apple that broke her heart, and now, though the serpent had sung of a man who lay beside her, in retrospect she knows he was a god. This Eve is all too familiar.

Randall's view of poetry is that it possesses a dangerous force that can transform the world and its inhabitants. She mistrusts the power to lie convincingly, and for herself she fears it: "Witch, so might / I stand beside the barberry and dream wisdom to babes, and health to beggar men . . . . By words I might" ("To William Wordsworth from Virginia"). This power, used by men (Wordsworth, or Merlin and his tribe), she associates with the supernatural; she does not want to be a witch. Her poem "Boundbrook" is a little fable which makes the same suggestion: a man led the speaker to a park and lordly palace; "My master said, Walk in, / And, Touch me. It is yours." "I had a hand could change a world," she asserts, but she destroyed the place, letting in the shaggy beasts with whom she ravined. So she has now returned to the pleasant, ordinary world where she belongs ("Touch me. It is mine"). In "The Company" she writes, "Let a woman take a fool to bed / And put a poet by"—for the poet has a devil in him. There is an implication that a poet is expected to be male and that he explores a poetic world which Randall feels too dangerous for her. Her title, *The Puritan Carpenter,* suggests the confinement of "the maker" in the person of the strict craftsman.

A denizen of the traditional Southern woman's world who stands out oddly from it because she does not quite fit, not because she is highly eccentric, is one of the South's finest poets, Vassar Miller of Texas. Like Bevington and even more than Randall she tends to restrict her poems in strict and conventional meters and rhyme schemes: sonnets, rhyming quatrains, a villanelle. Her subject matter is also conventional: religion, love, death, friendship. But her work progresses from the formal poems of her first book, *Wage War on Silence,* with their echoes of Hopkins, Dickinson, Donne, and Jeffers, to a freer style with more variety and more originality in her best books, *My Bones*

Being Wiser and *Onions and Roses*. Her poems continue to suggest Emily Dickinson, however, as much in content as in form.

Vassar Miller is a poet of drab outer existence and intense inner life. Her outer world is, as she writes, the domestic one of the pots and pans among which she moves; "I'm jealous of each plate and cup, / Frail symbol of my womanhood."

> Sometimes regret's old dogs will hound me
> With feeble barks, yet my true love
> Is Brother Fire and Sister Stove
> And walls and friends and books around me.

The title of the poem, "Trimming the Sails," shows her realization that this life is one of limited expectations. Furthermore, she presents the speaker of her poems as a failure in her outward role as woman and partly in her inner one. Her titles "Spinster's Lullaby" and "From an Old Maid" parade her spinsterhood; the latter poem shows the speaker forced to accept the desperate confidences and burdens of others of whom she asks, "Do you never pause / to wonder when or where I drift to shore?" Praise of someone else's marriage ("Song for a Marriage") shows it as a secure house giving warmth and shelter against the winter weather of the world. Miller's lullabies and christening songs reveal her love for the children of others. Although she knows love and sexual feelings ("here I lie naked, spitted upon my senses / like a plucked bird caught upon thorns," she writes in "Protest"), she can never take love on equal terms: she waits with her light burning hoping that one will come who does not come. She supplicates, she demands, she asks forgiveness for her demanding self, she reproaches ("Had you come to me / as I to you once / with naked asking, / I should have let you," she writes in "Regret"). Slightly old-fashioned in her frequent use of "heart" as an object that can be left about or given away, she tends to use "naked" of her condition once the heart is given; then she is exposed and helpless. What is she seeking—lover, friend, father? she asks in "The Quarry." But in any case, the quarry vanishes. She is constantly self-deprecating; in "Offering: For All My Loves" she presents herself as a bent and rusty can. True, the can is filled with "the liquor of lightning," with music and words; still it is a misshapen "hunk of corroded tin."

> Hold me with care and decorum
> For a little but not too long
> Lest my jagged edge cut you,
> My acrid drip scald you . . . .

Love passes through the world of these poems, is felt intensely, then is gone. However, there is no sense that it was expected to stay permanently. "I love you, but it doesn't matter" ("Modesty").

Such a self-effacing attitude is humility carried to painful excess. Even in Vassar Miller's powerful religious poetry one feels this. "I litter Heaven with myself, a wad / Of tedium tossed into it" ("A Duller Moses"); in a still darker mood she prays,

> Accept me, though I give myself
> like a cast-off garment
> to a tramp, or like an idiot's
> bouquet of onions and roses. ("De Profundis")

But the great equalizer for her is the pain she experiences; she offers it to God like a gift and to the world like a self-justification. Loneliness is her country; only God is there, and she begs Him to save her from her attraction to its strange and terrible landscapes ("Loneliness"). Suffering is a beast, a wolf, a tiger; but she manages to survive, remembering always the sufferings of Christ and feeling the healing in his hurt. In one of her finest poems, "The Ghostly Beast," she expresses the relationship between love and suffering in the first line, "My broken bones cry out for love," and the last, "My love cries out for broken bones."

Clothes imagery ("I . . . / put on . . . / dear Lord, Your satin day," in "Opening One Eye" or "You have undone the buttons of self-will," in "Cacophony"), imagery of nurturing, domestic details, and subject matter in general speak of a traditional woman's existence. Certainly insofar as she is represented by the "I" of her poems, her limited life and her self-consciousness about her limitations form a cage and one that she has helped to construct for herself. Accepting conventional attitudes toward a spinster's life, she is imprisoned by them. But since her emotional life is concentrated in a private world, the notion of a cage is usually irrelevant. As with Emily Dickinson, this poet finds room in the place where she really lives. Actually, she does not need much room. One of her favorite words is "bones," and her poetry like her life is spare, stripped down, concentrated, and powerfully intense. It demonstrates also humor and intelligence and often a fine imaginative gift.

Although Vassar Miller has produced five books of poetry, most of them substantial, she does not parade herself as a poet. Her poems she speaks of as "songs"; in "Origin" she is a bird singing, but the bird's song is of pain; its notes bite the tongue ("Bread-and-Butter Letter Not Sent"). Her words "beat at the cage of my bones / like

birds," she writes in "Peril"; "By art / they must escape that fat spider, / my heart." Poems are pieces of herself, of her pain: "Each day I hacked out my heart / into black chips of words / until it was gone" ("Addict"). In this poem poetry is a knife that cuts out and puts on paper the heart and the heart's pain; without that anguish the poet, though addicted to putting words on paper, produces nothing valid:

> Now I sit idle, my hands
> shaping wide arcs of nothing
> serving as poems.

Pain is the justification and source for her poetry as for her life. And that poetry is the "liquor of lightning."

Betty Adcock of North Carolina, author of *Walking Out,* is another accomplished poet of the closed-in self. But the self which Vassar Miller defines through the image of pain as fire burning in her bones, Adcock shows through images of ice or freezing, without a sure sense of who she really is. In the poem "Identity," in which she writes about the effect of the early loss of her mother (quoting Anne Sexton, "a woman *is* her mother"), she ends,

> Grown now into my life, I own it
> like any house freezing to permanence
> the dust love makes.
> All day I tap messages as though no one could hear,
> my voice flaking the way stone flakes
> in underbrush and weather.
> Cold at the clenched heart's center.
> the self fails again,
> that stranger.

Again and again she turns back to search the Texas scenes of her childhood, her own past, and also the past of primitive myth and ritual. Her images show a fascination with water, clear and enveloping; with mirrors; and with light that stings, that is brittle, that is a point, that cuts. Light is outside, it may *be* the outside; in "Inside the Blonde House," the house is "made of snow-light." In "Things Left Standing" she writes of "the sun with its open knife" and of "the green, deep scars of the light."

These dazzlingly light-struck poems give a sense of the danger of the world which threatens her ("I don't know how to wear a knife's two edges," she writes in "Skill"). Although certainly some of the poems show the persona as humorous, loving, and comfortable in the outside world, others use images of darkness and secretness: "I wait like you / in a small room which seems to be locked" ("News Item"); "I am a dark careful chiming" ("Oversong").

Brought up by female relatives after the death of her mother and growing up "Tight-lipped on an only stalk" ("Identity"), she shows herself as knowing but not learning to entirely fit or accept the part of conventional Southern woman. Therefore she cages herself against it, as well as the rest of the world; outside the cage is danger, inside is isolation. Poetry is an instrument of knowing and understanding in the darkness:

> Words tapped my way here:
> I use my own stick
> and I have learned to meet you, father,
> dark to dark. ("Again Then")

Yet to be a poet she must also be someone else. Her poems "Sister, That Man Don't Have the Sting of a Horsefly" has an epigraph by Robert Graves that discloses the attitude a female poet must combat: "However, woman can never be a poet. She is a muse or she is nothing." The poem begins,

> But doubling's a speciality among us.
> she looks from my mirror, that other's
> face nobody suspects me of.

That "other" personality is amusingly created as a brassy counter waitress in a bus station, in control of herself and every situation, "never taking no and never going far," mopping up after customers, surprised by nothing. This depiction of the waitress suggests that a woman can be a poet, but she must have masculine-like qualities of aggressiveness, self-possession, earthiness, control. And, therefore, to see herself as poet, Bettty Adcock must see herself as two.

A divided self appears also in the work of Eleanor Ross Taylor of Virginia, author of *Wilderness of Ladies* and *Welcome Eumenides*, a self influenced by church and society and another rebelling against these influences. And, as Randall Jarrell pointed out in his brilliant introduction to the first book, these selves are at war, imitating the wars of outer reality. The poems of *Wilderness of Ladies* illustrates a kind of matriarchy in which a woman's self is defined by women, rather than by men. It is a world where women teach women artificiality in looks and behavior, a world of social decorum where ladies crack nuts and ice cubes in the parlor, and a world of constricting religion. "Goodbye Family" describes the urge to grow fully, to cut free:

> Every day I opened the drawer and
> Scanned the knives;
> Were there enough, sharp enough,
> For all lives?

But stiffness and artificiality are countered by country talk and country folks from a rural Southern community. And the family is a center of warmth and fun as well as of the confinements and hostilities that freeze the soul. The irony of the title *Wilderness of Ladies* is thus complicated by the suggestion that the child growing up in this wilderness (and many of the poems in this book are of the past) has a freer and happier existence than that of the wife and mother she must turn into when her wedding dress has been made into a quilt ("The Bine Yadkin Rose") and "The wars of marriage and the family burst around us" ("Sister"). In her second book, writing mainly in free verse that is often nervous, taut, and disconnected, Taylor reaches out to a wider world, though there are as much of pain and death as in her first volume. The title poem, "Welcome Eumenides," is about Florence Nightingale who dared to break out of a restricted existence to snatch a chance for "a rich and true life" as mother and nurse to the British Army—amid filth, pain, and death. Again there is the theme of women entrapped by women: "Which of the chosen ever chose her state?" In the poem "Daphne" Taylor creates a fable about a real tree which turns into a girl and pursues her god out of the forest, trailing roots and bleeding mud; she is "ready to chop down Daphne if she could." The startling picture of the tree-woman with an urge for a rich, true life is again countered, this time by the reminder of the symbolic, fearful Daphne, cased up forever.

Jarrell's comment, "The world is a cage for a woman, and inside it the woman is her own cage," was made about Eleanor Ross Taylor; though she applies the knife of poetry often enough to herself, as her poems show, the knives never are enough or sharp enough to cut her loose from a life she has been brought up to and in part accepts.

The poem "Woman as Artist" illustrates, as does its ambivalent title, the correspondence between the two. Woman as artist is mother, but one who hunts alone with no bone too dry or too extra for her, who acknowledges no debt to fathers, and who promises that her babies will "Multiply / Multiply / Till the round earth's ringed with Babel trumpets." Taylor transmits the sense of the creativity, the lonely independence, and the powerful intensity of the artist. However, this poetic statement is qualified in that the Babel trumpets are flowers, grown from bulbs. And the power that can give birth to "the howling naked question life" withers into disillusionment and atrophy: the "ominous appetite" rises in "the hour of no food," "the expected light winks / Out" and the day of pleasure and promise, of birds and morning glories, ends in rain, tedium, and the sense that both life and art are frustrated by a woman's drab, confined existence:

But in the afternoon
Clouds came
Cyclonic gusts and chilling rain
Banged-to the windows of our heroine
Beginning to chronicle her wound-up skein.
Rib, spin.

Woman as artist is caged.

For black writers, the conflict between what they want to be as poets and what they must be as women is complicated by the desire to express themselves as blacks. There are forces urging them to write political poetry that will speak for their people (despite literary critics who dislike political poetry) and forces both inside and outside themselves urging them to express themselves more completely (Juhasz, pp. 144-50). For a religious, idealistic woman like Margaret Walker of Mississippi, her books of poetry, *For My People, Prophets for a New Day, October Journey,* and indeed all her writing are evidence of a deep commitment: "I want to write the songs of my people. . . . / I want to frame their dreams into words; their souls into notes" ("I Want to Write"). Her voice, oracular, strong, passionate, rings with a message of inspiration, despite its anger. Bits of folklore, character sketches, narratives (often in ballad form), and scenes of the South show how close she is to her heritage of place as well as people. "October Journey," a journey to the South, mingles nostalgia and joy with fear and distress:

Then when I touch this land again
the promise of a sun-lit hour dies.
The greenness of an apple seems
To dry and rot before my eyes.

Any idea of the poet's individualized self is submerged in these poems; even "Epitaph for My Father," a rather Wordsworthian account of her father's life and their relationship, while personal, presents the two as a generalized portrait. His goals are her goals; though she rebels against society, she never rebels against family and its shaping role. In "Dear Are the Names That Charmed Me in My Youth," she declares her intent "to make my life a purpose-tree"; her poems speak of the purpose rather than of the life.

Alice Walker, born in Georgia and better-known for her novels than her poetry, shows in her poems a persona who is both black and a woman. Her first book of poetry, *Once,* reveals her desire to know her heritage and be close to it but also her feelings of separation from it. In the poems in *Once* about a trip to Africa she is somewhere in between ordinary tourists and the Africans themselves. In "Hymn," moreover, she

writes about her embarrassment as a child in church in Georgia at the shouts of happiness, at "Illiterate sweating preachers / Hemming and hawing blessedness," which seemed to her to be so false to life in the South. In "Johann" she writes of an uneasy relationship with a German man: "You look at me with children / In your eyes." Since she obviously wants to accept her black heritage, one can hardly think of it as a cage for her; instead she appears in her first book as someone who is not quite at home in any world.

Alice Walker's second book, *Revolutionary Petunias*, reveals a speaker who has come to terms with her Southern heritage. She writes of Southern ties:

> Forgetful of geographic resolutions as birds,
> the farflung young fly South to bury
> the old dead. ("Burial")

She speaks admiringly of people she knew, for instance, the valiant women:

> How they battered down
> Doors
> And ironed
> Starched white
> Shirts
> How they led
> Armies
> Headragged Generals . . . . ("Women")

But as a woman and a poet she asserts that she can be free to express herself. In "Lost My Voice? Of Course" she rejects the idea of writing only of revolution, never of love and flowers; the "revolutionary petunia" is a flower that must rebel in order to survive, but in blooming it expresses its own nature and provides beauty and color for others and also for itself ("The Nature of This Flower Is to Bloom").

Sonia Sanchez, author of a number of books, including *Home Coming*, *WE a BaddDDD People*, *Love Poems*, and *A Blues Book for Blue Black Magical Women*, is a hardhitting poet whose power lies in direct, often obscene, language and poems used like weapons. Using black idiom, phonetic spellings, slashes, odd distribution of lines on the page, stretched out words ("baaaaddDD") she writes angrily of white oppression, false images of America, dope-ridden black lives, sex, loneliness. But anger is mixed and countered with love and expressions of exuberant feeling. In "Rebirth" she writes of a return to the South:

> When i stepped off the plane i knew i was home. . . .
> and I held up my hands. face. cut by the northern

winds and my blood oozed forth kissed the place
of my birth and the sun and sea gathered round
my offering and we were one as night is surely day
when you truly understand the need one has for the other.

Despising the stereotype of Southern woman, "miss anne," and like Margaret Walker and Alice Walker free of any such pressure for refined gentility on her own life, she sees black women as "QUEENS OF THE UNIVERSE" ("Introduction: Queens of the Universe"):

We Black/wooomen have been called many
things: foxes, matriarchs, whores,
bougies, sweet mommas, gals,
sapphires, sisters and recently Queens.

"It ain't easy being a queen in this unrighteous world," she comments, "but we steady trying." Black women must be sisters, must help one another and their children, whose "lives will be like ours if we don't / moooVVVe awaaaAAY from slave actions." Like Margaret Walker, Sister Sonia Sanchez is intense, even visionary sometimes. Being fully a woman and being a poet are for her two aspects of the same thing: responding to the call of destiny to explore, dominate, prophesy, love, and heal. Mistreated as a child by a stepmother, learning to protect herself, then emerging into a young womanhood of sexual excitement and sophisticated living with white friends, joining the civil rights movement, coming to understand her African heritage, she at last understood this destiny:

and
i gave birth to myself,
twice. in one hour. ("Past")

The world is a cage for black woman poets in the way that it is for any black, but it does not cage them as women. All three of these poets see poetry as a powerful means of inspiration and attack in the cause of their people; Alice Walker and Sonia Sanchez see it also as a means of expression for a free self.

Rosemary Daniell in *A Sexual Tour of the Deep South* displays a rage equal to that of Sanchez against the conventional ideal of white womanhood. She also uses poetry like a blunt instrument, emphasizing ugly subject matter, obscenities, animal imagery and imagery of violence and blood. Her poetic stance is one of continuing hostility against the oppressors of women who use and force them, and against the conventional life which drives women to suicide and madness. Pressures of church, of female stereotypes applied in childhood (through the training bra, the Barbie doll), social status, male chauvinism and contemptuous or violent sexuality rouse a fury that compels images of knives, whips,

broken glass used for castration and self-mutilation. Menstruation, cystitis, vaginal odors, the drooling crotch, rottenness are flung out as assertions of aggression. Those readers not impelled to cry, "Right on, Rosemary!" are frequently repulsed by poems which are so obviously and so purposefully not in good taste. In "Liturgy" a rabbit, "skewered skinned / pierced with forks," is compared to the woman on the gynecologist's table,

> she's opened like
> a purse knitted
> unknitted vacuumed
> & scraped hooked
> like a fish &
> told "The cervix
> has no nerve ends . . .";

the woman is likened also to the mutilated Christ "our hermaphrodite our / Sister in the Cross."

What Daniell does well is to deliver a Flannery O'Connor-like world of the preacher and the Bible salesman, sorghum and biscuit, feedsack dresses and angora sweaters, a kewpie doll, a carnival midway. In this world that old-time religion both rouses sexuality and oppresses it with shame and guilt. "The State of Georgia" features religion, racism, gun shots, heat, kudzu, garbage, slugs. In Daniell's narrative poems there is a portrait of rural, lower-class southern life, ironic but carefully detailed, that is missing from most of the work of other southern women poets; it pulses with energy.

Feminist poets like Rosemary Daniell are rare in the South; the Amazon image is not popular here. Daniell uses poetry to declare her own independence and to assert women's right to a new freedom; the anger and destructiveness in her poems are expressions of the force necessary for a woman to blast her way out of a caged life. She says in "To a Family Man in His Family Room,"

> I had
> a house like this
> once, a black velvet
> pants suit, a son,
> and a man as sweet
> mild and misled.
> And my rage turned
> his hair gray, drove
> my son insane,
> and broke every plate-
> glass window in the place.

Another poet who exhibits this new freedom, one who is usually uninhibited, though not usually feminist, is Ann Deagon of North Carolina, author of five books of poetry, including *Poetics South*, *Carbon 14*, and *There Is No Balm in Birmingham*. A professor of classics, she draws as easily on the past for subjects as on the present and is at home with myth as with motherhood and housewifery—but she cannot be satisfied with cold marble. Her great fear is of the frigidity of death; her great concern is vitality, expressed by sex as symbol and subject in her poems. Another Daphne poem (this nymph is currently one of the mythological figures most popular with women poets), "Daphne on Woodbrook Drive," is about the speaker's gradual encasement in the weathered bark of age. In Deagon's poems Penelope abandons her loom and makes a Penelopeid. The persona, though not totally free of inhibitions, is too greedy for experience to be decorous or to accept traditional stereotypes. Deagon likes to break down stereotypes, for instance, to write about little girls who are mean and violent and who court danger. Although she does not ordinarily compose poems that are feminist in the sense that I use the word—that is, ones that show a commitment to the women's movement—the first lines of "Women and Children First" constitute a striking tribute to women's natural power:

> While they estimate the damage,
> while their great arms pump back the sea,
> we have slipped overboard. Girls thin
> as oarblades cleave green surface,
> fleshed women spiral down
> into the salt mother. She bears us up.
> We wear our babes like barnacles.
> Children skip wave crests, old
> women quaff foam like ale.
> We have found our element.

There is no question that Deagon is female, and wants to be. In "Tod Und Das Weib" she declares that she wishes her body after death to be given to medical students

> to feel at dying as at borning
> against my flesh in their sweet fumble
> the brash tentative hands of men.

Indeed, in employing persistent images of sexuality along with figures of blood, knives, and excrement, Deagon sometimes risks presenting a persona close to the caricatures of sexually obsessed, dominating women so popular in the long tradition of misogynist literature. One problem for her is that she cannot quite accept being restricted to woman's nature

only; this is her version of the cage. In "At Intervals" she says, "I have not been sure and am not sure / whether I would choose to be your sun / and fire you to your orbit or to be / your moon and round you like a tongue." And it is still another thing and also desirable to be an artist, to burn like a comet into "cold space / where poems make."

Deagon's poems about poetry show her as fully aware of the violation of a woman's traditional nature necessary in becoming a poet. In "A Woman Poet" the woman has fingers "cut away to nubs" by discipline of feeling—"Still / we are all / god help us / salamanders in the dark." (The rose-colored, pulsing salamander is an image Deagon has used in "The Salamander" to suggest the vagina.) The pursuit of the art of poetry demands the masculinity of the hunter. I return to the poem with which I began, "The Amazon at the Metropolitan Converses of the Past; the Female Poet Replies." In it the Amazon speaks of the women's bodies of her tribe: "we were not / men unpenised." Their single-breasted state resulted from being "shaped . . . to our art. The knife's poiesis / created us half nurse, half warrior." The female poet answers that there has been no change:

> The choice
> still makes the chooser. We who hunt the word,
> who nurse at breast that sharp malignancy the muse,
> still slash our bodies into music, still
> enact the halving of the moon upon
> our womanhood, bestride the nightmare still,
> still from self-sculptured breast we spurt
> the milk of love, the blood of art.

The knife appears again and again as an image in the poetry of the women I have been discussing. (Always the knife, never the gun.) For Betty Adcock the knife's cutting is an image of the dangerous world, for Eleanor Ross Taylor a figure of the cost of freedom, for Rosemary Daniell one of striking back at an oppressive society. For Vassar Miller and Ann Deagon it is an image of the poetic process and of the sacrifice involved in it. There is seldom anything soft, sentimental, or complacent about the world that emerges from the poetry of these women, or of their conception of what it means to be a poet.

Since the South is far from a hotbed of militant feminism, women poets tend to be more restrained both in their attitudes and language than some of their northern sisters. With respect to the cage Randall Jarrell writes of, we have seen in these ten poets a range of attitudes, beginning with an acceptance of a woman's role without any obvious feeling of constriction within it in the poems of Helen Bevington and Julia Randall. These poets also reveal themselves less fully than some of

the others discussed here. In Vassar Miller and Betty Adcock we see a confinement that is self-created, in Eleanor Ross Taylor a frustrated rebellion against the cage, in Daniell and Deagon freedom-at-a-price. Margaret Walker, Sonia Sanchez, and Alice Walker evince less circumscription resulting from their heritage as black southern women than the whites but show constraint and obligation imposed on them by their heritage as blacks and a necessity both to accept this and yet resist confinement by it. Obviously, free and full expression of her feminine nature by a woman poet is not necessarily basic to poetic skill and imaginative power.

But however much they may differ in their response to conventional ideas about a woman's existence, these poets tend to reflect the conflict represented by the term woman-poet. Since for blacks poetry is a political weapon, the danger is to lose woman in poet as Margaret Walker appears to do; the difficult process of becoming both, seen in the poems of Alice Walker and Sonia Sanchez is symbolized in Sanchez's image of giving birth to herself. The woman-poet is the odd creature Helen Bevington does not identify with, the witch Julia Randall fears to be, Betty Adcock's brazen "other face nobody suspects me of." For Vassar Miller she is the one who carves pieces from her heart, for Eleanor Ross Taylor the heroine shut away from the field of action, for Ann Deagon the self-multilated Amazon.

As long as there are differences between men and women, there will not be unisex poetry. These poets show Southern womanhood in transition and women's poetry in transition. Since the old definition of "feminine" poetry as sentimental versifying plainly does not now apply, eventually "feminine" may be defined as that which expresses a woman's true nature, a nature seen as less limited and less limiting than at present. At that point a woman perhaps can determine to be a poet without reaching for a knife.

JANUARY IN SALT LAKE

There are no humans in the night —
In the common enemy of night.

The Mormon elders cycle by —
How young the Mormon elders are.

I know. I know that they have murdered me —
How like nuns young men can be.

R. B. WILLIAMS

° ° °

OF CLOAKS AND HATS AND DOUBLINGS IN POE AND FLANNERY O'CONNOR

MARION MONTGOMERY

In Poe's "William Wilson" the narrator, at a point where he has yet another unsettling encounter with his mysterious "double," has his whole attention suddenly

> arrested by a fact of the most startling character. The cloak which I had worn [to a gathering] was of a rare description of fur; how rare, how extravagantly costly, I shall not venture to say. . . . When, therefore, Mr. Preston reached me that which he had picked up upon the floor, and near the folding doors of the apartment, it was with an astonishment nearly bordering upon terror, that I perceived my own already hanging on my arm, . . . and that the one presented to me was but its exact counterpart in every, in even the minutest possible particular.

We are at a point in the narrative at which the reader no less than the narrator is to be shocked almost to terror by an inexplicable encounter, and the persuasiveness of that encounter would seem to depend heavily upon this duplication of coats "in even the minutest possible particular." To the degree that one is moved, however, it is by the tone of the speaking voice and not by the immediacy of any imagistic detail. Poe as artist depends but slightly upon any detail concretely summoned by words to an immediate presence in the narrator's memory. Still, there is a constant insistence upon the vividness of those details as revisited, upon a revival of the original emotional burden of an old event or situation through remembered particularity. The narrator of "William Wilson" has promised us from the beginning a "minute recollection."

In Flannery O'Connor's fiction, on the other hand, imagistic details are of crucial importance as they reveal the presence of an external world to the character, a world which Poe is at pains always to deny in his ambitious tales. The concrete world inhabited by Miss O'Connor's characters reveals itself to the reader no less than to her character, so that the character is dramatized by his response to that world. For she intends her character to signify beyond the more simple end of stirring a reader to a fleeting emotional horror. It is through images bearing an immediacy to the reader because they are anchored in the real world of the senses that she dissolves the spiritual tensions built in her character. That double presence of the world—to the character and to the reader—is present through a skillfully manipulated point of view, so that a range of emotional responses is played, from

ironic comedy to poignant terror. There is a most careful attention paid to minor objects and to peripheral characters, the effect of which is to give her fictional world a substantial weight in our imaginations. For the created world is for Flannery O'Connor, as it was for Pascal, "an image of grace." Particular segments of that world and images received out of that world have a way of coming suddenly alive with a life beyond the accounting of reason or the senses. One of the effects of such an experience in the created world, as Miss O'Connor dramatizes it often in her fiction, is a panic in her protagonists—a terror in the presence of that mercy which reduces presumptuous man, woman, or child.[1] For her "epiphanies" are spiritual revelations, not psychological resolutions.

Poe also leads us to an epiphany, but one in which there is the recognition only of an inevitable annihilation. At the conclusion of "William Wilson," the speaker faces his own image in a mirror after delivering that image a death blow. The mirror stands "where none had been perceptible" during the struggle. In it his own features appear "all pale and dabbled in blood." He cries out to us that they are "in the most absolute identity" his own features. The pale image speaks in whispered italics the concluding words of the story, so that the narrator "could have fancied that I myself was speaking while he said:

> *You have conquered and I yield. Yet, henceforward art thou also dead—dead to the World, to Heaven, and to Hope. In me didst*

---

[1] We might recall the origins of our word *panic:* the sudden, unreasonable and overpowering fear which the ancients supposed was caused by the god Pan. American poets have felt the absence of such explanations, partly because they have tended to enspirit nature with their own consciousnesses and partly because Puritan thought purged nature of old imaginings. An occasional writer has celebrated our deliverance. Sylvester Judd, for instance, in his novel *Margaret* (1845), says:

> There are no fairies in our meadows, and no elves to spirit away our children. Our wells are drugged by no saint, and of St. Winifred we have never heard. . . . The Valley of the Housatonic is beautiful as the Vale of Tempe, or of Cashmere, and as oracular. We have no resorts for pilgrims, no shrines for the devout, no summits looking into Paradise. We have no traditions, legends, fables, and scarcely a history . . . no chapels or abbeys, no broken arches or castled crags. You find these woods as inspiring as those of Etruria or Mamre. Robin-Good-Fellow is unknown, and the Devil haunts our theology, not our houses, and I see in the last edition of the Primer his tail is entirely abridged. (Quoted by F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance,* 13-14.)

Hawthorne, as we shall see at some length in Volume III, was not so content with nature's exorcism as is Judd or the more influential Emerson. For not only faeries, but the devil and saints were also cast out, and in the process the very ground of being itself. In the absence of such a ground of being, Poe comes to long for "earth-angels" to rescue an empty world, and comes to believe himself such a one.

thou exist—and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself."

Such is Poe's shocking encounter with what Heidegger would call perhaps the "true-self."

What Poe requires of his reader, in order that he may work his emotional effect, is that we hang on every word for the word's sake, but be impressed by its literal articulation and not by its meaning. Hence the importance of the italics in this passage, and of the capitalization of *World, Heaven, Hope.* He is dependent upon a melodrama, effected by diction and by a typography used like musical notes to sustain a tone. One is expected to ratify an impression on the authority of the act of speaking itself, as opposed to sheer and empty silence, not on the authority of what any words convey. And that incidentally is a principal reason that Poe must commit himself not only to first person point of view but to the short lyric and tale, since impressions are fleeting. One has the uncomfortable reflection, after the experience, that he has been held—in the words of the German poet Hölderlin— by "lyre music, a song without words." For it is a necessity of Poe's limitations as artist that his tone be initiated at a high pitch and maintained at that pitch, largely through repetitions in which there is little variation.[2]

We have in Poe, then, no such subtleties of language as in Miss O'Connor, who foreshadows her revelations in such device as the structure of her sentences as well as in metaphors that often seem at first merely casual or comic. When young Tarwater visits the city the first time and leans too far out of the lawyer's window, high above the

---

[2] If one compare his prose poems "Shadow" or "Silence" to Wallace Stevens' "Seascape Full of Clouds," the weakness of Poe's devices becomes more apparent. One sees how much he depends upon agitation at one speed in his speaking voice, as in a washing machine, to perform what his words will not accomplish through any signifying presence. Stevens' subtle shifts in perception, through very minor variations in his repetitions—but variations that measure shades as in an impressionistic painting—are far more effective in establishing a sense of the changing seascape of the mind than Poe's elaborate idea of *identity* (in Stevens' sense of the term) between such words as "DESOLATION" and "SILENCE." In addition, the identity Poe develops is largely through the use of the vestigial imagery of a literary vocabulary. Poe's speaking voice must therefore begin in a trance-like state that allows few possibilities of that modulation necessary either to make a particular work dramatically effective or to create in the reader a convincing sense of verisimilitude which would justify any willing suspension of disbelief. For dramatic effect depends upon a development and revelation such as enlarges perceptions rather than accumulates facts—facts in Poe's work being paradoxically the assembled evidence of emptiness.

busy street, "he saw his new hat drop gently, lost and casual dallied slightly by the breeze on its way to be smashed in the tin river below." That hat, his badge of authority and pride, has to be removed, but not by such accident as this, nor by his Uncle Rayber's concern for social appearances. It must be removed by an act in which Tarwater willfully participates, an act which issues in a submission and humility. If he will not be made humble, because of his angry independence, that very independence will make such an act a dramatic necessity. That is, by calling our attention to the refusal, Miss O'Connor commits the story to the refusal that must be tested. In one important respect, Tarwater is like Poe's William Wilson, or rather like Wilson's report of himself. As a child Tarwater too is distinguished by "evil propensities." In his frantic atttempt to say NO—to serve as minion of evil —evil undoes him in the person of the stranger in the lavender car, who after raping the drugged boy, takes his hat "as a souvenir." Later when Tarwater goes to warn the children of God in the burning city, he journeys bareheaded.

Miss O'Connor thus builds with her play on Tarwater's hat an intricate pattern of imagery which functions at both the level of naturalistic detail and at the symbolic level of her spiritual theme, Love. The hat is not simply a literary gimmick imported for the surprise of imagistic doubling as Poe's cloak in "William Wilson" seems to be. In the structure of that sentence in which we see Tarwater's first lost hat, we see vividly the casual drift of the hat downward in the literal air echoed in a diction, and a rhythm of that diction, which settles the words to a flat dead ending in the sentence. Once more: "he saw his hat drop gently, lost and casual, dallied slightly by the breeze on its way to be smashed in the tin river below." The sentence gives a comic parabola of Tarwater's prideful course through the novel, up to his encounter with the stranger in the lavender car.

Tarwater's hat is but one image in the dramatic weaving of Miss O'Connor's novel. Water, fire, bread, hearing aids, bottle-openers, the sun, the moon, silence, noise—if one take any of these (or others) and explore them carefully, he will discover an intricacy of emerging symbolic meaning, controlled by a very careful eye to the naturalistic detail; it is through the naturalistic surface that one penetrates to the spiritual depth. When Old Tarwater lies in his wooden coffin and instructs Young Tarwater in the proper burial ritual, the boy (looking at the box) sees "nothing showing but [Old Tarwater's] stomach which rose over the top like over-leavened bread." Christ as the Bread of Life, that constant thread in the novel, is echoed in comic cliché; it is an empty phrase to Tarwater as he remembers the scene and the discussion with the old man. For at this point, Tarwater can com-

prehend only literal food. He sees his hunger as literal, though mysteriously insatiable by literal bread. Hence his own diagnosis of "worms" as his difficulty. In his final vision, he is looking out across the young, freshly plowed field of corn. With that promise of cornbread and liquor out of nature's and Buford's constancy as a foreground of time and place, Tarwater comes to see the loaves and fishes transformed, though they carry still a very physical weight in his understanding. The boy is approaching a point where he can sense the sacramental complexity of bread. For bread is neither simply symbolic nor naturalistically material, this fiction suggests. It is real in both its spiritual and sensual dimensions. The natural world can never be what it has been to Tarwater, since in that vision which Miss O'Connor celebrates the whole world becomes transformed. The world about him becomes a different country in the same way that Rome becomes a different city in that vision which sees it borne in the City of God as St. Augustine does, and in that new world he comes to see the possibility of becoming a new man. That is, he sees it inadequate to conclude himself simply mirrored by the external world or the external world a mirror of his own thought, which in either perspective means isolation from the outer world, the turning of image in upon itself as in "William Wilson."

For O'Connor image is window not mirror. In her fiction she is constantly attempting to reveal a double presence in the brief image that she is concerned to capture. It is of this attempt she speaks when she says, "The longer you look at one object, the more of the world you see in it; and it's well to remember that the serious fiction writer always writes about the whole world, no matter how limited his particular scene." Catching in an image the large world as it is implied by an object was her principal devotion as artist, for which reason she requires as close a reading as we are accustomed to give the metaphysical poets. But the double presence her principal characters encounter is the small world of their wayward selves. When Haze sees Silas Layfield standing on the hood of a car, mouthing Haze's own attempts at blasphemy, he becomes obsessed with destroying his own conscience, which Silas seems to manifest. "Your conscience is a trick," he insists, seeing Silas. But he adds almost at once, "If you don't hunt it down and kill it, it'll hunt you down and kill you." Whereupon he pursues the hapless Silas and murders him. Tarwater's stranger echoes his own inclinations as well as his language and haunts him as a stern rebuke to his willfulness, turning him with Rayber's help toward the possibility of rescue. "The prophet-freaks of Southern literature are not images of the man in the street," Miss O'Connor says. "They are images of the man forced out to meet the extremes of his own nature."

It is man in his spiritually fallen nature that her characters discover as images of themselves.

The device of doubling personae has been fascinating to writers in the modern world, at least since the German Romantics, in whom perhaps Poe encountered it through Sir Walter Scott's interest in E. T. A. Hoffmann. It comes to be of increasing thematic interest as the spiritual and physical worlds become dissociated in Western thought and as the problem of identity of the self grows in the popular mind toward the agony of alienation, a consequence of an increasing insistence on (in Poe's phrase) the "natural rights of self-agency." We see a coincidence of these concerns in Poe's "William Wilson," a story which probably owes something to tales like Hoffmann's "Sand Man." Miss O'Connor also makes complicated use of the double in *Wise Blood*. Haze encounters his fallen self through images that come to him from the external world; there is the figure of the mummy, for instance, and Asa Hawks's eyes seen by match light and Silas Layfield in a full imitation of Haze including his blue suit. But it is important that we distinguish between Miss O'Connor's doublings and Poe's.

She makes the distinction repeatedly, often through her use of her characters' eyeglasses. Haze has his mother's lensless glasses; the Misfit wears glasses; Rayber does. What she suggests is that our vision of the world is divided, requiring to be brought into focus. It is one way of dramatizing the Manicheanism we moderns are given to, a charge Miss O'Connor makes against us repeatedly in *Mystery and Manners*. The Misfit is in one world but disturbed by rumors of another, the world as rescued in Christ. His cleaning his glasses, a natural enough act, means more through the conversation with the grandmother which accompanies the action. *Seeing* in its literal and prophetic senses is a constant in Miss O'Connor's fiction; what she attempts is a proper focussing upon the world whereby one becomes a "realist of distances." When we reach the conclusion of Poe's "William Wilson," the recognition, the focussing, is upon empty being, the narrator having become no more substantial than his own illusion in the mirror. But Miss O'Connor's protagonists come to enter a silent yet resonant country, an action which Haze or Tarwater resist until they must capitulate; they are forced to abandon the illusion that existence is simply explained by 19th century naturalism. Thus they enter upon the complex ground of being where the new temptation is to deny the naturalistic world, a temptation as ancient as Plato or the Gnostics and as modern as Poe or Jean-Paul Sartre. It is through her own detachment as story teller that she dramatizes the necessity of this focussing. Indeed, it is in the disparity between her character's initial vision of reality and Miss O'Connor's own that the

ground for both her comedy and tragedy is established, though readers persist in mistaking her characters' views for her own. As her characters move toward seeing the world as she sees it, the comic element diminishes. Poe on the other hand, when comedy is afoot in his work, moves in a different direction, toward farce as a rescue from intellectual dilemma as in "King Pest," of which tale Constance M. Rourke remarks that Poe transmutes "terror into gross comedy" in the manner of the frontier tall tale. One is hardly inclined to laughter after Haze loses his Essex, or at the resolution of "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," or in the third section of *The Violent Bear It Away*. Nor is laughter stirred at the end of "Everything That Rises Must Converge."

We may conclude our point by examining her use of the double in the title story of the posthumous collection, seeing here that her comedy also turns grim as illusion fades in the protagonist. In the story the protagonist Julian thinks he discovers a comic double of his mother in a Negro woman who boards the bus. The comedy, however, is more nearly that of the bad joke: it is at his mother's expense. What Julian does not perceive is the degree to which he himself is reflected in that woman, the imagistic details disguising the kinship from him, but not from the reader. The initiating device Miss O'Connor uses to this end is very like Poe's cloak in "William Wilson," though much more intricately employed. That pseudo-intellectual realist, Julian, is much embarrassed and irritated by his mother, who he supposes hides her emptiness in antique manners and false recollections of family history, the pride of generation. He must ride a common city bus with her, a bus awash with hoi polloi who are more repugnant to him than to his mother. As they set out for the bus stop, he bears the indignity of her new hat in a martyrdom ill-concealed:

> It was a hideous hat. A purple velvet flap came down on one side of it and stood up on the other; the rest of it was green and looked like a cushion with the stuffing out. He decided it was less comical than jaunty and pathetic. Everything that gave her pleasure was small and depressed him.

The mother and son encounter a variety of people, Julian progressively irritated by his mother's friendly stupidities. He plots some public outrage to embarrass her, and so intent is he on his petty revenge that when the large Negro woman gets on the bus with her child and pays her fare, though he observes them minutely his sullenly reflective mind is on his mother. He does not at first realize what his senses have taken in:

> . . . a large, gaily dressed, sullen-looking colored woman got on with a little boy. . . . Julian hoped that he would sit down beside him and that the woman would push in beside his mother. He could think of no better arrangement. . . . There was something familiar-looking about her but Julian could not place what it was. . . . Her face was set not only to meet opposition but to seek it out. . . . Her bulging figure was encased in a green crepe dress and her feet overflowed in red shoes. She had on a hideous hat. A purple velvet flap came down on one side of it and stood up on the other; the rest of it was green and looked like a cushion with the stuffing out. She carried a mammoth red pocket book that bulged throughout as if it were stuffed with rocks.

A Poe could not have resisted italicizing the repeated sentences, but Miss O'Connor is careful to submerge them in Julian's rambling eye and his arrogant sullenness which allow him only surface observation; the final sentence about the pocketbook, an object which figures dramatically at the story's climax, allows the reader a moment longer to enjoy the irony at Julian's expense. One's attention as reader, then, is on Julian. With the advantage of his delayed recognition, we see him suddenly realize that the woman's hat is identical to his mother's. He is delighted beyond containing himself. But what Miss O'Connor has revealed to the reader in her management of Julian's recognition is the childish superficiality of his awareness, which contrasts sharply with his own estimate of his worldly and intellectual sophistication. What is more crucial, we see his petty arrogance unmistakably as he projects it upon the world, and we begin to realize that there is another world yet for Julian to recognize.

The hat after this point in the story is mentioned only once more, almost passing unnoticed when it is. When the Negro woman knocks Julian's mother down, out of anger at her gesture of love to the little boy, Julian picks up his mother's pocketbook and hat and helps her up, interpreting the Negro woman's action as just and righteous and lecturing his mother on the lesson she should have learned. The story has now come to focus upon the impending change in Julian, while very skillfully subduing the devices that have made us see both him and that possibility. We are left with Julian struggling toward light out of his spiritual darkness. It is also, as one learns to expect of Miss O'Connor's fiction, a literal struggle on a darkening city street in those concluding lines. "The tide of darkness seemed to sweep him back to [his mother lying dead in the street], postponing from moment to moment his entry into the world of guilt and sorrow." A lesser writer would have been sorely tempted to make a final use of the hat, that apparent catalyst to the

violent action in the story. But Miss O'Connor's delight is not primarily in her mastery of concrete images for the purpose of irony, though one is delighted by those qualities. The end those images serve is deeper: it is the revelation of that mysterious love at the center of all being which makes such terrifying demands upon us. Julian, childish throughout the story, at the last calls "Mama! Mama" like a child being forced alone into a real world he has so far managed to avoid, that world of guilt and sorrow in which he must discover and come to terms with a common humanity, but a humanity which is insufficient to its own rescue through "self-agency." Julian, that is, is being forced to put off the old, egocentric self. But the suggestion is quite other than that he will be left with only a mirror image of himself—with what Wallace Stevens might call an "identity," the empty and meaningless duplication such as that with which "William Wilson" ends. Julian has been emptied too, but only so that he may be filled in ways different from Poe's conception of the possibilities of man's being; and it is in a manner quite unlike that which Heidegger envisages as developing out of boredom and ennui, although those "modern" symptoms are nevertheless apparent in Julian as the preliminary signs of his spiritual and intellectual poverty. Earlier in the story he thought himself safe. He could withdraw behind his newspaper

> into the inner compartment of his mind where he spent most of his time. This was a kind of mental bubble in which he established himself when he could not bear to be a part of what was going on around him. From it he could see out and judge but in it he was safe from any kind of penetration from without.

But the vacuum in which he has attempted to maintain himself, his "bubble," is ruptured by a devastating intrusion from an outer world, an intrusion through the world he has sat in judgment upon, in an action of that Agent of all being and action. That intrusion, as we know, Miss O'Connor speaks of as the action of the mystery of grace.

We have come a world away from Poe in Miss O'Connor's fiction, for as we discover in reading Poe carefully, his concern is to establish just such a "bubble" as Julian builds. Poe, like Julian, would deny any world separate from the self by building an intellectual bomb shelter, a mental bubble in which to hide. And so Miss O'Connor's words concerning the rootless modern man, particularly the writer who denies the created world as Poe does, are apt. "The borders of his country are the sides of his skull." It takes something stronger sometimes than an atom bomb to open the old self-centered Adam in us which would retreat inward from the world. From her realization of the drastic possibilities in the tensions of that necessity, Miss O'Connor writes her Dan-

tesque comedy, a comedy rich also with Chaucerean playfulness about man's struggles with the created world. And a part of the comic in her fiction springs from the protagonist's discovering likenesses of himself in the outer world—likenesses which he cannot explain as a projection of his own making. It is one thing to take bored delight in one's singularity as Julian does, but it is devastating to be forced to acknowledge a world one cannot claim to have made and then encounter the haunting presence of that world's creator. Poe gives us the baffled horror of the inexplicable; the mind plays tricks upon the senses with a momentary emotional shock. Miss O'Connor raises up terror out of a deeper mystery: the mystery of self-agents who are not self-caused at the deepest level of their being. We are more deeply arrested by her fictions than we are sometimes comfortable in admitting.

THE CHANGELING

I've harnessed the weasels
to the hearse of the elfin dead.
Six weasels. A strange team,
when each can wrap itself
around a fence post at top speed.

Like furry serpents, they tug at their collars,
plunging into the miniscule leather.
Spokes like matchsticks of black walnut
carry the load. The team of eyes
and whiskers raises this much dust:
Enough to cover the freight.
Enough to cover the toadstool seeds.
Enough to blind the procession.

Touch-me-nots snap at the passage.
Dandelions shrivel. The widow's wailing
opens the owl's eyelid.

Crows, dressed for funeral,
hover at the graveyard, where a hoofprint
is deep enough
for the ashes,
the dust,
the weasels' work.

HAROLD WILEY

THE DEMATERIALIZATION OF WILLIAM WILSON: POE'S USE OF CUMULATIVE ALLEGORY

Ottavio M. Casale

The three great writers of symbolic fiction in the American Renaissance worried over the question of allegory and its relations to verisimilitude. And anyone who has read Melville's *Mardi* or Hawthorne's "Egotism; or, the Bosom Serpent"—to cite extreme but instructive examples—has painfully shared the worry. When Roderick Elliston, whose dilemma has been announced in the title of Hawthorne's tale, walks serpentinely through the world, uttering, "It gnaws me!" and we are left to ponder whether "it" is pride, an actual snake, or even dyspepsia, we confront a basic problem in symbolic fiction: how to make symbolic things convincingly "real" while suggesting so much more.

In his revised review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales,* Edgar Allan Poe reasoned on the subject this way:

> The deepest emotion aroused within us by the happiest allegory, *as* allegory, is a very, very imperfectly satisfied sense of the writer's ingenuity in overcoming a difficulty we should have preferred his not having attempted to overcome. . . . One thing is clear, that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction. Where the suggested meaning runs through the obvious one in a very profound undercurrent so as never to interfere with the upper one without our own volition, so as never to show itself unless *called* to the surface, there only, for the proper uses of fictitious narrative, is it available at all. Under the best circumstances, it must always interfere with that unity of effect, which to the artist is worth all the allegory in the world. Its vital injury, however, is rendered to the most vitally important point in fiction—that of earnestness or verisimilitude.[1]

Clearly, Poe practiced what he preached by generally avoiding outright allegory and by submerging ideas in his best tales. The many and often conflicting meanings that critics have called to the surface of such works as "Ligeia" and "The Fall of the House of Usher" testify to the cryptic nature of those tales. But what of "William Wilson," deriving from the same period of Poe's life as "Usher" and "Ligeia" yet obviously an allegory?

Readers may disagree, if at times only semantically, on *what* the tale allegorizes. A nineteenth-century reader would have probably ac-

---

[1] *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe,* ed. James A. Harrison (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1902), VI, 148.

cepted the double as the conscience at moral war with pure will. The twentieth-century reader has other options. If he is a Freudian, he can see Wilson [2] as the super-ego checking the *id*. If he responds to recent mythicosymbolic criticism, he can find in the work another example of Poe's obsession with the disintegration of mind or of Poe's myth of fragments seeking a unity only achievable in dream or death.[3] Despite the interpretive choices, however, most readers would agree that "William Wilson" is definitely an allegory, a whole symbolic construct in which aspects of a mind are incorporated as characters.[4] The questions then arise: how did Poe, the anti-allegorist, write an allegory? did he, and how did he, avoid "overturning a fiction" in so doing?

A basic response to those questions is that Poe, conscious of the dictates of "earnestness" and unity, carefully worked between the poles of concrete reality and the supernatural symbolic in "William Wilson." [5] Yet there is more to it. I wish to suggest that, in this most overtly symbolic of his tales, Poe created a cumulative allegory, one which only by degrees reveals itself. Unlike the traditional allegories of Dante or Bunyan, or even some of Hawthorne's, which early announce and repeat their nature, "William Wilson" is only an allegory after we have read the last paragraph; because the whole story lingers symbolically in the memory, we tend to overlook or forget how Poe teased us along through our first reading. To help us suspend our disbelief until the end (or promote what Norman Holland calls our "undisbelief" [6]), Poe created a narrator perfectly suited to his cumulative strategy and delicately handled the other elements, such as the whisper, clothing, and setting, so as to move the narrator and reader only gradually toward the allegorical climax. By the story's end, William Wilson has receded from the real world and entered the world of mind, ours and the narrator's.

---

[2] In this discussion, I will use the name "Wilson" to refer only to the double.

[3] See, for example, the general views of Allen Tate, "The Angelic Imagination: Poe as God," in *The Forlorn Demon* (Chicago: Regnery, 1953) or Richard Wilbur, "The House of Poe," in *The Recognition of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Eric W. Carlson (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1966).

[4] This is not to say that more naturalistic readings are not possible. For example, Thomas F. Walsh, "The Other William Wilson," *American Transcendental Quarterly*, 10 (Spring 1971), 17-26, argues that the double may be a projection of the narrator's mind, an example of "autoscopic hallucination."

[5] Stuart Levine, *Edgar Poe: Seer and Craftsman* (Deland, Florida: Everett/Edwards, 1972), p. 184, puts it this way: "It ["William Wilson"] is neither fantasy nor factual narration, but rather something between the two. Veer too near the former, and one's characters become flat and stereotyped; insist on the latter, and the miraculous happenings seem incredible and out of place."

[6] *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 69.

In writing "William Wilson," Poe was working with and against a source, Washington Irving's "An Unwritten Drama of Lord Byron."[7] Had Poe chosen to write a blatant piece of symbolism, he would have found ample precedent in that sketch, where the protagonist Alfonso, a Spanish nobleman, is followed "soon after his entrance into the world"—and in the second paragraph—"by a person masked and muffled up so as to conceal both countenance and figure." The muffled figure, "like the demon in Faust," checks the willful Alfonso at every turn, speaks to him "like the voice of his own soul," and hounds him to his death.[8] This sketch of a sketch may indicate by contrast what Poe had to do to escape the abrupt and fantastic leads of his source and to give credibility to a literary mode in which he was not entirely comfortable.

"William Wilson" does not take place out of time or space, in a single house, a single castle, a single pit. It is unique among Poe's dark tales for the extent to which it is located in geographical reality and for an attention to realistic detail—especially in the first half of the tale. After an obscure prelude, spoken by the narrator from the limbo of his present, post-Wilson state, he tells the tale in four distinct phases: the English academy scene, by far the longest, in which the narrator closely describes the locale of the school and his ambiguous initial relationship with Wilson; the Eton scene, where Wilson stops a night of dissipation; the Oxford scene, where Wilson prevents the narrator from dishonestly ruining a classmate at cards; and what might be called the "continental" scene, which culminates at Rome with the narrator's murder of Wilson. It would be stretching the limits of coincidence to think that this relatively dense realism, again especially in the story's first half, was accidental. Poe deliberately chose to be more realistic because he was being more allegorical. Like Melville in *Moby-Dick*, he needed an anchor in reality to keep his allegory from taking off too fast, too far.

A typical device in most of Poe's serious tales is, of course, the first-person narrator, who influences the form and substance of what we read as well as our attitude. In "William Wilson," the narrator is the key to the progressive development; his point of view operates in different ways to control the admission of symbolic unreality, to allow it only to leak into our consciousness. First, there is the fact itself of the narrator. There is a mind between us and the double, a mind which reveals much, but

---

[7] Poe admitted the indebtedness in an October 12, 1839 letter to Irving. See John Ward Ostrom, ed., "Supplement to The Letters of Poe," *American Literature*, 20 (November 1952), 360-361.

[8] Washington Irving, *An Unwritten Drama of Lord Byron* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Charles F. Heartman, 1925), no pagination; originally published in *The Gift* for 1836.

which also deflects our attention away from the meaning of Wilson and toward the interesting *puzzling out* of that meaning by that mind. What could be baldly ideological or fantastic in another treatment is made dramatic. We are forced one important remove away from conclusions and compelled to focus as much on the process of a character's mind as on the results of that process.

Important to this deflection is the quality of the mind in which we are locked. Like other romantic characters (Ahab, Donatello, Billy Budd), the narrator is incomplete. He is soulless, a kind of moral *tabula rasa*, but he is eminently rational and curious. Unequipped for an integrated, fully human life, he is admirably appropriate to reveal a story about that subject. His skepticism about Wilson allows and justifies our skepticism about Wilson, and at the same time it lures us unconsciously to submit to the narrator. We are not asked to swallow fantastic conclusions; we are asked to watch a character who doesn't want to swallow them but is gradually compelled to do so. With the aid of hindsight, we (and the narrator) can see that his perception of Wilson *was* limited, ironic, and "completely erroneous,"[9] but we are in no sure position to do so while we are under his limiting spell.

Poe is careful through most of the tale to provide this skeptical narrator and us with alternate readings for the same phenomena, realistic ones to satisfy our/his rationalism, suggestive ones to advance the "incredible" allegory. The hatred the narrator feels at "every circumstance tending to show resemblance, moral or physical, between my rival and myself" has definite symbolic import, but realistically speaking the narrator is all too human in resenting the mockery, as well as the loss of individuality inherent in another's so imitating him. The even richer syndrome of that hostility being fused with attraction for Wilson can also be read in two ways. Mystically the syndrome can suggest the ambivalent relation between the conscience-father and the will-son principles—they war but feel that they are almost Platonically, primordially linked: "I could with difficulty shake off the belief of my having been acquainted with the being who stood before me, at some epoch very long ago—some point of the past even infinitely remote." Practically, however, the love-hate can be attributed to the usual ambivalences of friends or brothers so much alike they are inseparable, if at moments antagonistic. ("To the moralist it will be unnecessary to say, in addition, that Wilson and myself were the most inseparable of companions.") The insensitivity of the other, objective students to any deeper or occult similarity—they indulge only in a "rumor touching a relationship"—

[9] See James W. Gargano, "Art and Irony in 'William Wilson,' " *ESQ*, 60, Supplement, I (Fall 1970), 18.

tends to make the growing irrational suspicions of the narrator seem perhaps hypersensitive and subjective.

All in all, the blending of fascination and repulsion, belief and skepticism, the fantastic and the rational, even syntactically rendered in Poe's prose,[10] might seem strained coming from an omniscient author (the meteor incident of *The Scarlet Letter* or the shuddering corpse of "The Minister's Black Veil" come to mind), but the vacillation seems "earnest" and credible deriving from this half-man, the narrator. Or put another way, our potentially superior awareness or complete assurance of the allegorical truth is fictively impeded by the narrator's groping, lagging understanding.

Other related features of the narrator act to freeze our disbelief. Consider the narrator's crimes themselves. Poe allows them to escalate appropriately until the end when we have a murder, but for the most part they are, when considered against the scale of human depravity, "comparatively trivial wickedness": juvenile pranks, collegial dissipation, dishonest gambling, attempted seduction. If in conventional romantic style, Poe had let his narrator commit a great infraction early in the tale, let us suppose signing a pact with the devil, or murder, or adultery, then the attachment of a curious figure like Wilson would have instantly begged for more or less heavy symbolic interpretation. Instead Poe fastens on the youthful years of his narrator and on the less depraved moments of his willful history. It is only after and because Wilson is "gone" that the narrator's crimes exceed "the enormities of an Elah-Gabalus."

As if that weren't enough to disarm us, the narrator tends to minimize and distort whatever negative value his deeds do possess. Morally opaque as he is, he frequently shunts our attention away from moral questions by misstating or understating the terms of contravention. He says at one point, "Poor justification this, in truth, for an authority so imperiously assumed. Poor indemnity for natural rights of self-agency so pertinaciously, so insultingly denied!" The prose is that of an outraged Thomas Paine. Or again, he speaks of Wilson's foiling "my ambition" at Rome, "my concerns, at Paris," and (very vaguely) of frustrating him "at Vienna, too—at Berlin—and at Moscow!" These actions, he allows, "might have resulted in bitter mischief." Bitter mischief. Not only does Poe keep the pitch of transgression low and vague, but our narrator undercuts whatever importance the acts do have by his tendency to ob-

[10] Donald Barlow Stauffer in "Style and Meaning in 'Ligeia' and 'William Wilson,' " *Studies in Short Fiction*, 2, No. 4 (Summer 1965), 327, notes how the complex style is "organically related to Wilson's own psychological state."

scure them rhetorically. The total effect is to suggest some, but not monumental, moral dislocation in the narrator while throwing us off our moral and analytic balance.

One final quality of the narrator I should like to note is his habit of delaying some of the information he gives us, timing the transmission so that our quest for the meaning of Wilson will follow the same wavering lines that his did. Of course, the whole tale, haltingly told years after the happenings, is an example of this, but let me indicate another key one. Only at the end of the Eton scene do we learn that Wilson had left the English academy on the same afternoon that the disturbed narrator had departed, or fled. If the narrator had given us this information immediately after the powerful scene where the narrator perhaps sees his very image in the face of the sleeping Wilson, the effect might have been too heavily suggestive, too symbolically transparent. As it is, Poe shrewdly lets his narrator slip the detail into a quieter, less charged page.

Throughout the history of the relationship, the narrator and Wilson are "in phase," to use a term applicable to psychospiritual as well as electrical phenomena. Wilson exists most objectively, separately, and publicly in the academy scene. As the narrator's career opens out, becoming simultaneously darker and more public, Wilson incrementally becomes more privately felt, internalized, and symbolic in value. And Poe handles the situations, the settings, and the clothing, whisper and appearance of Wilson accordingly.

Let us look at the academy phase. On the one hand, the academy environment is etched with many concrete, realistic details. This realism (presumably influenced by Poe's memories of his own British school days) perfectly supports the relative actuality of Wilson in this phase, where his presence is acknowledged by persons other than the narrator. The house with its many rooms, the school-room with its "ceiling of oak" and a homely "huge bucket of water" at one end, and the stern Dr. Bransby seem as substantial as the "high and solid brick wall, topped with a bed of mortar and broken glass" surrounding the whole. At the same time, however, Poe treats this "real" academy and its surroundings with a degree of imaginative suggestion appropriate to Wilson's strangeness. The village is "misty-looking," the "fretted Gothic steeple lay imbedded and asleep," and the school is a "dream-like and spirit-soothing place" of "labyrinthine" corridors.

In this ambiguous environment, we are introduced to Wilson and we are told much about his murky friendship with the narrator, his physical appearance, and the crucial whisper.

In a way, the whole tale can be seen as the progressive finding of a voice by Wilson. In this progression Poe shows superb craft in avoiding

pitfalls and exploiting possibilities. In the first place, we can note that Poe, as is usual with him, employs little direct speech or dialogue in the story, a wise strategy here because speech can be the death of suggestiveness if handled the least bit poorly. Consider Hawthorne's "Egotism . . ." again. It is in the portions of that tale where Hawthorne allows Elliston to speak of his affliction ("Oh, 'tis a mere nothing! A snake! A snake! The commonest thing in the world. . . . But how is your own breast?") that we are pushed most toward the laughable. Why? Because direct speech is an outward utterance. As such it enters an objective, real, and public domain. An irrational or romantic innuendo which can shimmer elusively in the moonlight of a mind, to adopt Hawthornian diction, which can convince when described or mulled over by a character, can fail terribly in its effect when made explicit in the speech of a character. (This may be the major reason that no artistically successful movie or play, as far as I know, has ever been made from a Poe tale.)

The use of a whisper for William Wilson, like the conferring of a stutter on Billy Budd, is a stroke of aesthetic equivocation, an intriguing blend of the real and unreal; and we and the narrator react ambivalently. Practically, it is, especially in the first half of the tale, a possible, credible, and fascinating handicap which can be exploited by the half-hostile narrator in his continuing half-combat with Wilson. But it also suggests psychological and abstract meanings, and the suggestions grow as the story does.

One passage from the academy phase should suffice to illustrate Poe's dance between the levels. After introducing us to the fact of this "weakness in the faucial or guttural organs," the narrator describes how he resents the mockery embodied in the whisper of Wilson, again as anyone would resent such caricature. He then implants the enigmatic clue that only *he* was fully aware of the imitation. But then he immediately retreats from the impact of the suggestion by rationally attributing the "riddle" to the skillful "*gradation* of his copy," which made it hard to detect by the other students.

As the allegory intensifies, the directness, length, and substance of the words permitted to Wilson by Poe change according to the narrator's accelerating decline and Poe's strategy. When the two principals are at the academy and the narrator's "crimes" are of the schoolboy variety, we do not actually hear Wilson at all. His opposition to the narrator is only *described* as being whisperingly "hinted" or "insinuated." From this point on Poe will allow us directly to hear certain utterances which will grow longer and closer to the symbolic point in each phase.

The face and clothing of Wilson are as important in the progressive treatment as the whisper. Between the two key scenes of sleep at the

academy and death at Rome, that face is hidden from the narrator. Wilson exists for the narrator by what and how he says, by what he wears, and what he hides. At the academy, Wilson is described as similar to the narrator "in *general contour* of person and *outline* of feature [my emphasis]." As for his clothes, Wilson is generally described as "copying" the narrator's dress; no other specifics are given, and the reference slides easily by. That too will change.

We are at the end of the academy phase, and half-way into the story, before Poe gives us the identity-in-sleep scene. In its hallucinatory and symbolically rich quality, this scene is to the academy phase what the ending Roman scene is to the work as a whole. Richard Wilbur has told us how the drift of Poe's character toward unity via dream, imagination and death is architecturally supported and indicated.[11] The idea is applicable here. It is in sleep and death that William Wilson perfectly mirrors the features of the narrator, i.e., that he becomes most allegorically explicit, although in the earlier scene the narrator only implies his shocked realization, leaving us to wait. To render this premonition of allegorical identity, Poe blots out the real world for a time by dimming the lights and taking us in the night "through a wilderness of narrow passages" to the box within a box that is Wilson's bedroom. As the lamplight falls on the sleeping Wilson, his face, which we will not see again until the end, speaks eloquently and symbolically to the narrator. And the narrator's language—which has had and will have what Tate calls "an eighteenth-century directness, and even elegance, of which Poe was seldom capable in his stories" [12]—becomes aptly overwrought and electrified, signaling the loss of control at the temporary fading of reality:

> I looked;—and a numbness, an iciness of feeling instantly pervaded my frame. My breast heaved, my knees tottered, my whole spirit became possessed with an objectless yet intolerable horror. Gasping for breath, I lowered the lamp in still nearer proximity to the face. Were these—*these* the lineaments of William Wilson? I saw, indeed, that they were his, but I shook as if with a fit of the ague in fancying they were not. . . . Awe-stricken, and with a creeping shudder, I extinguished the lamp, passed silently from the chamber, and left, at once, the halls of that old academy, never to enter them again.

We next find ourselves at Eton, where despite the proximity of fellow dissipators, the narrator encounters Wilson in private (a servant who has fetched the narrator having presumably retired). The meeting

[11] "The House of Poe."

[12] "Our Cousin, Mr. Poe," in *The Forlorn Demon*, p. 91.

occurs in the less than half-light of "the exceedingly feeble dawn which made its way through the semi-circular window" of the vestibule. The near darkness hides the face of Wilson, but his clothes are detectable. The "white kerseymere morning frock" he wears is not yet identical to the narrator's but is "cut in the novel fashion of the one I myself wore at the moment." That is, the form is similar, but the substance is unmentioned. It is here that the faceless adversary, for now he is becoming such, frustrates the narrator by whispering the first words we directly hear: "William Wilson!"

The revelation of the narrator's cheating at Oxford occurs in public, that is with the other gamblers present, but in an almost total darkness caused by the extinguishing of the candles by the stranger's entrance, so that his presence from that point on "we could only *feel*." Wilson's face and figure are, further, "closely muffled in a cloak." Verbally reflecting the moral slippage of the narrator, Wilson directly whispers more than we have ever heard from him by revealing the cheating in a complete paragraph. But consistent with that portion of reality still accruing to him—he has not yet become fully ideational—his words are concrete, even business-like: "Gentlemen, I make no apology for this behaviour, because in thus behaving, I am fulfilling a duty. . . . Please to examine, at your leisure, the inner linings of the cuff of his left sleeve, and the several packages which may be found in the somewhat capacious pockets of his embroidered morning wrapper." When the "stranger" departs, he leaves behind a "luxurious cloak of rare furs," which in its unique form and rare substance is "the exact counterpart in every, in even the minutest particular" of the narrator's own. Wilson's face has been hidden from us for two scenes now, but its meaning is being carried by the power of his articulation and aggressiveness, the clothes he wears, and the constriction of the settings. We "see" the face, and thus feel his growing symbolic impact, through other things. This is the last time Wilson's presence is sensed by anyone other than the narrator. And we are now far from the reality of the academy.

The final confrontation begins in public, at least ostensibly, at the carnival masquerade given by the Duke Di Broglio, whose name in Italian, "intrigue," happens to describe the behavior of our narrator, bent on seducing the Duchessa. Presumably, the party is well-lighted, but no one notices the violent altercation between the doubles: the narrator's abrupt seizing of Wilson by the collar, his angry denunciation, and his subsequent "dragging him" into the small antechamber. They do not notice because he is not there to them; Wilson is rapidly receding from public existence.

The fatal denouement occurs in a private, enclosed space reminiscent of the sleep scene at the school. They are again utterly alone, dissembling is no longer necessary on Wilson's part, nor is realistic dissembling any longer necessary on Poe's part. Since the final illumination is at hand, the lighting can be normal. After the narrator runs his opponent through with his rapier, and Wilson is about to die, he can doff the mask and cloak and reveal the face and clothing, which mislead the narrator into believing there is a long mirror at the end of the room. The likeness is now and for the first time entire, specified, and acknowledged without question: "Not a thread in all his raiment—not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of his face which was not even in the most absolute identity, *mine own!*"

And now too, Wilson can doff the whisper, which we fully realize was the sound of a being inhabiting the mid-region between reality and mind. He can speak out loud and for the first time in the openly allegorical, indeed oracular or Biblical, parlance that Poe often gave to his disembodied spirits:

> *"You have conquered, and I yield. Yet, henceforward art thou also dead—dead to the World, to Heaven, and to Hope! In me didst thou exist—and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself."*

Through an art aimed at preserving verisimilitude and unity of effect through to the climax of a cumulative allegory, Poe has overcome a difficulty we are glad he attempted to overcome. William Wilson has dematerialized and found his voice.

OWL HYMNS

i

The owl at the top of the tree
turns one wide eye and turns the zodiac;
the other tightens a black loop on the moon.

He is who he is, monitor
of the moon's track, its endless silver coil
and of the pale automatic stars.

Sun once spilled on that tree
but all the colors are hidden now
in the one branch under his hands.

ii

As the folded rain
opens, recognize the eye
of winter watching.

When the white wind fells
the panes and walls, very soon,
all the owls will die.

Not in black gaudy
storms but with the private knife
of ice, in silence.

The sun is bright now
but every day the wiser
birds fly south, fly south.

WILLIAM S. HILLMAN

OUR FATHER WHICH ART NOT IN HEAVEN

(a story of the fifties)

Clark Brown

Chazz said it would be days before Hazelbabes found out, but, hell, the very next morning he noticed. "Somebody jimmied my trunk and stole my spare!" he said, which was a load of bull. Nobody jimmied his trunk; he just forgot to lock it. Somebody'd jobbed his tire all right, and that was us—or Chazz anyway, it was Chazz's idea. I'd felt funny because he *is* our stepfather, but Chazz said, "Makes no difference." Chazz said a stepfather isn't a *real* father, he isn't a blood relation, and besides, we didn't *ask* to have him for a stepfather. That's what Chazz said.

Chazz is my older brother, my *only* brother. His real name is Mark Charles Logan, Jr., after our Real Father who's dead. I call him "Chazz" because C-H-A-S is short for Charles which is Chazz's middle name, only I say it "Chazz." We call Hazeltine—our stepfather—Hazelbabes or Hazelfart or Hazelbutt or some dumb thing like that. We don't call him that to his face of course. To his face we call him "Murray," like he asked us. It sounds real hairy. "Murray?" I'll say. "Me and Chazz are going down to the playground." "Mark and *I* are going," he'll say—or else our mother will because she's off her stick about grammar.

Well so anyway, Chazz and I looked at each other, and Chazz said, "No lie?" and jumped up, acting real surprised and rushed out. Of course he knew what he'd see, which was just an empty space where the tire should go. "There's nothing to *see!*" Hazelbabes said, getting irritated, but I jumped up too. I figured *I'd* better act surprised. I didn't move as fast as Chazz because I'm built different. It's funny. Chazz is tall and slim and real goodlooking. He's got curly blond hair and these kind of sky-blue eyes and a big old crooked grin with all these white teeth. Women really go for him. When we had paper routes this married gal would drive up and take him along to deliver his papers, then they'd go down by the lake. Of course our mother and Hazelbutt never knew anything about *that.*

Well, I'm not as tall as Chazz and I weigh around two-hundred and forty, if you can believe that. I eat a lot but it isn't that. It's glands, the doctor says. Our mother and Hazelboobs took me to around eleven different doctors. I've had pills and injections and these hairy old diets, but nothing seems to work. I don't look anything like Chazz either. Maybe it's my eyeglasses but also it's my coloring and my face. My face is kind of pudgy looking, not thin and tan like Chazz's. The funny thing is, Chazz doesn't look anything like either our mother or our father—our Real Father. We're all dark, but Chazz is The Golden Boy. That's

what this woman that used to go down to the lake with Chazz called him. She said he was an Adonis. Chazz could feature that. He'd get this half-assed grin on his face telling about it—after I'd explained, because Chazz doesn't read anything if he can help it, and I have to practically do all his homework for him. It doesn't matter much, I guess, because Chazz has it made. People just look at him and smile, he's so goodlooking and agreeable. This woman that used to live next door, Mrs. Baldrick, would go by Chazz and say, "I declare, Mark, if you aren't getting more handsome every day!" Chazz would just grin his old half-assed grin and light up some more.

Well so we got outside and Chazz started laughing, and then I did. I was scared at first, though. Chazz went over and lifted up Hazelbabe's trunk just the way he'd done the night before and naturally there wasn't any spare. Where it was, was in the trunk of our '42 Ford along with all the other stuff we'd jobbed: hubcaps and side mirrors and radiator ornaments and trunk ornaments. It was all Chazz's idea. He'd started out wanting to get some Caddie hubs for the car. See, *our* machine is primed this dull gray and lowered in back, and we put on fenderskirts and stripped all the chrome and molded in the hood and the trunk-latch, and Chazz wanted Caddie hubcaps for the front wheels because nothing looks sharper. We've even got dual pipes but one is just a cutout because the '42 is a Six even if it *is* a Ford. But even so, it looks cool as hell peeling out with the pipes rapping and these two little bursts of smoke shooting out. Well, he jobbed these Cad hubs, but they wouldn't fit. There's a cup spot-welded inside that'll only fit Caddies, I guess. We tried prying them off with a screwdriver but it didn't work, so Chazz sold them to Ferris. That gave him the idea, though, and after that we'd go out at night and job whatever we could because Ferris'll buy anything.

So Chazz said, "You better take that goddam tire over to Ferris and that shit-load of stuff we got in the trunk." Of course, *our* trunk only opens from the inside because the outside handle is gone and the hole molded in, but even so Chazz didn't like having the tire around. I didn't blame him. He couldn't go himself because Hazelbabes and our mother were taking him over to meet some big jasper that's in charge of recommending guys for appointment to the Naval Academy. Chazz is going to the Naval Academy if our mother and Hazelbabes can get him in. Damn if they haven't been trying!

Well so then we went back inside. Hazelbabes had told our mother about it, and she was rushing around all excited while he phoned the police. He had the serial numbers and everything because his tires are practically new, all five, with warranties. Our mother is a little woman—

you'd never believe she had me—and she talks a lot with her hands and she's always telling you what you feel.

". . . You feel upset," she was saying to Hazelboobs. "Of course you do. That's only natural. It's very, very, very, *very* upsetting, of *course* it is! Yes! You want to talk about it. You want to get it off your chest. You want someone to take action right away—"

"Paula, would you be quiet, please? I'm trying to talk!" Hazelbabes doesn't get mad very often, but he isn't the world's greatest Personality either. He's tall and skinny and practically bald except for a couple of dark patches around his ears and across the back of his head. He's got kind of a long, sharp nose and a grumpy expression, but he can be pretty nice sometimes. He doesn't care for sports or anything, but when I was littler he'd read to me if I was sick. Hazelbabes is in real estate; he was in it with our Real Father before he died. I guess he'd kind of had the hots for our mother even then, or after he got divorced anyway. Sometimes I think he's okay, but Chazz hates him, which is funny because he gets on better with Chazz than with me. I mean he *likes* Chazz more, but then so does practically everybody else, and he takes an interest in Chazz's big old hairy "career." He's the one that's pulled a lot of strings to try and get Chazz appointed. Hazelfart knows some big-ass old Congressman he's always kissing it up to, you see.

Well so anyway they all piled in Hazelbabes' Buick and headed out to see this guy that looks over high school seniors for the Congressman. Hazelbabes said he hoped he didn't get a flat. He'd even thought of taking *our* car but that would have made a hell of an impression, tooling up in the Big Gray Machine, pipes rapping like cannons. Once he asked Chazz if they shouldn't take the spare out of our car and put in the trunk just in case, and I almost about dropped my jock. Chazz said a Ford wheel wouldn't fit on a Buick, and Hazelbabes said, "Oh." He doesn't know anything about cars. Chazz could have been bee-essing him, but he wasn't. It's true. A Ford wheel won't fit on a Buick.

So as soon as they cut out, I go tooling up Nineteenth Avenue. The Ford is both of ours, you see, because we both paid for it with money we earned working in the Brewery last summer, but it's only since last month that I get to drive it, because I just turned sixteen. You'd think we'd have fights about who gets to take it on dates and everything, but so far that hasn't happened. It's mostly Chazz that goes out on dates, not that he has to work at it. Women call up Chazz and practically beg for it. Really! "Just remember, Perry," he tells me. "Too much tail is just as bad as too little." Then he grins his dumb-ass old grin.

Well, I was thinking about Chazz and Annapolis and not paying good attention. That's another dumb thing—Annapolis. See, when we

were littler one time we were playing pirates. I'd made up the game because Chazz never makes up anything, but I'd been reading library books about Captain Kidd and Henry Morgan and we were jumping all around and fighting with coathangers we pretended were cutlasses and so on. Well, one time our mother and Hazelbabes asked Chazz what he wanted to be, and Chazz couldn't think of anything. He just stood there, grinning that silly-looking crooked grin and shrugging, the way he does when he's called on in school. "Well," said Hazelballs, "what are your interests, what sort of vocation appeals to you?" "What do you like to *do*, Chazz?" I said, because sometimes you have to sort of explain stuff to him. Then Chazz said, "I don't know. I kind of like pirates," and our mother said, "*Pirates?*"

"You mean you like boats?" Hazelbutt said, and Chazz nodded.

"You'd like to follow a nautical career," our mother said, because, like I explained, she's always telling you how you think. "You'd like—" She waved a hand. "—some sort of calling where you would be near the ocean, where you could—*travel*. It's perfectly natural. You're adventuresome. You want to see the world . . ." She went on explaining Chazz to himself.

"Yeah," Chazz said. "I think I could hack being a sailor."

"Exactly," said Hazelbabes, but of course our mother wouldn't stand for anything like that, so it turned out that Chazz wanted to go to the Naval Academy and be a naval officer—that was what she told everybody, and she really featured *that*—no lie! She cut pictures out of the society columns where navy guys were getting married, the bride and groom walking between all these jaspers in uniform holding swords over their heads. She said Chazz would look "divine" in dress blues, and she told how senators and important Washington hotshots very often picked Annapolis graduates for their daughters to marry. Before long she had Chazz married to some debutante or something of "fine old Virginia stock." Then she made up all these swishy parties in Washington for Chazz to go to, and before long *she* was going to them, and then, I think, she got herself and Chazz invited to the White House. I don't know if Hazelbabes and I were invited or not, but it all sounded a lot like me and the pirates, except that I never really believed I *was* a pirate; I always knew I was just a funny-looking fat kid waving a coathanger and play-acting. Well, she bought a Navy pennant and hung it in our room and she learned to play "The Navy Blue and Gold" on the piano. I kind of went along with it too. I'd put Chazz through the manual of arms and march him around the living room, and he'd do it—he always likes showing off—grinning like a damn idiot, of course. Then I'd make up a deep voice and ask him if he was qualified.

"Ever been married?" I'd say (real stern-sounding).

"Uh-uh."

"Between seventeen and twenty-two years of age?"

"Uh-huh."

"Graduated from high school?"

"Um, I will have."

"Of good moral character?"

Chazz would crack up.

"Top forty-percent of your class?" I'd ask.

"Um—" He wasn't, but our mother didn't seem to think that mattered. I guess she figured Chazz would just grin and everybody would say, 'Oh, what the hell?' Hazelbabes would smile a little and pull on his pipe.

"How's your science?" I'd say.

"It's okay."

"How do you find the density of an object?"

"Um, uh, you divide—ah, shoot, you take—"

"Weight by volume, moron!"

"Yeah, weight by volume!" He'd grin like he'd known it all along.

Well, I was thinking about this and I hung a looie off Nineteenth onto Taraval—that means make a left turn. Hang a rogie is make a right turn. There're a lot of expressions like that. When somebody mis-shifts and hits the gears you say, "Grind me off a pound while you're at it," and when you go down a long steep hill like O'Shaunessey, you shut off the engine and coast and that's Jewish overdrive. But it's illegal to turn left off Nineteenth, and if I hadn't been thinking about Chazz I'd have checked out the cops but I didn't, and all of a sudden I heard this mournful old wail and my heart started thumping. There he was right behind me, the old black-and-white car with the red light turning and the siren groaning. I pulled right over and stopped, and he pulled up behind me and the siren moaned and ran down like something dying.

Well, I knew what to do all right. I took my license out of my wallet, because they won't touch a wallet, and I sat right where I was. He came waddling up to the window and bent down, dressed all in black—navy blue, I guess it is, but it looks like black. He had on sunglasses so you couldn't see his eyes, and a gun of course and a whole beltload of bullets. "See your license?" he said, all cool and bored sounding the way cops act, like they've already seen so many dumb things nothing surprises them.

He looked at the license and sniffed, and my heart was banging away. Then he asked for the registration, and I gave it to him, and he wanted to know who Murray J. Hazeltine was, and I told him, because

naturally the Ford is registered in Hazelfool's name—Chazz and I being too young to own a car legally.

"All right," he said, "get out."

"Get out?" I said. My heart kind of flopped.

"Get out," he said.

"What for?" I said.

"Just get out. Don't give me no crap."

I started to say I wasn't giving him no crap, but I didn't. So I climbed out and he looked at me. Then he said, "What's in the trunk?"

"The trunk?" I said.

"Yeah, the trunk. You know. What's in the trunk?"

"Nothing," I said. I practically fainted dead away there in the street.

"Nothing?" he said.

"Well," I said, "you know, just the usual stuff: a lug-wrench and a jack and the spare. That's all. And I think we got a tow-rope."

"Open it up," he said.

I swallowed real big and hoped he didn't see it. I was trying not to, but I thought if I didn't swallow pretty soon I'd fall down. "It don't open," I said. "It's busted." Then I showed him where the handle had been taken off and the hole molded in, but he wasn't that dippy.

"It opens from the inside, doesn't it?" he said.

"When it works," I said. "There's a cable but it's pulled loose. Somebody'll have to climb back through the panelling and attach it again. I can't," I said. "I'm not small enough." I thought maybe he'd grin or something, because people make a lot of jokes about my size, but he didn't change his expression. He leaned into the car and looked. Then he said, "Pull it."

"Pull it?" I said.

"Pull it."

"It won't do no good," I said.

"*Pull* it!" he said.

Well, in a '42 coupe there's no back seat. See, it was the last car Ford made during the War, so there's only one taillight and one window wiper and just a board across the back with a rubber mat. So I stepped inside and pretended to pull the knob, letting my hand slip off. "See!" I said.

"Goddamit!" he said. "Get out of the way!"

So I backed out, praying the cable would snap because sometimes it does. I thought maybe he was so mad he'd yank real hard and snap the catch and the trunk wouldn't open. Besides, I don't think they're supposed to do that, I mean without a search warrant, because a car is

your property, isn't it? I didn't say that, of course, I just thought, 'Please, please, please let it snap!' Then he reached in and yanked and the trunk popped like it's supposed to, and I felt everything in me drain right out.

"Let's have a look," he said.

II.

Well, it was pretty hairy all right. What was so bad, of course, was Hazelbabes reporting the tire being jobbed. There wasn't anybody home yet, so they took me in this room at the Youth Guidance Center, and these two guys with their coats off questioned me. They acted real teed-off, like they could hardly keep from punching me. It didn't scare me, though. It just made me mad back again, like I really *hadn't* done anything. When you're fat you get used to taking crap and it doesn't bother you as much as it would somebody else.

I kept saying how could the tire be stolen if it was in Hazelbabes' own car since the Ford was registered to him? I said it was just a mistake, I was taking the tire to get fixed and Hazelbabes didn't know about it.

"What was wrong with it?" one guy said.

"Nothing," I said. "I mean I was taking it to see if anything *was* wrong with it, to be inspected sort of."

"He wanted to have a new tire inspected?"

"Well, yeah!" I said, like it was the naturallest thing in the world. "Heck," I said, "how can he steal his own tire? It's in *his* car, ain't it?"

"I guess all that other stuff is his too, huh, fatboy?"

"I don't know nothing about that," I said.

"Hell, if you don't!"

"Hell, if I *do!* "I said, glaring right back at them.

"Well, where'd it come from?" they said.

"I don't know where it came from," I said. I'd have to keep looking from one to the other. One would fire a question, then while you were still trying to answer the other would cut in. They do that on purpose, to try and break your alibi.

"It was in your trunk," the one said.

"Not *my* trunk," I said. "I don't know nothing about it."

"We'll see about that," the other one said.

Well, of course they were right. I could see this wasn't getting anywhere. "Okay," I said, "so I took it."

"By yourself?" the other said.

I hadn't really thought about that. Well, yes, I guess I had. "Uhuh," I said.

"You sure?"

"Uhuh."

"*All* by yourself?"

I shrugged. I thought about it some more. What could I say? "Yeah," I told them. "I took it myself."

Well, by then they'd gotten hold of Hazelbabes and our mother who were back from their appointment. They came rushing right up, but I wasn't allowed to see Chazz. He had to wait in the hall. Our mother was so off her stick she couldn't even think what to tell me I was feeling. Then she decided I hadn't taken the stuff. I was just holding it for somebody.

". . . they asked you to keep it. And so you said you would. But you didn't know—."

"Paula!" Hazelbabes cut in. He knew better than that. Then he asked the cops if he could talk to me alone and they left us be for a while. I'd rather have had the cops. They were bad but being alone with Hazelbabes was putrid.

He didn't say anything for a while. I was sitting by the table, and he was standing, head down, stroking his chin with his thumb and one finger and frowning a lot. I could see the thin grumpy looking lips and the long nose and the bald head shining in the fluorescent light and the patch of dark hair around Hazelbabes' ears. He looked awful sad. Then he said, "Was Mark in on this?"

"No," I said. "It was just me. Mark didn't know anything about it."

He nodded and thought some more. "It could ruin Mark's chances for the Academy," he said. "In fact, it *would* ruin them."

"Uhuh," I said.

Then he said, "Do you hate me, Perry?"

"No," I said, swallowing and feeling sick all over again. "I don't hate you." I wish people wouldn't say stuff like that.

"What were you going to do with that tire?" Hazelbabes said.

"I don't know," I told him.

"Were you going to sell it?"

"I don't *know!*"

He looked at me. "Perry," he said, "what is it you want so badly you have to steal your own stepfather's tire to obtain?"

"Nothing!" I said. I started getting mad again. It was true too. I mean there were things me and Chazz wanted all right, but there wasn't anything in particular. It was mostly just the idea.

"I believe you," he said, sighing a little. "I think you don't really know *why* you stole that tire, or the other things either."

I wanted to say it wasn't me that stole it, at least it hadn't been me that *wanted* to steal it, but naturally I didn't. I could see he wanted to talk so I shut up.

He said that property rights were special. "The ancient Romans," he said, "regarded property as an extension of the personality. They felt that stealing was a violation of the self, you might say, of the person . . ." He went on like that. I could see him being all freaked about property,-him being in real estate and everything. Then he said that he wished me and Chazz had had more of a religious upbringing. He said he wished our father—our Real Father—had had a "more religious nature" because it might have helped him in his "time of trial," when he had gotten into trouble. I didn't say anything. Right *then* I hated him all right. He'd said it before and that was what made Chazz hate him, Hazelbabes talking about our Real Father like that. Right then I wasn't sorry at all. I wished now we'd jobbed the whole damn car!

Well so anyway Hazelbabes wasn't going to press charges about the tire, but there was all that other stuff we'd lifted, so I was going to have to have a "hearing" the next day, and the judge would decide what to do with me. Hazelbabes and our mother were inside talking to the cops a long time, telling all about me and I guess our Real Father. Then they came out and I was let go. When we went into the hall Chazz stood up and gave me that dippy grin but his eyes were scared. He didn't know what I'd said. Naturally we couldn't talk much on the way home—the Ford was "impounded" so we all rode together. I asked him how the interview went and he said "pretty good," which didn't mean anything. If we'd been alone he'd have said "bitching!" if it went good and "real hairy" or something if it didn't.

Well, when we *were* alone he wanted to know if I'd told about him, and I said I'd told them I did it myself. Then he felt a little better, but he couldn't relax, not at first. I could see he wanted to talk about *his* interview, but he didn't think he should. He wanted to thank me for not telling about him too, but he didn't know how to say it. "You done good, Perry," he said. "No lie." But I wasn't pleased. For some reason it just made me mad.

Well so that night, just before I went to bed, I could hear Hazelboobs and our mother talking. They didn't know I heard. They were out in the kitchen with the door shut, but the voices kind of trickled through. Hazelfool compared me to Chazz and his "sunny disposition." He said I was jealous, that was the trouble, jealous of Mark (meaning Chazz), and I'd jobbed the stuff to get attention. He said I hated myself. I detested my appearance. "He's a great big ball of misery and spite," Hazelbabes said. Well, I'm not too crazy about my appearance,

but I don't hate myself. Actually, I move pretty good for being so fat. You might not believe it but I'm quick—at least I made first string outside linebacker when I was just a sophomore—and whenever Chazz and me wrestle he's pretty careful not to get me mad. I'll get him down and jounce him and he'll say, "Get off, you cow!" He knows I can take him, though, and I can.

Well so anyway we went to bed. Chazz and I share a room, you see. We each got our own bed, and Chazz was lying there in the dark under the Navy pennant talking about his interview. He was all jazzed up now. Our mother had said how Chazz's grades weren't too good, and this big important jasper had said it wasn't so much grades that counted as drive and determination. He said if somebody wanted to go to the Academy bad enough they'd get in. Then our mother had asked about social life and wasn't it true that midshipmen were much in demand among prominent east coast families as desirable marriage prospects—or some dumb thing like that—and this guy had said that that was correct. Chazz said that midshipmen got so much tail you couldn't believe it, that in the east they were the number one ass bandits, because of the uniforms and everything.

Well, I listened to all this stuff. I was thinking about having to go to trial in the morning and maybe I'd be going to jail while Chazz was back at Annapolis banging all the admirals' wives and the cream of Washington society. And I thought about how when we were little kids lying in the dark like this our Real Father would come in and tell us stories. I could hardly remember that, just a little. Chazz remembers it better because he's two years older. It's because he remembers our Real Father better that he hates Hazelbabes so much. But he didn't hate him then. And it seemed like he'd forgotten all about me, which made me mad. Maybe it isn't his fault. He's been spoiled so much by women he just expects people to just hand him whatever he wants—which they pretty much do. Then I really got mad. I thought about me going to jail for him, and how he expected that too, just took it for granted, and I thought why should I be such a damn pigeon? Hell, I said! So he was jabbering on about the Army game or some stupid thing, and I said right out:

"Hey, Chazz?"

"Huh?" he said.

"Chazz?" I said. "Y'ever try sticking things up your ass?"

Well, that shut him up for a while. I guess he figured out how I was feeling. He thought about it a little, but he couldn't think what to say. He didn't want to get me mad—madder than I already was—but he wasn't going to kiss it up either. Then he tried to bluff out of it.

"So what's *your* problem?" he said, kind of scornful.

"Nothing, Chazz," I said. "You wouldn't understand."

He just couldn't make himself say he was grateful. I mean he couldn't *really* thank me for what I'd done. He was just too damn proud. "Ah," he said, "I don't give a crap."

"That's good," I said, "cause maybe I'm going to tell that judge whose idea it was to cop all that stuff."

Chazz didn't say anything at first. Then he said, "Go ahead!" He was trying to sound rough.

"Maybe I'll tell him who wanted to job Hazelbabes' tire," I said. "Hell, it wasn't *me*!"

"You goddam cherry!"

"Flattery'll get you nowhere," I said.

"Go ahead!" he said. "I don't care."

"Hell, if you don't," I said.

"Do it, redass!"

"Don't worry," I said. "I will."

And I decided I would too. I figured I'd taken enough crap for Chazz, let him take some for himself, him and all his goddam midshipmen assbandits. And I thought about everybody's face, how Hazelbabes would look when he found out his precious Chazz had been the one, and our mother too. Well, I thought, it would serve them right. It would too, no lie!

In the morning I felt pretty crappy. I hadn't slept much, lying awake and thinking of so many things, and I sort of had a cold and maybe a fever, and I was grouchy as a bastard. Chazz didn't say anything. He got himself dressed and went downstairs and then I got dressed. I had to put on my suit and tie, of course. Chazz has these sharp looking powder-blue-one-button-roll jobs, but I got this pukey old double-breasted pin-stripe gaberdine number our mother got at Big Fellows' Fashion Clothiers where all the fatasses go that can't fit into regular clothes. I would have asked Chazz if I could borrow his fluorescent royal blue silk tie he wears with his powderblue babes, but we weren't on speaking terms any more. The hell with that anyway, I thought, and I whipped out my dumb old knit jobby and started tying it. Usually when I wear my suit Chazz says something about I must have been to Omar the tentmaker, and our mother says it looks quite "becoming" and that pinstripes are always in and very slimming. Now, I knew, Chazz wasn't going to say anything, but that didn't make me feel any better.

So I was tying my tie and looking in the mirror and all of a sudden I saw the picture of our Real Father our mother had put on the bureau. He was looking at me, smiling a little, but looking serious too. He was a goodlooking man with a lot of thick dark hair, not prissy looking, and not like Chazz but handsome still. He seemed to be asking me what I was going to do, and I swallowed and felt like there was something brassy tasting inside me, the way it tastes if you suck on a penny. I didn't want to look at him, but I couldn't help it. Then I thought about what I tried never to think about, I mean the day when Chazz and me were little kids walking home from school and these kids kind of trailed after us, asking all these dumb questions. *It said in the paper your father killed himself, is that right? Was he going to have to go to jail? Did he take somebody's money?* I'd started to cry, but Chazz jumped this one mouthy kid and busted his nose. We didn't know then it was busted, but it was. We ran home, scared we'd catch hell, but nothing happened. We couldn't understand why the kid's parents didn't come around raising hell.

Well, all that came pouring down on me, and I thought about all the times Chazz and I had laid awake in the dark talking about stuff when we were supposed to be asleep, and then I thought how it was funny we always called our father our "Real Father," and how it reminded me of praying. *Our Father which art in heaven . . .* But then I thought how he couldn't be in heaven, because you can't be there if you did what he did, and I thought, *Our Father which art* not *in heaven.* And I thought if he wasn't there I didn't want to be there either when I die.

Just then our mother called up the stairs, "Yoo-hoo? Perry? You just about ready?" in this sweety-sweet voice, like nothing had happened and we were all going for a drive in the country.

It wasn't much of a trial. There wasn't any courtroom and the judge didn't have on a robe. He was just some jasper in a suit and he didn't have much hair—like Hazelbabes. He said he had noted that I played football. I said uhuh. Then he talked about the Forty-Niners for a while, to try and act friendly. Then he asked if I knew why I'd taken all that stuff. I said I didn't. He said was I curious, didn't I want to understand the "sources of my hostility?" I said I guessed so. He said that was fine because he'd decided to put me on probation if I'd agree to talk to the police psychiatrist. I just said "uhuh," and then it was over. Hazelbabes patted my shoulder in a clumsy way and our mother said I'd done "real fine" and she was proud of me. Chazz's face was all funny and glad, and he snuck up to me trying to say something, but I wouldn't let him.

"Lemme alone," I said. "I don't want to hear it."

HISTORY REPORT

In Delaware, wearing the spring dress
my mother made, I read my notecards aloud—
how the combine, with one smooth motion
pulled the migrant girl's ponytail
out by the roots.
(My father kept us moving
away from the South. In Kansas my hair was cut
for the first time. Ten years' braided hair
still shines in its cellophane wrapper.)

Class meets outside; before the backdrop
of clipped shrubs the shade is cold.
Afterwards I walk slowly to our rented house:

migrant girl, the yellowed grass
of these empty city lots
is gleaned from your anonymous death.

MARLENE YOUMANS

TWO POEMS BY LEE M. ROBINSON

THE WHITE DOOR AND THE WALL

What is it (I ask) about?
The mind orders (you say), as in:
birth is a forcing out,
death is a falling in.
It draws borders (you go on):
thus you and I
do not collide.
The mind opposes.
Thus the white door is not
the wall it closes.

I shake my head. Nothing you say
is real. In my mind these figures
do not fix, but turn:
the infant and the hag together
warming by the fire
stale toast and desire.
You and I in the same skin.
The white door
and the wall
leaning in.

NOVEMBER

So late in November the days
drop golden, expendable as pennies.
We hoard the old season
behind closed doors, sipping
our Darjeeling, ignoring
the first raw finger of a wind
fiddling at the tree's throat,
threatening.

We will not anticipate December,
the sure, slow layering
of the damp covers over us,
over us. Stubborn as the sun,
still gaudy summer yellow,
we will not foresee
that season's hundredth pot of tea,
the restless hibernation
of the imagination,
the rocking of the frozen words
to sleep.

Now in November
my body drinks the sun.
The incessant bud
unfolds inside me:
flicker of fire,
quick gold on a leaf,
sweet ignorance,
small keeper of the season.

THOMAS WOLFE AND THE SENSE OF PLACE

ELMO HOWELL

In 1959, An English admirer of Thomas Wolfe, Pamela Hansford Johnson, announced that the "kicking season" was on again and that the North Carolina novelist was in for another round of abuse.[1] The abuse had in fact hardly let up since a searing (and in some ways just) essay in 1936 by Bernard DeVoto, who declared that the finished form of Wolfe's novels was determined by "the offices of Charles Scribner's Sons" rather than by the author himself.[2] Called everything from racist to perpetual adolescent, Wolfe is bypassed today most often because he is considered long-winded and dull, "a seedy, insanely garrulous old man," says Alfred Kazin, "who can never stop explaining each yellowed old photo in the family album."[3] Truman Capote reveled in his fiction as a boy, but "can't read a line of it now."[4] Taking a different tack, Paschal Reeves attacks Wolfe's social views: he shows little sympathy for the modern concept of brotherhood.[5] The fact is, says Miss Johnson, modern criticism with its rarefied aesthetics and indifference if not hostility to moral values has turned today's students into "half-read parrots," who have trouble understanding what literature is all about . . . Dickens, Dostoevsky, and Balzac, as well as Thomas Wolfe.[6]

The main problem with Wolfe is not in appreciation but a change in the critic's concept of what a novel should be. On the whole, modern criticism has little interest in place (the landscape of the mind is generally preferable to a generation of writers who have no fixed abode); and Wolfe's Southernness is an essential element of his fiction, sometimes liked, sometimes hated, but always present to be dealt with in some way. He seems at times to find more wrong with the South than right with it. Few writers have dealt with the homefolks more cavalierly . . . and yet one feels, taking his work as a whole, that the mainspring lies in a sense of loyalty to his origins, a sentiment that runs too deep to be consciously felt. It begins with loyalty to certain people, his mother in

---

[1] Pamela Hansford Johnson, "Thomas Wolfe and the Kicking Season," *Encounter*, XII (April, 1959), 77-80.

[2] Bernard DeVoto, "Genius is not Enough," *Saturday Review*, XIII (April 25, 1936), 4.

[3] Alfred Kazin, *Washington Post Book World*, Jan. 28, 1968, p. 1.

[4] Truman Capote, *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York, 1958), p. 293.

[5] Paschal Reeves, "Gleam from the Forge," *Georgia Review*, XXII (Summer, 1968), 249.

[6] Pamela Hansford Johnson, *The Art of Thomas Wolfe* (New York, 1963), pp. iii-iv.

particular, and branches out to the larger echelons of clan and region and perhaps even race, as Professor Reeves suggests. As he moved away from home to the East and to Europe, Old Catawba seemed remote and exotic and yet dearer and more real, and the abrasiveness of the later books which reach beyond the South is due to the discomfort he felt in a world where the old values no longer obtain. Though he preferred to live and write in hotel rooms and city flats, he was always at heart a country boy a long way from home. This is the image he gave to friends in New York and, more importantly, the image he had of himself. Among the rootless millions of the great cities, he took fierce pride in the fact that his life was marked by place.

But as Southerner, Wolfe is after all an anomalous figure. He never prized the designation himself, at home at least, and away from home he never thought of the South as a distinct homeland with something of a political dimension, as other Southerners have felt or professed to feel. In Europe, he thought of America as home, the new land set apart from a tired old world. This was part of the experience of a solitary traveler among people who were not always friendly, which for the moment led him to forget that America included the urban wasteland that he despised as well as the hills of North Carolina.

Wolfe the American is even more dubious than Wolfe the Southerner. He regarded himself "as more American than Southern," says C. Hugh Holman, and in his "firmly democratic insistence on himself as representative of the equality of man," he comes closest, says Holman, of all our major prose writers to the spirit of Walt Whitman.[7] But it is misleading to think of Wolfe as a national author. The vitality of his fiction, when he leaves the mountains where he was born, lies in the studied opposition to almost everything he encounters. He is a great hater. And though in a rhetorical moment he may expand on the national theme, he cannot see the country as a sort of mystical unit, as Whitman did, nor accept all men as brothers and comrades. "The subway guard, or the man behind the counter, can, by a few ill-timed remarks, change my desire to call him 'camerado' to a desire to punch him on the jaw. So much for the universal brotherhood."[8]

His fiction is filled with punches against all sorts of people at home and abroad, the French, English, Jews, and of course fellow Southerners, but most of all the people who live in the great cities of the East, whatever their origin. No one has written with such virulence about any people as Wolfe wrote about New Yorkers.

---

[7] C. Hugh Holman, *Three Modes of Modern Southern Fiction* (Athens, 1966), pp. 58, 63.

[8] *The Letters of Thomas Wolfe*, ed. Elizabeth Nowell (New York, 1956), p. 29.

> Their voices seemed to form one general City-Voice, one strident snarl, one twisted mouth of outrage and of slander bared forever to the imperturbable and immortal skies of time, one jeering tongue and rumor of man's business, fixed on the visage of the earth, and turned incredibly, and with an evil fortitude, toward depthless and indifferent space against the calm and silence of eternity.
>
> Filled with pugnacious recollection that Voice said, " 'Dis guy,' I says, 'dis friend of yoehs,' " it said, " 'dis bastad who owes me fawty bucks—dat yuh introduced me to—when's he goin' t' giv'it to me?' I says." And derisive, scornful, knowing, it would snarl: "*W'ich* guy? *W'ich* guy do yuh mean? Duh guy dat used to come in Louie's place?" And bullying and harsh it would reply: "*Yuh* don't know? . . . *Who* says so? . . . *Who* told yuh so?" And jeering, "Oh *dat* guy! . . . Is *dat* duh guy yuh mean? An' wat t' hell do I care wat he t'inks, fr Chris' sake! . . . To hell wit' him!" it said. . . .
>
> And as he listened, as he heard them, their speech could not have been more strange to him had they been people from the planet Mars.[9]

If this looks like petulance, there is at least nothing partisan about it. He takes off in the same mood against the poverty of a certain type of Southern speech: "Hey, theah, you all! Wheah you been! Come *on*, heah, man!"[10] The South would not quite do either because for one thing it was tied up with history, which had no appeal to Wolfe. This marks a significant difference between his work and that of William Faulkner, in so many ways parallel. The best of Faulkner derives from the past, which is often more exciting and more real than the present. In the Sartoris family, the ghost of Colonel John Sartoris, veteran of Second Manassas, is "a far more palpable presence" than members of the living family. All of this is unimaginable in Wolfe, who would have treated the idea of Sartoris with deep irony. As a consequence, his work lacks the grand effect that comes from a brush with history, but on the other hand it gains in immediacy. He is more honest than Faulkner, more directly engaged with the present, without the built-in attitudes of the past. To Eugene Gant, Charleston was a dead city, in need of Northern capital. The past was charade. "By heaven, as long as one true Southern heart is left alive to remember Appomattox, Reconstruction, and the Black parliaments, we will defend with our dearest blood our menaced, but sacred, traditions. . . . He brushed a tear from his een."[11]

---

[9] Thomas Wolfe, *Of Time and the River* (New York, 1935), pp. 417-418.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 217.
[11] Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel* (New York, 1930), pp. 366-367.

However, the essence of Wolfe's manner is paradox. As he laughed at Charleston aristocrats, he subscribed wholly to their social views, striking out with particular fervor at the levelling tendency of his time, which he looked on as a sign of decay.

> Our constitution has perpetrated the most damnable political theory ever conceived—namely that men are created equal. Now, I appeal to your judgment, to your good hard sense—did you ever see two people who were equal in any respect? . . . Furthermore, we Southerners more than anyone else, recognize the falsity of the doctrine in practice at any rate, while defending it hypocritically in practice. Do we admit the equality of the negro? Do we give him the vote? . . . Yet yearly we are bringing hundreds of thousands of inferior people, the Latin races, undeveloped physically, dwarfed mentally, into this country. From them we grow the American of tomorrow—"the hope of the world." It is impossible to regard them without a sinking of the heart. How can anything good come from it?[12]

These unresolved sympathies indicate not only that Wolfe was no thinker but that he never organized his feelings either, as Faulkner did in the best of his writing about the South. If one would find the heart of Wolfe's allegiance, he must not look to the South *or* America, vague configurations that take in too much, but to the hills of North Carolina, where Asheville, as he once said, had the good sense to be built.

Asheville itself was not the place; it was the hills beyond in Yancey County, where his mother's people came from, the Southern hill people, more subject to derisive treatment than any other in the national life. Wolfe respected them. His father, as a Northerner, is a strange element in his fiction, as he must have been in actual life. A striking, dynamic figure who stomps his way through *Look Homeward, Angel*—C. Hugh Holman calls him the central character[13]—W. O. Gant is not at home in Altamont or with his own family, or in the imagination of Thomas Wolfe, though Wolfe made a genuine effort to understand his father and assimilate his influence. He began his first novel with a sketch of his early life in southern Pennsylvania and later visited that country to inquire about his relations and perhaps write a book about them. He liked the idea of Pennsylvania—and of the North and America—but his heart warmed only to one place. It was the mother who won in that long battle between W. O. and Eliza Gant. He loved his father but was the child

---

[12] *Thomas Wolfe's Letters to His Mother*, ed. John Skally Terry (New York, 1943), pp. 58-59.

[13] C. Hugh Holman, "The Loneliness at the Core," *New Republic*, CXXXIII (October 10, 1955), 17.

of his mother, who became the most important influence in his life and inspiration for the most complex of his creations.

Eliza Gant is the great character she is because of Wolfe's mixed feelings towards his mother. He hated her grasping nature, possessiveness, and seeming indifference toward anything that cannot be bought and sold, but understood her compulsion and the hard front she put up to the world and pitied her starved emotions. He was her youngest; she nursed him till he was more than three years old and slept with him till he was nine and continued to mother and look after him even after he left home. "For every cent I spend," he wrote in 1925, "I am, at the present time, absolutely dependent on my mother."[14] She sent him money after he went to work in New York and helped him out in the junkets about Europe. She rescued her son, she liked to think, from a degrading love affair—with his full consent—for he took her side in that meeting of mother and mistress in the New York flat. She met his train in Chicago on his way back east to die, with a sack of fall peaches from the trees at home; and a few days later accompanied him to the operating room in Baltimore. And finally, back home, she stood by his coffin all day talking about him in her tearless, matter-of-fact way. "She seems to be the most completely fearless and independent person I have ever known," Wolfe said in 1932. "Her courage is of an absolutely spontaneous and natural kind which is not even conscious of itself. She has endured the most crushing blows in life without any suggestion of ever giving in to them and with no idea that there was anything else to do except to endure them and live through them."[15]

If he had been uncritical, he could not have written about her so well. He felt no such ambivalence towards the other members of the family, who appear as one-dimensional with some overriding trait of character: W. O.'s oaths and outrage, Steve's bravado, Luke's stutter, and Helen's devotion to her father. But Wolfe goes beyond Dickensian trappings in Eliza's character. Whenever she appears, the reader, like Eugene, is at odds with himself. As Ben lies dying, she never lets up in the boarding-house routine or in the one passion of her life, real estate speculation. "Why only day before yesterday," says Mabel, "when his temperature was 104, she was talking to old Doctor Doak about a lot. Did you know that?" And a moment later: "Poor old mama. She'll never get over this."[16]

The long account of Ben's death is the finest scene in Wolfe and one of the finest in American literature. There is nothing in Faulkner

---

[14] *The Letters of Thomas Wolfe*, ed. Elizabeth Nowell, pp. 97-98.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 341.
[16] *Look Homeward, Angel*, pp. 543-544.

that stirs the depths in quite the same way. The mother, rejected by the dying boy, loitering about the sick room in a dirty frock—"Did you see it? It's filthy"—and the final admittance and conflicting attitudes of the family toward her: these are details provided by the author's experience, but only a great artist could use them to such effect.

> All by unspoken consent stook back in the shadows and Eliza repossessed the flesh to which she had given birth.
>
> And Eliza, now that he could deny her no longer, now that his fierce bright eyes could no longer turn from her in pain and aversion, sat near his head beside him, clutching his cold hand between her rough worn palms.
>
> She did not seem conscious of the life around her. She seemed under a powerful hypnosis: she sat very stiff and erect in her chair, her white face set stonily, her dull black eyes fixed upon the gray cold face. . . .
>
> "Mama!" Eugene whispered. "Mama!"
>
> He touched her. She made no response.
>
> "Mama! Mama!"
>
> She sat there stiffly and primly like a little child.
>
> Swarming pity rose in him. Gently, desperately he tried to detach her fingers from Ben's hand. Her rough clasp on the cold hand tightened. Then, slowly, stonily, from right to left, without expression, she shook her head.
>
> He fell back, beaten, weeping, before that implacable gesture.[17]

In the portrait of Eliza, Wolfe not only reflects the ambivalence he felt towards home but dramatizes the loyalty that triumphs over these conflicting emotions. Whether or not he could live at home again in peace, his imagination always went back there for values against which life in the rest of the world was judged. Home was permanence and stability; all else was shifting sand. "As I walk through the crowded and noisy streets of this immense city and look at the dark swarthy faces of Jew, Italians, Greeks, and all the people of the New America that is roaring up around us here, I realize more keenly than ever that I come from the old Americans—the people who settled the country, who fought its wars, who pushed westward."[18]

This prejudice never devolves in Wolfe, as it does in Faulkner, into regional bias. He found the Southerner "a better fellow" than the Northerner, "quieter, kinder, slower, and less offensive."[19] but refused to be-

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 555-556.

[18] *Letters of Thomas Wolfe*, ed. Elizabeth Nowell, p. 197.

[19] *Thomas Wolfe's Letters to His Mother*, p. 118.

come the cultural curiosity the Southerner often became in the North, falling into the stereotype cut out of him. He was too honest in the first place, and then he cared little for the South as an idea. What he did care about was the folk heritage of his people in North Carolina. He came from yeoman stock, the hill-country farmers of the Old South, whose "Southernness" was inadvertent since most of them had no slaves to fight for and no grand image to sustain. And yet unawares, says W. J. Cash, their lives were molded by an image. They took from aristocracy only what could fit with their homespun qualities, yet what they took they made their own, "a kindly courtesy, a level-eyed pride, an easy quietness, a barely perceptible flourish of bearing, which for all its obvious angularity and fundamental plainness, was one of the finest things the Old South produced."[20] Andrew Jackson and John C. Calhoun were products of this class and in Wolfe's state Zebulon Pike, as well as the Pentlands and Joyners of Wolfe's fiction. And of course Thomas Wolfe himself. What is the misery of George Webber in New York drawing rooms but the fierce, hurt pride of the Southern hill-country out of its element?

In what is still one of the best studies of Wolfe, Floyd C. Watkins makes the point that in his last years, Wolfe returned to his home country with what seems to have been for him a new approach to the writing of fiction. *The Hills Beyond* is not autobiographical in the way the novels are.[21] The stories of this volume are about a people—as the novels are about an individual. He likes the country, Zebulon County he calls it, and writes about it for its own sake, not just as it happens to strike one tormented young man. When he came back to Asheville in 1936, "some deep, unreasoning urge" took him first to the region his mother's people came from, and in the village of Burnsville in Yancey County one Saturday night he witnessed a brawl that resulted in killing of a distant kinsman. The incident appears in *The Hills Beyond*, with first a nostalgic account of how Eugene Gant arrived in Zebulon, the "lost world" that shaped "the very clay of his mother's ancestral earth."

> And all at once he heard his mother's voice echo across the years: "Son! Son! . . . Where are you, boy? I'll vow—where has the boy gone?" And with it came faint echoes of the bell that came and went like cloud shadows passing on a hill, and like the lost voices of his kinsmen in the mountains long ago.[22]

---

[20] W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1951), p. 70.
[21] Floyd C. Watkins, *Thomas Wolfe's Characters* (Norman, 1957), p. 133 ff.
[22] Thomas Wolfe, *The Hills Beyond* (New York, 1943), p. 122.

Then the author bows out and gives the stage over to his characters. "The account here," says Watkins, "is almost as bare and stark as it would have been if Hemingway had written it."[23]

The drama of North Carolina history was focused for Wolfe in Governor Vance, who represented the mountain country in a power struggle with seaboard privilege. Although old Zachariah Joyner, Wolfe's fictional version of Governor Vance, could trace his pedigree to respectable origins, he had "a magnificent quality of Nowness" that led to ascendancy over the backward-looking followers of the Lost Colony. And he and his people were *what* they were because of *where* they were.[24] In this fact lies the core of Wolfe's loyalty; it was place that made the Southern mountain man what he was. In this respect, Wolfe was in agreement with Old South apologist Thomas Nelson Page, with whom he otherwise had little in common. Page points out that the Saxon on his first settlement in England, as soon as a footing was made good, selected a hill or a grove near a spring and was prepared to defend it to the death; and the same instinct survives, adds Page, among his descendants in the South. While the people in the North settled in communities, the Southerners preferred the independence of an isolated freehold. "They were habituated to rule, to ride, to shoot, and to maintain their rights."[25]

This is the people that Wolfe came home to in the stories of *The Hills Beyond.* The feud he witnessed in Burnsville—he was later called as a witness in the trial—was only a dramatic reminder of the fierce quality of his ancestors, which he admired even while fearing it. He might not be able to live comfortably among such people, but understood them and felt that underneath he was one of them. These men who take the law into their own hands—one is reminded of Beat Four of Yoknapatawpha County—are "almost the most devout in their respect for it." This paradox is part of the South, says Wolfe in a discursive moment, and applies to all ranks of society.[26] Faulkner respects the outlaw Gowries, literary descendants of Scottish Highlanders, but remains ambiguous about the violence of Beat Four. Wolfe's spiritual home is Zebulon County.

But the town of Asheville is another matter. It meant something to Wolfe too, of course—the house and garden, the sights and sounds and smells of childhood, certain people; but what tourist's child could not have had the same experience? To the adult Wolfe, Asheville was only an appendage to the hills that range out in all directions, from which

---

[23] Watkins, p. 135.

[24] *The Hills Beyond,* p. 212.

[25] Thomas Nelson Page, *The Old Dominion* (New York, 1910), p. 242.

[26] *The Hills Beyond,* p. 252.

came the voice of great-uncle Bacchus, "impregnant with all time and memory, and in it suggestive overtones of the voices of lost kinsmen long ago: 'I knowed him the minute that I seed him, Liza—for he looks like you.' "[27] During the long period of his exile, Wolfe declared that he was never homesick for Asheville but for "the great and marvellous hills of North Carolina." His feeling was "for the land, my blood kin."[28]

At home for the last time in the summer of 1937, he happened to meet Scott Fitzgerald, who told him he was wasting his time in North Carolina. Wolfe replied that the only real life for him was to be found among the people he knew, his old Uncle John Westall, for example, who gave him the Civil War story "Chickamauga."[29] This was a bone of contention when the two first met in Europe. According to Fitzgerald, whose agreeable sophistication put Wolfe on the defensive, Americans have no sense of place, and he himself had no feeling whatever for the part of the country he came from. These were fighting words that set Wolfe off in denunciation of the whole expatriate movement, for whom, according to fellow-Southerner Katherine Anne Porter, nothing worked "except sex and alcohol and pulling apart their lamentable Midwestern upbringings."[30] Wolfe called them "futility boys and girls, the stealthy lasses, the elegant mockers, the American T. S. Elioters . . . a low but vilely cunning lot of bastards."[31] They were the ones, he wrote in *You Can't Go Home Again*, to whom nothing was left but an encyclopedic sneer—a sneer at everything American.[32]

These outbursts helped bring him closer to home, even while he continued to live in Europe or Manhattan. There was too much pose in the West Bank crowd, and Wolfe was incorrigibly honest, often to his own as well as others' discomfort. He would have nothing to do with the Nashville Agrarians of *I'll Take My Stand*, whom he found cut off from the very life they wanted to preserve by pretentiousness and concern with aesthetics. The academic world, he said, has created "its own race of men who are set apart from the rest of humanity by the affinity of their souls."[33] He despised intellectuals, for to be intellectual, he said, "is a vastly different thing from being intelligent."[34] He loved the common people and identified with them—not the mankind of Whitman's rhapsodies, but a particular people in a particular place. And his de-

---

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
[28] *Letters of Thomas Wolfe*, ed. Elizabeth Nowell, p. 230.
[29] Watkins, p. 3.
[30] Katherine Anne Porter, *The Days Before* (New York, 1952), p. 44.
[31] *Letters of Thomas Wolfe*, ed. Elizabeth Nowell, p. 275.
[32] Thomas Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again* (New York, 1940), p. 610.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 554.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 409.

votion grew in the last decade of his life as he witnessed the growing patronage of the region now known as Appalachia by academicians, humanitarians, and social planners.

> The people! To be gloated over by exultant Ph.D's (who find in mountain shacks the accents of Elizabeth); to be gawked at by tourists (now the roads are good) in search of the rare picturesque; to be yearned over by consecrated school-marms "from the North"; have their "standards" "improved" by social service workers, who dote upon the squalor, ignorance, and poverty; lasciviously regret the degradations of the people's lot, and who do valiantly their little bit (God bless their little, little souls!) to help the people, teach the people, prop the people, *heal* the people, with their little salves (not, too completely, else what are little salves and social service work about?)—and who therefore (in spite of dirt, filth, rickets, murder, lean-tos, children, syphilis, hunger, incest, and pellagra) love the people, adore the people, see underneath their "drawbacks" and their "lack of opportunities" all "the good" in people—because the people, at the bottom, "are so fine."
>
> It is a lie! . . . Dear God! . . . Dear Jesus God, protect us, all men living, and the people, from such stuff as this![35]

Katherine Anne Porter once took issue with Wolfe's dictum about going home again. Of course one returns, she said; we do it all the time.[36] Wolfe meant going home in the body to pick up an old pattern of living, impossible he felt in his case, in part because of the way he had written about his neighbors. When he returned years later after old antipathies had died down, he found for various reasons that life was more livable, at least for him, away from home. Many Southerners have had this experience, including Miss Porter, who has long been an exile from South Texas. What she meant, of course, was a return through the imagination, and she was right. Wolfe wrote hundreds of pages about the world beyond Old Catawba, many of them memorable—Eugene's experience at Harvard and as a teacher in New York, the party at Jack's, *Oktoberfest* in Munich, the ramble in England based on a visit with Sinclair Lewis—but memorable in a negative way. For the most part, Wolfe is the plaintiff presenting a case. He is, for the moment, caught up by the death spirit himself, which he hated, and swept away by the eloquence of dissent. And so his writing about the outside world seems finally trivial or

---

[35] *The Hills Beyond*, pp. 238-239.

[36] Katherine Anne Porter, *Recent Southern Fiction: A Panel Discussion* (Wesleyan College, Macon, Georgia, Oct. 28, 1960), p. 10.

somehow irrelevant. He hated a lot at home too, but *Look Homeward, Angel* is a book about life, not death.

There are those who like to think had he lived, he would have joined the outside world, adjusted to his age, and got rid of the "gant-i-ness" of his nature. As a result of the second World War, says B. R. McElderry, Jr. in the Twayne biography, he would have espoused cooperation with the Russians, put his hopes in the United Nations, and lived down his wayward racial attitudes. In short, he would have written to please the critical establishment of the second half of the century.[37] But for those who respond in an almost physical way to Wolfe's writing about his home country, it is hard to imagine his blood thinned down in this fashion. He would have hated the novels of today, says Pamela Hansford Johnson, where the action lies in an unspecified country, where people bear "careful, middling names that might belong to the nomenclature of any race," and where the thoughts expressed are bland and unoffensive. "He postulates always a certain country, a certain man; thickens his pages not with symbols, or with types, but with huge and terrifying and adorable human beings." [38]

Wolfe did most of his writing away from home, but wherever he wrote and whatever he wrote about, there was never any doubt about where he came from. "If you explore your own back-yard carefully enough and compare it with all the other things you find out, you may some day find out what the whole earth is like."[39] His genius was anchored in place. In 1934, he asked his mother to write down the branches of her family tree—he had a big book in mind that he "might wind the whole thing up with"[40]—and he liked to speculate with her about buying land in Yancey County, "where all your folks came from."[41] If he had lived on, whatever he might have written would have been cast in the large perspective, because he had lived too much in the world to concern himself with what is solely regional. But his heart was *in* a region, which he had only begun to explore.

---

[37] B. R. McElderry, Jr., *Thomas Wolfe* (New York, 1964), p. 152.
[38] Pamela Hansford Johnson, *The Art of Thomas Wolfe*, p. 134.
[39] *Thomas Wolfe's Letters to His Mother*, p. 294.
[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 292-293.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 275.

WINTER ON THE PIEDMONT

Tonight we watch the process of our talk
In sliding doors so black they mirror us;
Two worlds recording gestures that we see
Reflected as from underneath a pool.

Outside, the wind is sawing through pines,
Exhausting the single-running mind
That strains to measure everything it hears
Cold and sharp under winter stars.

It saws all night, and I sleep in a draft
Dreaming of evergreens on the piedmont,
Their boughs reflected in a running stream
That flows from caves yet, going, remains

With fish suspended like Chagall's,
Like kites strung flying from the touch.
The fixtures of a windy, falling dream
With heads reflecting in a broken shaft

That empties out of darkness,
I dream the blind eyes of white fish are stars
Sketched across a perfect screen
Framing memory into light.

—Wyatt Prunty

Beginning in the fall of 1978, *The Southern Quarterly,* published by the University of Southern Mississippi, will concentrate on studies of the arts in the South. The editor invites essays, articles and book reviews on both contemporary and earlier literature, music, art, architecture, popular and folk arts, theatre and dance. Particularly sought for the first issue are survey papers on the arts and arts criticism — achievements, trends, movements, colonies. Special issues are being prepared on Elvis Presley and Walker Percy. Inquiries and suggestions should be addressed to the *Southern Quarterly,* Box 78, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS 39401.

JAMES DICKEY'S ARROW OF DELIVERANCE

PAUL STRONG

> The mind of man is capable of anything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future.
>
> —Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Among many surprising events in *Deliverance*, surely none is more unexpected than Ed Gentry's self-wounding. It is a turn of the screw that takes the reader unawares for it occurs just when Dickey seems to have established Ed as something of a hero. Bobby has been raped, Drew has disappeared, Lewis has broken his leg. Alone, Ed manages to scale the cliff; only he achieves the self-mastery necessary to merge minds with the mountain-man, to imagine his precise movements. Then, at the novel's climax, he shoots his quarry only to tumble head over heels from the tree in which he has been hidden and become impaled on his own arrow. Why this anomalous self-wounding should occur when it does, or why it should occur at all, is not readily apparent.

A partial explanation is suggested by C. G. Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*. In a chapter entitled "The Battle for Deliverance from the Mother" Jung discusses a Nietzsche poem in which the hero is pierced by his own arrow: "The deadly arrows do not strike the hero from without, but it is he himself who, in disharmony with himself, hunts, fights and tortures himself. Within himself will has turned against will, libido against libido—therefore, the poet says, 'Pierced through thyself,' that is to say, wounded by his own arrow. It is a phallic act of union with one's self, a sort of self-fertilization."[1] The coincidence of such peculiar motifs as phallic union and self-inflicted arrow wounds makes one wonder the extent to which the Jungian psychology of the unconscious underlies *Deliverance*. Surely it is not surprising that a novel whose title betokens rebirth and which has as its main action a river journey to uncharted regions, a journey from which the hero returns wounded but enlightened, should suggest such a reading.

In *Self-Interviews* Dickey has said, "What I want more than anything else is to have a feeling of wholeness."[2] By wholeness he means a "property of mind which, if encouraged, could have this personally ani-

---

[1] C. G. Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, trans. Beatrice M. Hinkle (New York: Moffat, Yard and Co., 1916), p. 329.

[2] James Dickey, *Self-Interviews*, eds. Barbara and James Reiss (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1970), p. 68.

mistic relationship to things." Aware that "we can't return to a primitive society" Dickey states:

> I go out on the side of a hill, maybe hunting deer, and sit there and see the shadow of night coming over the hill, and I can swear to you there is a part of me that is absolutely untouched by anything civilized. There's a part of me that has never heard of a telephone. By an act of will I can call up the whole past which includes telephones, but there is a half-dreaming, half-animal part of me that is fundamentally primitive. . . . It's what gives us a personal relationship to the sun and the moon, the flow of rivers, the growth and decay of natural forms, and the cycles of death and rebirth.[3]

This bears an obvious relationship to one of Jung's basic tenets:

> . . . we, in childhood, go through a period in which the impulses toward . . . archaic inclinations appear again and again, and that through all our life we possess, side by side with the newly recruited, directed and adapted thought, a phantastic thought which corresponds to the thought of the centuries of antiquity and barbarism. Just as our bodies still keep the reminders of old functions and conditions in many old-fashioned organs, so our minds, too, which apparently have outgrown those archaic tendencies, nevertheless bear the marks of the evolution passed through, and the very ancient re-echoes, at least dreamily, in phantasies.[4]

In fact, argues Jung, it is precisely modern man's lost ability for "phantastic thought," the loss of contact with his "primitive self," that is a major cause of civilization's discontent:

> To-day there are countless neurotics who are so simply because they do not know how to seek happiness in their own manner. They do not even realize where the lack lies. And besides these neurotics there are many more normal people—and precisely people of the higher type—who feel restricted and discontented. For all these reduction to the sexual elements should be undertaken, in order that they may be reinstated into the possession of their primitive self, and thereby learn to know and value its relation to the entire personality.[5]

In *Deliverance* reinstatement "into the possession of [the] primitive self" occurs when Ed Gentry's two arrows reach their targets simultaneously

---

[3] Dickey, *Self-Interviews*, pp. 68-69.

[4] Jung, p. 35.

[5] Jung, pp. 259-260.

—one striking the mountain man external to him; the other, piercing his side, renewing awareness of the primitive self within.

Yet Dickey's novel is not simply a self-conscious secret sharer tale, for *Deliverance* concerns spiritual harmony as well as psychic integration. In the last piece of dialogue in the novel, Lewis Medlock refers to the Zen Buddhist understanding of archery: "I think my release is passing over into Zen."[6] The reference is significant to the emblem of the archer pierced by his own arrow.

As Eugen Herrigel has explained in *Zen in the Art of Archery,* the Japanese view archery not as a sport but as a religious ritual, in which the Zen archer undertakes a series of spiritual exercises designed to free him of his self and attune his mind to its unconscious sources. Such training is necessary if the archer is to "loose" a shot correctly, for correct physical loosing of the arrow can only be achieved after mental and spiritual loosening. Then "the hitter and the hit are no longer two opposing objects, but are one reality. The archer ceases to be conscious of himself as the one who is engaged in hitting the bull's-eye which confronts him."[7] "By the 'art' of archery [the Japanese] does not mean the ability of the sportsman, which can be controlled, more or less, by bodily exercises, but an ability whose origin is to be sought in spiritual exercises and whose aim consists in hitting a spiritual goal, so that fundamentally the marksman aims at himself and may even succeed in hitting himself."[8] Thus for Jung, the Zen Master, and Dickey, inner harmony is metaphorically achieved when the archer is impaled on his own arrow, the arrow of deliverance.

Our first view of Ed Gentry is of a man out of touch with both inner and outer worlds. His physical environment, an ad-agency working on the "Shadow-Row Shell Homes" account, has no connection with the reality he will soon experience. Led daily down a walled-in corridor of glass to his studio, Ed is imprisoned by fear. Indistinguishable from the "affable gray men" he employs, he finds himself "not really thinking about their being my prisoners, but of being my own" (p. 17). City life has shielded him from Nature's cycles. Walking from tavern to agency, he notes, "It was the first time I had realized that autumn was close" (p. 15). On the first day of the trip he stands "looking at one of the few dawns I had seen in the last ten years" (pp. 29-30). Such currents as the Cahulawassee River, a "supernatural source of primal energy" (p. 224), have been domesticated and reduced by civilization to "a modern foun-

---

[6] James Dickey, *Deliverance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), p. 278. Subsequent references to this edition will appear in the text.

[7] Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery,* trans. R. C. Hull (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), p. 10.

[8] Herrigel, p. 18.

tain full of dimes and pennies" (p. 16). If contact with the river will eventually "kill" (p. 186) his watch, freeing him to partake of the immortality of natural energy, Ed, before his encounter with the Cahulawassee, finds himself "time-terrified" (p. 18).

Indeed, much of his routine life functions in the novel as a contrast to the truly terrifying events to come. In the suburban world of women, for instance, the need for lubricant and the ambiguous posture of Ed's rear-entry sexual union with his wife serve to contrast starkly with the painful, male-only sexual activity in the wilderness. Likewise, the appearance of Dean rising from behind the camping equipment, stalking the living room, waving Ed's sheathed bowie knife parodies the meeting that will soon occur with the knife-wielding mountain-men. Thus it is not difficult to understand why, surrounded by "gray and bald heads," serenaded by Muzak's "Vienna Blood" (p. 16), Ed could not "feel my heart beat, though at that moment I wanted to" (p. 18).

Ed's insulation from the physical world is matched by ignorance of his inner world. At least, he seems only vaguely aware: "There was something about me that usually kept me from dreaming, or maybe kept me from remembering what I had dreamed" (p. 25). Dickey makes clear that by entering the river world Ed will come face to face with his darkest impulses, those repressed in daylight, city life. When first boarding the canoe he experiences "the feeling I always had at the moment of losing consciousness at night, going toward something unknown that I could not avoid, but from which I would return" (p. 73). Paradoxically, Ed's encounter with the stuff of his dreams constitutes an awakening. It is significant that the first and second days of the trip literally begin with Ed awakening and that "After" begins, "When I woke up." Indeed so much of the trip partakes of a dream-like quality (especially the cliff-climbing episode) that Ed's last utterance on September 16—"I lay awake all night in brilliant sleep"—acts as a coda for the entire trip.

For Ed's awakening, his contact with the buried self, can occur only after he relinquishes the very self-control which has caused his imprisonment. That Ed has such potential is demonstrated by his experience with the Kitt'n Britches model. Although clad in artificial silk underwear (synthetic, like Ed's nylon flying suit) she is a product of the farm world, the world beyond the city. And, unlike the women of suburban Georgia, secretaries and file clerks with "hair styles, piled and shellacked and swirled and horned, and almost every one stiff" (p. 15) who fill Ed with desolation, the model's hair is "free of her neck," and her legs are "very shapely and harmonious." More significant is the gold-glowing mote in her eye, "more gold than any real gold could possibly be," the gold eye which reappears on Martha's back during lovemaking, the eye Ed identifies with "another life, deliverance" (p. 28). It is precisely Ed's poten-

tial to respond to this eye, a precursor of the many eyes which appear in the novel—all related to the "bull's-eye" of the spiritual target—that implies Ed's potential for a unified mode of vision, "beholding," and thus his deliverance. Although Ed has repressed his artistic capacities, denied the George Holley within himself, such potential does in fact exist. Unlike Bobby, Ed is not merely a "pleasant surface human being" (p. 8), a hollow man. For with the vision of the gold eye before him, a vision he has himself created, the rest of the afternoon is spent brainstorming.

The unguarded free-association of ideas that brainstorming implies is an appropriate way for Ed to prepare for his first encounter with the free-flowing river and the interior journey described by Jung:

> When the libido leaves the bright upper world, whether from the decision of the individual or from decreasing life force, then it sinks back into its own depths, into the source from which it has gushed forth, and turns back to that point of cleavage, the umbilicus, through which it once entered into this body. This point of cleavage is called the mother, because from her comes the source of the libido. Therefore, when some great work is to be accomplished, before which weak man recoils, doubtful of his strength, his libido returns to that source—and this is the dangerous moment, in which the decision takes place between annihilation and new life. If the libido remains arrested in the wonder kingdom of the inner world, then the man has become for the world above a phantom, then he is practically dead or desperately ill. But if the libido succeeds in tearing itself loose and pushing up into the world above, then a miracle appears. This journey to the underworld has been a fountain of youth, and new fertility springs from his apparent death.[9]

Although the return to the mother is more familiar, Dickey seems to favor a lesser known rebirth pattern. Specifically, the trip from Oree to Aintry with its suggestion of oral to anal implies an interior journey with the anus as source of deliverance. Jung cites the precedent of Chiwantopel, an "unconscious personality" who arrives as "a sort of human creation or birth by the anal route.[10] *Deliverance* is in fact filled with references to the oral/anal, the first occurring on the drive to the Cahulawassee: "We hummed along, borne with the inverted canoe on a long tide of patent medicines and religious billboards. From such a trip you would think that the South did nothing but dose itself and sing gospel songs; you would think that the bowels of the southerner were forever clamped shut; that he could not open and let natural process flow through him, but needed one purgative after another in order to make

[9] Jung, pp. 330-331.
[10] Jung, p. 214.

it to church" (p. 38). Ed's musings take on the mantle of prophecy, for Bobby's rape will be followed, apparently, by an act of oral sex. The primary use of the oral/anal motif is to monitor Ed's gradually increased willingness to let "the natural process flow through him." Only after he has killed the mountain-man and totally abdicated the control that has imprisoned him does he feel the river current "thread through me, first through my head from one ear and out the other and then complicatedly through my body, up my rectum and out my mouth" (p. 208). At novel's end the river's energy is internalized and runs "nowhere but in [Ed's] head" (p. 275). The rebirth pattern then in two senses centers on a "gut-survival situation" (p. 49) in which the Cahulawassee baptizes and purges.

Other patterns concerned with psychic/spiritual liberation are introduced in the novel's opening sentence: "It unrolled slowly, forced to show its colors, curling and snapping back whenever one of us turned loose." Literally, the sentence describes Lewis, Ed, Drew and Bobby in a suburban bar trying to flatten a map under their beer steins. Symbolically, just as the river journey progresses from peaceful deer shooting to dangerous manhunt, from laconic currents to fearful rapids, the map "shows its colors" only when forced to. That it "snaps back" portends the action of the bowstring when loosed; its curling and snapping also suggest serpentine activity. As we will see, "Helms County" Georgia with its soon to be "dammed" river is characterized by snake imagery. Most significant, the "curling and snapping back whenever one of us turned loose" hints at the many difficulties Ed will encounter attempting to "turn loose" and achieve oneness with "It."

To "turn loose" becomes one of the novel's central metaphors, for Ed's advancing abilities as canoeist and archer provide an index of his mental and spiritual growth. As the Zen Master explains to his questioner:

> "How can the shot be loosed if 'I' do not do it?"
> " 'It' shoots," he replied.
> "I have heard you say that several times before,
> so let me put it another way: How can I wait
> self-obliviously for the shot if 'I' am no
> longer there?"
> " 'It' waits at the highest tension."
> "And who or what is this 'It'?"
> "Once you have understood that, you will have
> no further need of me."[11]

[11] Herrigel, p. 76.

Dickey seems almost to allude to this colloquy in *Deliverance:* " 'OK,' Lew said. 'Turn loose.' I did; they floated free. . . . I got one foot out of the mud by driving the other one about twice as far down, and then grabbed a long branch and pulled myself up as best I could with the river holding on to me hard by the left leg. 'It's got me,' I said. 'What's got you?' 'It' " (p. 72). This dialogue, occurring when Ed first steps into the Cahulawassee and floats freely in his canoe, establishes one connection between "turning loose" and encountering "It." Dickey has prepared carefully for this turning loose. When Lewis explains to Ed, "I am what I choose to be, and I am it," he adds: "It feels right, like when you turn loose the arrow, and you know when you let go that you've done everything right. You know where the arrow is going. There's not any other place that it can go" (p. 50). In his role as Ed's mentor Lewis has something of the Zen master in him, for through his repeated encounters with the wilderness he has achieved that inner harmony Ed lacks. The measure of their difference is most apparent in the ease with which Lewis kills the mountain-man, holding his bow at full draw "for at least a minute"; Ed cannot even shoot a deer, missing because of a failure at "just that little second, right when I turned loose" (p. 98). Not until he has climbed the cliff will Ed, "in touch" with inner and outer worlds, achieve a mastery of the bow permitting him to shoot the second mountain-man. At this point he can literally "turn [the bow] loose" (p. 204) by throwing it over the cliff, for he has nothing more to learn from it.

Ed's mastery of the bow finds its parallel in his mastery of the canoe. Like his arrows, the canoe that plays a central role in the novel is made of aluminum. Like his arrows, its target is "Circle Gap." Archery and canoeing terminology even intermingle when Ed turns his "bow, and we swung, swung and jumped shooting into the hole" (p. 224). The identification is most overt when Ed wonders "if I should tell whatever doctor dressed it that I had gored myself on my own arrow, or that I had cut myself on the canoe when we turned over, since there were several places on it where the banging around it had taken on the rocks had forced the metal apart and made flanges and projections that might conceivably cut" (p. 232).

Ed's first attempts at both archery and canoeing are awkward and unsuccessful. Only when he feels control sliding away does he achieve oneness with the Cahulawassee such as Dickey alludes to in his poem "Inside the 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.[12]

No longer fighting the bow, the canoe, or the river, Ed learns to flow with the current like the snake he has seen earlier, "a thing with a single spell, a single movement, and no barriers" (p. 106).

To partake of the snake's singleness is to come to a full awareness of the primitive self. In the "Kingdom of Snakes" Ed learns that coexisting with his city-self, a "light green, a tall forest man, an explorer, guerrilla" (p. 69), is "Bolgani the Gorilla" (p. 103), the dark hairy "fucking ape" (p. 112/p. 266) apparent to rapist and sheriff. Drew, salesman of soft drinks and city values, is unable to accept this aspect of himself; his eyes open to its reality only as he sits facing upstream, imbibing the river's flow—in death. But Ed meets Helms County on its own terms and gradually recognizes not only the snake within but the capacity for evil it implies. Like the mountain-men who have "no need to justify or rationalize anything; they were going to do what they wanted to" (p. 114). Ed, with civilized restraint removed, realizes, "you can do what you want to; nothing is too terrible. I can cut off the genitals he was going to use on me. Or I can cut off his head, looking straight into his open eyes. Or I can eat him" (p. 200). Like Marlow considering Kurtz's unspeakable practices, Ed recognizes this to be "the ultimate horror" (p. 200). Yet at the same time he finally comes to grips with that part of the psyche that civilization tries to bury (even as the Cahulawassee itself will soon be dammed).

Ed's recognition of an essential oneness with the mountain-man occurs after he realizes that to save Lewis and Bobby he must become so inward with the man's being that he can anticipate his every action. By acting as "if it were me" (p. 173), by fusing minds, he comes to understand the darkness of the heart he shares with this adversary. As if to confirm the validity of his new knowledge the mountain-man appears just where Ed imagined he would. "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: the peep sight and the alleyway of needles" (p. 191). The sexual suggestiveness of this description hints that the scene is meant as an inversion of the earlier rape scene—only this time it is Ed who turns loose. For now he will come face to face with his darkest impulses—murder—sodomy—cannibalism. It is

[12] James Dickey, *Drowning With Others* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1962), p. 91.

precisely at this moment that he falls from the tree and is impaled on his own arrow. For as Jung says: "It is our own repressed and unrecognized desires which fester like arrows in our flesh."[13] Having recognized and accepted these impulses Ed cuts loose the arrow to find "there had never been a freedom like it" (p. 195). Crawling on all fours, knife between his teeth, he finds the dead man and, in a manner familiar to anthropologists, appropriates his powers, recalling "the pose by the river in which I had most wanted to kill him. He now had that same relaxed, enjoying look of belonging anywhere he happened to be, and particularly in the woods" (p. 199). His complete identity with the mountain-man is dramatized in several ways. Like Drew instinctively merging musical skills with the albino boy, Ed begins to sing, then dances a "bloody clog step" (p. 203) mirroring the "clog step" danced by Bobby's rapist (p. 117). Finally, realizing that Bobby's cowardice has prevented the agreed upon dash for freedom, Ed, like the rapist before him, perceives Bobby as an "asshole" (p. 201) and actually sights down the mountain-man's rifle, very nearly pulling the trigger.

Ed's final metamorphosis occurs in a hospital setting, his only companion a "snakebite case" (p. 238). Snakelike himself, Ed sheds his old skin as "piece after piece of cloth, or of me, softened, softened, and came away" (p. 237). His nylon flying suit replaced by "clod-hopping brogans that linked me to the earth with every step" (p. 249), he returns to civilization and, like Marlow, lies to a dead man's beloved. His new-found inner harmony is expressed in art; his friendship renewed with George Holley, Ed creates collages based on the Cahulawassee's sinuous forms. As Lewis remarks, the key to the journey has been to give up control: "Those gooks are right. You shouldn't fight it. Better to cooperate with it. Then it'll take you there; take the arrow there" (p. 278). Like Lewis, Ed has learned not to fight "it." Bearing the arrow scar, a visible reminder of his hunt for himself, Ed has come to his own understanding of the Zen Master's words: "For this is what the art of archery means: a profound and far-reaching contest of the archer with himself. Perhaps you have hardly noticed it yet, but you will feel it very strongly when you meet your friends and acquaintances again in your own country: things will no longer harmonize as before. You will see with other eyes and measure with other measures. It has happened to me too, and it happens to all who are touched by the spirit of this art."[14]

---

[13] Jung, p. 235.

[14] Herrigel, p. 92.

THE MATHEMATICS OF IT

I figure it will be the high stack of Time,
its pieces all added together,
that will topple, finally take you from us,
not some hungry germ or new virus.

Here in the dining room of the nursing home,
I watch you chew with your own teeth
baked chicken with cornbread stuffing
and guide with untrembly hands
hot coffee — second cup,
to lips that do not dribble.

Quietly, I take out pen and pad,
begin to scribble numbers
too big to do inside my head.

One thousand one hundred and eighty-two
months.

This morning I tiptoed to your room,
amused to find you arm-testing
distances for reading the Daily News
and wondering if tomorrow you should
be checked again for eye glasses.

Thirty-five thousand nine hundred and fifty-two
days.

The nurse comes in and asks
if you have sung the old folk ballad
you entertained her with last night.
While you sing in gravelly voice
so loud we close the door,
acting out the wry humor of this tale
you knew as a boy, forgot for years,
and now welcome back,
I put down pen and pad,
stop my multiplying,
glad the happy odds already show
you'll make it to a hundred
or die trying.

GRACE FREEMAN

TWO POEMS BY BETTY ADCOCK

EXTINCTIONS

The stacked years—little finished
wingbones—gleam on a plate. Theirs
is the wrong shape for luck.
Who was it sailed in a tree,
believed in swans,
practiced flying?
Cloud heart, bony weather—
I hunched closed to the sky
with no knack and no tether,
with no way to get down and the prayer
that the ground would come closer to a failure.
I jumped clean
from the chinaberry.

Wind comes back like a foreigner,
every breath odd, darker.

I am starting again from the bottom,
a worm of pain old in my shoulder.

In the thinnest world, Andean
flutes are carved from the wingbones
of condors. Ritual breath
be song down
these corridors of broken flight.

AT LEAST

The night is older than it should be.
Dreams tumble in the surf
like children drowned under the sun
and given this black froth,
this negative of a snapshot
taken on the last day.
Across any water,
women are grieving for these.
Inland, the sound is a man sawing
his own fingers out of a jammed machine.

You must try to wake up, try
drifting out of locked edges
like smoke or conversation.
See how the broken places—
old farmhouses shedding their porches—
go on leaning toward morning!
They are climbers of the transparent mountain
against which the dark sea breaks into spume,
rain, dawn. The children.

ST. FRANCIS RECEIVES THE STIGMATA FROM A MEDIEVAL TRAVELING ALTAR

Left foreground: the gentle saint,
palms uplifted in surrender, eyes also
angled unto the pale blue alms of sky,
relaxed, right knee flexed, foot lost in habit.

Down right, and deep, swells Calvary.
Christ, gored on a thin gibbet, gives in
at last, once, to the demand of gravity:
the limbs sag from their ties,
the trunk bulges forward, the head
settles to the left, face averted.
Only the wounds ruin an expected scene.

Instead of oozing to the ground as usual,
matting the luminous body or staining
the coarse cross and parched dirt,
the blood leaps from Christ's open scars
like a high-pressure rupture, surging
in distinct scarlet streams across
a millenium of featureless land.

St. Francis is arrested in mid-prayer:
his body floats with the impact
of transfusion, the tattoo of sacrifice,
like a puppet on new, untried strings.

Centuries pass: the blood remains
taut, a miracle of coagulation. Even
the gold leaf of his little nimbus
glows, vivid red at the periphery.

MICHAEL MCFEE

DREAM OF FIRST LABOR

This place thick with knife wounds and women
from the full moon. Lovers: beatings
on linoleum that will become infanticides
before the sun at 6:00 A. M. First blood
appears at 2:00; the muscle, wood.
You contract the twenty stories of grey brick
into you.
Bag of waters intact.
Blood rare. The red arrow on the floor
you follow past the poisoned, fractured,
maimed. The smell of names on lines.
Chloroform, fluorescence;
Maldonado, Brown, and Jamirez.

You arrive at 1965 and cold.
The Audubon where they are giving mouth
to mouth to Malcolm El Shabazz.
Betty X is shouting "They killed him!"
as the Muslims wrestle with their names,
their sons and daughters, and a first degree murder.

You know the way back to the place
and bear the stretcher to the surgeons
who give up at 6:00 A. M. when you awake.
Broken, blood on your hands and gown.
The firstborn, white, anonymous. Fine
and white. Red vessels in your eyes,
her face. Too white.
There will have to be transfusions before the sun.

—Bruce Smith

REVIEWS

William B. Dillingham. *Melville's Short Fiction. 1853-1856.* Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1977, 390 pp. $16.50.

Marvin Fisher. *Going Under. Melville's Short Fiction and the American 1850s.* Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1977, xii, 216 pp. $12.50.

These two books, published within a few weeks of each other, are indication that interest in the entire body of Melville's short fiction is strong. In the early years of the Melville "revival" his shorter pieces were treated within studies which encompassed the whole of his writing and generally dismissed them as below the caliber of his longer ones. Richard H. Fogle in *Melville's Shorter Tales* (1960) was first to address himself to them alone. Subsequently a good many periodical articles focused on individual stories, often with very perceptive analysis. In 1975 came R. Bruce Bickley, Jr.'s *The Method of Melville's Short Fiction* which accorded this fiction as a whole extremely high praise. Now William B. Dillingham and Marvin Fisher come to give it stature equal to that of Melville's best long fiction.

Inevitably these two books take cognizance of what has been written previously, either in the text or (as Dillingham more often does) in notes. Inevitably, too, they recognize certain obvious relationships between pairs of stories: "The Two Temples," "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs," "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids." But they propose other comparable relationships: Fisher those between "The Piazza" and "The Encantadas," Dillingham those between "Cock-a-Doodle Doo!" "The Lightning-Rod Man," and "The Bell Tower," and both, those between "The Happy Failure" and "The Fiddler." Both discuss Melville's review of Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse* as bearing on the stories. Both agree that in these stories Melville was engaging in a kind of double-talk in which a surface meaning is disputed by one which lies underneath.

Otherwise the aims of these two books are different. As the subtitle of *Going Under* declares, Fisher is primarily concerned with relating Melville's short fiction with several cultural currents in the middle years of the nineteenth century, the time of its composition. Dillingham's study is more broadly—or perhaps more narrowly—concerned with what was happening to Melville's personal as well as artistic convictions during this time.

Both books should be read by students of Melville and up to a point they complement each other. In terms of their stated aims and the light they shed on Melville's writing, however, Dillingham's seems to be more successful. He follows the text of the first printing of the stories, for the most part in the periodicals *Harper's* and *Putnam's,* and thus is able to point out several revisions in those stories which make up *The Piazza Tales.* Fisher uses the text of Jay Leyda's edition, *The Complete Stories of Herman Melville* (1949). Probably on this account Fisher does not treat "The 'Gees," a relatively unimportant sketch not in Leyda, which Dillingham nevertheless makes relative to his thesis. Dillingham also relates the stories more often to Melville's long fiction than does Fisher. Dillingham has a final chapter entitled "Conclusion," which offers several insights which have not been put forth in quite the same terms earlier in his book. Fisher has no conclusion as such. Dillingham makes greater use than Fisher of previously published critical studies (including Fisher's own published articles).

It is Dillingham's thesis that in his shorter fiction Melville set out to *"seem* congenial, amusing, and harmless," while concealing his "profundity." His "basic

formula" was simply that "an older man reminisces in urbane fashion about some episode in his life or some eccentric character he has known or something he has once seen." These first-person narrators are (in all but two stories) "as a rule mild, domestic types, husbands and fathers or bachelors who have settled down to a staid way of life." Some of them are, however, "rebellious deep divers, others shallow and hypocritical weaklings." While recognizing that the periodicals which published Melville catered to a genteel public, Dillingham notes that by the middle 1850's Melville had already practiced concealment as a writer and that he experimented in artistic forms in almost everything he wrote, including his poetry. In these stories, as Dillingham puts it, "the story is the narrator." In consequence, for example, the narrator of "Bartleby" is a deceiver, and Bartleby is a rebel. In "The Encantadas" and "Jimmy Rose" the narrator alternates between gloom and a kind of brightness, which Dillingham thinks is a bifocal view which Melville came to have more and more. The character of Bulkington in *Moby-Dick* is an early example and the poem "Pontoosuce" is a late one. At best, he came to achieve a synthesis of both views.

Fisher's *Going Under* is chiefly concerned with Melville's attitudes as expressed in his shorter fiction with such American cultural patterns in the nineteenth century as the fate of native artists, the American "Dream," slavery and the rise of industrialism. Some of his interpretations are not altogether new; the themes of "the dehumanizing quality of industrial labor and the denial of humanity in chattel slavery" in "The Bell Tower," "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," and "Benito Cereno" have been pointed out before. The analysis of Bartleby in terms of later psychology is not altogether persuasive. As for Melville's criticism of American culture, he had expressed it before the time of his stories, notably in *Mardi* and *Pierre*. Still Fisher has written a useful book; it is good to have the stories as a whole brought together as a comment on the time in which they were written.

NATHALIA WRIGHT
University of Tennessee

Northrop Frye, *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1976, 296 pp. $11.50.

Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature: A Collection of Review Essays, ed. Robert D. Denham. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 264 pp. $13.50.

Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature and *Spiritus Mundi* extend our sense of Frye's work and career in important ways. The first book, which is ably edited by Robert D. Denham, gathers together Frye's review-essays written during the nineteen-forties and fifties. These are far from fugitive pieces, and often form substantial essays in their own right. As always, Frye's command of a vast body of material—whether he is dealing with books by Cassirer, Jung, Eliade, or Frazer, or else commenting on new studies of Pound and Wyndham Lewis—is very impressive. The review of Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, for example, considers not only the book itself, but also the theory of translation, the nature of poetic language, and discursive thought. Frye's writing is lively and witty, as when he refers to "some phrases in Clive Bell's book on Proust that slither around in the mind like greased weasels" (p. 114), or when he defines the aphorism as "working on the principle of the Bloody Mary: it has to be swallowed at a gulp and allowed to explode from inside" (p. 239). Thanks to Denham's selection and arrangement, we can observe in these reviews many themes and problems that recur

(and are re-examined) in different contexts. Toynbee, for instance, is first treated in a separate review, and is then cited in a discussion of Frazer, who is, in turn, taken up again in reviews of Eliade's and Jung's books. *Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature* allows us to see Frye in his workshop, defining himself against the other great system-builders and mythmakers (from Spengler to Toynbee) of modern times, and preparing the ground for his own system in the *Anatomy of Criticism*.

Denham also provides a sixty-page introduction to this volume, where he surveys Frye's career and analyzes his critic's attitudes towards history, society, and culture. A welcome aspect to Denham's account is his careful definition of Frye's key terms: imagination, symbol, archetype, ritual, dream, romance, identity, and analogy. He closes with a strong claim for Frye's "achievement," stressing the "practical value" of his system, his "creative and aesthetic" power, and his effort to defend "all the products of human culture" (pp. 52-3). Denham stands with Angus Fletcher as one of Frye's most skillful and sympathetic readers, and he greatly enriches our understanding of his critic's labors; his introduction will serve as an excellent point of departure for students of Frye's work.

Denham's introduction, however, falls short in several areas. Though he confronts Frederick Crews's and others' attacks on the *Anatomy's* lack of social reference, he accepts Frye's own defense too much at face value. Frye views literature as a "self-contained universe" which is not dependent upon social contexts, but which is, at the same time, related to them. Literature and society, Frye believes, should be kept in "balance"; each vitally contributes to the growth and development of the other, but each also has its own special terms and emphases. Through this "balanced" account, Frye aims to organize a body of knowledge—literature—that humanists may study, and that is free from the influence of political or social dogmatism. But what Frye regards as a necessary detachment of literature from social context, W. K. Wimsatt, on the other hand, judges as an example of one of Frye's "oddities, implausibilities," and "patent contradictions" (see his essay—which Denham does not discuss—in *Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism*, ed. Murray Krieger, p. 80). Denham correctly perceives that Frye "wants the best of both possible worlds" (p. 17), but Wimsatt and other critics are not content to let Frye have them.

Perhaps Denham should also have described Frye's relation to structuralism and continental theories of literature. Some structuralists have embraced Frye as an ally, but others, who are hostile to his emphasis on "humanism" and "human nature" as well as to his placement of man's imagination at the center of things, speak of him as an arch-enemy. Denham himself seems to advocate a critical pluralism which accepts many methods, and which, he feels, Frye's literary holism helps to foster. But several recent writers have denied the value and even the availability of pluralism. Paul De Man, for example, states that "if we start from a pluralistic perspective, we can never achieve a genuine reading. We can develop a reading only if we think it is somehow unique" (see his essay in *Symposium*, Spring, 1974). From this point of view, Frye's holistic approach ought to be resisted; De Man's account of the "genuine reading" may be a narrow one, but it does pose a challenge to Frye's method that Denham fails to consider.

Frye, unlike De Man, is rarely concerned with uniqueness or "difference" in literature. He highlights recurring patterns and images, describing what makes one text "like" another one, and revealing the sources of literary and cultural continuity. But the danger of his schemes and over-views is that they too often ignore the experience of reading (and struggling with) specific texts. *Spiritus Mundi*, which collects Frye's essays from the nineteen-seventies, offers a case in point. Some of the essays, especially those on Spengler and Milton, are first-rate, but others, which

treat the university, education, and research, are so detached, so grandly self-assured, that the reader feels almost no contact with the real pressures and tensions of these issues. Frye provides little concrete reference or quotation in these essays, and his reader longs at times for examples of distinctive, challenging voices that differ from Frye's own. To put the matter bluntly: Frye moves on occasion so far above the presence of authorial voices and individual texts that his reader grows impatient with the many schemes and patterns, and is unwilling to consent to the critic's confident generalities and social counsel. Frye's achievement is major, but so are his limitations.

WILLIAM E. CAIN
Wellesley College

Jack Temple Kirby. *Media-Made Dixie: The South in the American Imagination.* Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1978, 203 pp. $9.95.

In this study of popular perceptions of the South, Kirby has provided a useful historical survey of the imagery produced by the media—in the broadest sense of that term—and accepted uncritically by the American public for approximately the last eighty years. Using principally film, television, bestsellers, popular histories and text-books, and country music, but also advertising, sports, and drama, he perhaps attempts to cover too much, at times giving a paragraph where pages are needed. Nevertheless, the book will be a basic work for future scholars of popular culture who are concerned with the South.

The study of popular culture is still recent, and there is as yet no established methodology for this interdisciplinary field. Being a historian, Kirby follows a chronological approach to indicate the growth and decline of various dominant images associated with the South. The problem with this method is that often contradictory images coexist side by side, and to treat them implicitly as if one is replaced by another is misleading. Certainly, the myth of moonlight and magnolias, what Kirby calls "The Grand Old South,'" has not disappeared; it is still present along with the more recent "Neo-abolitionist South," "Gothic South," and "Devilish South." The fact that these varying images are all still present in the popular mind indicates the complexity of the South and of the image-making process itself. Kirby gives enough examples of each to indicate their nature, but is wise enough not to try a synthesis of them, a task only for the foolhardy.

Kirby is at his best in showing the reciprocal influence of popular attitudes and the media: popular attitudes determine what the media will present, and the media's presentations enforce or moderate popular attitudes. One of his best extended examples is D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation,* of which Kirby says, "magnified convictions already there; it was a saga *dé jà vu.*" He also clearly demonstrates that at least until the 1930s historians followed popular attitudes about the South, rather than leading them. In fact, instead of historians, "the most influential communicator about the American South" is Erskine Caldwell, the South's most successful popular writer of fiction. In light of the critical neglect of Caldwell's work, such a position calls for serious study of that work and the exact nature of its imagistic significance, both as to how it reflected popular attitudes and how it shaped them.

In spite of its excellences, there are a few matters with which I must take issue. One is Kirby's repeated use of the word *decadent,* as in "Page's South was moss-covered and belligerently decadent." He never defines the word as he is using it, but seems to apply it to any work which praises ante-bellum aristocratic life. If so, his choice is semantically inappropriate—even false. A second point arises in his discussion of Kyle Onstott's *Mandingo* and *Drum* (the latter of which was actually written

by Lance Horner, though Onstott's name appears on its cover). There he states that "Onstott's genre had more or less passed with the sixties." Apparently Kirby has not visited any rack of paperback novels recently, for if he had, he would have seen dozens of "sex-and-slavery" novels in the Onstott mode, often with such blurbs as "More scorching than *Mandingo!*" The fact is that the majority of present *popular* novels about the South are direct imitations of Onstott's 1957 novel. Finally, with Jimmy Carter as President and the "nationalizing" of Southern life as demonstrated, for example, by *The Waltons*, Kirby foresees "the demise of Dixie." I disagree, for the images he has identified so well are buried so deeply, though often confusedly, in the American psyche, that whatever the reality of the South may be or may become, those images will be around for quite some time.

Kirby is not a W. J. Cash or C. Vann Woodward, but his survey of the popular images of the South—whatever one's caveats with individual interpretations—is a pioneering work and a major contribution to the study of both popular culture and the South.

EARL F. BARGAINNIER
Wesleyan College

The Collected Poems of Howard Nemerov. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. 507pp. 1978. $17.50.

That the light of Howard Nemerov's talent has been steadily increasing over a thirty-year span, from the 1947 *The Image and the Law* to the 1975 *The Western Approaches*, can scarcely be denied in the face of all of his volumes of poetry brought together as they are here; genius may be the better term for the source of this light. Pilgrim feet moving inexorably westward, as must ours all, has integrated his achievement through a few central motifs, of which mortality has been a leading one: "I am asked why I do not/Stop writing about death," he says in the first book, and goes on doing so. Though the body of his world is mirrored here in "splendid fixity," to use a phrase from his early "The Frozen City," the anthology need not be considered his total achievement. Eventually, as with Yeats, the plays, fiction, and criticism may join it in comparable culmination, as well as lyrics yet unwritten but part of a final appraisal.

To the "image," predominant in today's neo-Romantics, he adds "law," never having discarded the stance of the Harvard intellectual any more than that other Harvard Man, Eliot, discarded his prodigious knowledge. Classical mythology attracts him (the several pieces on Medusa are exemplary), a means of connecting vertically European and American poetry through the ages. At times pessimistic ("The Triumph of Education"), he is not usually so; delight, allied in connotation to that noun as Robert Penn Warren keeps establishing it in his advancing years, informs "The Blue Swallows" and much else. From it, the dust-jacket takes an excerpt to stress that Howard Nemerov is not someone who writes poetry "just to write":

> O swallows, swallows, poems are not
> The point. Finding again the world,
> That is the point, where loveliness
> Adorns intelligible things (p. 398)

Probably more of a philosophical idealist than Warren (he continues "Because the mind's eye lit the sun"), he has the same faculty for rejoicing in this earth's "given" and in trying to fathom what it all foreshadows. Like Warren he has let Dante be a constant influence on him.

Why Randall Jarrell should be generally considered this country's best World War II poet, though never in conflict, and Nemerov, with his military experience, scarcely known at all in this role, may be due to the fact that it (the war) was a chapter in his life he was eager to close and forget. The myths of the ten-year Trojan-Greek battles in *Guide to the Ruins* are war-poems of a sort, rooted in the Odyssean fables, which continued to preoccupy him, as evidenced by that most successful second of his fifteen runes in *New Poems* (1960), combining Homer's and Dante's Ulysses. "Angel and Stone" in the same volume shows Nemerov as another Ulysses, seeking new prosodic effects (as he has done throughout his career) as he too sails towards sunset.

His Muse is readily inspired by painting ("Vermeer", p. 257), especially (as was W. C. Williams' and Jarrell's) by the work of Brueghel. But music is just as prominent: "Playing the Inventions" is a tribute fitting even for Bach, the third sonnet in the sequence astonishing in its beauty. He follows Blake in regarding the arts as the tongues spoken in Heaven ("Conversing with Paradise"). Translating fascinates him, as it does most major poets; it would be illuminating to compare his Rilke's "Childhood" with Jarrell's.

Though born a Jew, Nemerov celebrates "the sweet Christ" in "A Poem of Margery Kemp" though his "Nicodemus" departs from the Gospel account to create a holy man who rejects the call of the Saviour. "Sonnet" on p. 72 and the following "Carol" are Christian; it would be hard to locate a lyric more so than the latter, an imitation of medieval song on Bethlehem, with the italicized refrain *"In silence and in night."* One of the fifteen runes (the ninth) praises Mary and St. Christopher. His piece about the Rabbi (pp. 270-271) wittily defines his attitude towards the faith of his fathers, without repudiating the ethnic characteristics which remain a part of his psyche: though not a practitioner in Hebrew ritual, he is no more an atheist than the "Jewish ethereal" who sends his friends off with "Go with God" (p. 414).

One likes the autobiographical Nemerov of *The Salt Garden*, especially in such poems as "The Snow Glove", better than the analyst of ideas who comes before this 1955 collection and afterwards. Here, he so excels in description that his co-editor of *Furioso*, Reed Whittemore, calls him on the basis of it a Nature poet (*North American Review*, June 23, 1958, p. 27). It is brilliant in its verse forms; if overshadowed by Yeats, what he borrows he makes new ("Midsummer's Day"). The fairly constant rhyming is welcome to ears deprived of it in contemporary verse. *Mirrors and Windows* in 1958 betrays a desire for a freer prosody; *The Western Approaches* has a few prose-poems, such as "The Four Ages," an intricate meditation.

One could wish that he had kept his poetic gift for Allen Tate's seventy-fifth birthday till the very end: its last quatrain is more significant than much of *The Western Approaches:*

> Of making many books there is no end,
> And like it saith in the book before that one
> What God wants don't you forget it, Jack,
> Is your contrite spirit, Jack, your broken heart.

Howard Nemerov, not only as the first choice for the National Book Award but all along, can best be categorized as a winner.

SISTER BERNETTA QUINN, O.S.F.
Norfolk State College

John S. Phillipson. *Thomas Wolfe: A Reference Guide.* Boston, G. K. Hall & Co., 1977, 218pp. $18.00.

The most recent aid to the assessment of Thomas Wolfe's place in American letters is one of the most helpful. Phillipson's work augments, supplements, and, in some instances, corrects the complementary projects undertaken in recent years by Leslie Field (*Thomas Wolfe: Three Decades of Criticism*), Elmer D. Johnson (*Thomas Wolfe: A Checklist*), Paschal Reeves (*Thomas Wolfe: The Critical Reception*), and Louis D. Rubin, Jr. (*Thomas Wolfe: A Collection of Critical Essays*). The common feature of all these books is a bibliography, but only Johnson's book attempted to be exhaustive. The feature shared by the books by Fields, Reeves, Rubin, and Phillipson is the recording of Wolfe's impact upon domestic, and some foreign, critics. All of these books have value, both for the student of American literature in general and of Wolfe in particular.

Phillipson's book provides brief abstracts of the books, essays, or parts of books devoted to critical assessments or examination of Wolfe's writing, covering in its sweep the criticism appearing between 1929 and 1976. Two complementary sections are (1) a list of doctoral dissertations and (2) a bibliography of works in foreign languages. Phillipson did not abstract every piece of critical writing, electing, instead, to include what seemed to him the important ones. He also chose not to consider reviews "unless they were also actually critiques." His main goal throughout was "to reproduce, generally within 120 words, the gist of the original article or chapter, without bias, using the point of view of the original." In addition to the bibliographical information for the first appearance of a piece, he also told where a piece had been reprinted if it had been made a part of a book or a collection of essays, noting whether the item had been changed or abridged. He also occasionally pointed out a critical critique overlooked by Reeves. The value of all of Phillipson's careful labor is self-evident: students of Wolfe can now briskly survey the significant critical works and decide what articles or books they need to explore in depth.

Abstracting forty-five years of critical writing gave Phillipson the opportunity to see the development of some patterns in the perceptions and notions of critics. Some earlier critics complained about a lack of social awareness, some charged him with formlessness, some disliked his use of poetic prose, a few likened him to Joyce, Melville, and Whitman, some declared that his ability to draw characters placed him in the ranks of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. A few noted that his forte was the short story rather than the novel, and some denounced him as a slave to autobiography. As Phillipson observes, "over the almost forty years since Wolfe's death, the criticism of him has followed a pattern of marked attraction and detraction, though in recent years the latter seems to have diminished in both amount and intensity."

One other observation by Phillipson is worth noting. He found that in the 1970s each year but one had greeted the appearance of a new book on Wolfe and that since the beginning of the present decade over eight books and articles on him have been published. The number is indeed modest if compared to the activity surrounding Faulkner and Hemingway, but it does show that Wolfe is far from dead, a fact which is further established by the continuing sale of his novels, all four of his major ones being still in print.

As one of those books that will often be used in the trenches of scholarly pursuit and as one of those authors who are often blessed by the time-oppressed researcher but seldom if ever thanked, this book and this author have made a solidly

significant contribution to the study of Wolfe's personal successes and failures and of his place in American letters. I welcome the book and say, "Thanks, John Phillipson."

JOHN L. IDOL, JR.
Clemson University

Stephen Dixon. *No Relief*. Ann Arbor: Street Fiction Press, 1976, 220 pp. $4.95. ..... *Work*. Ann Arbor: Street Fiction Press, 1977, 189 pp. $5.95.

When we've finished a day and go back over what we've done and what has been done to us, we are likely to find that most of our time has been spent in actions, projects, or relationships that are of long duration. The beginnings and endings are out of sight. We've written another paragraph in a long book or taught another class in a long course, talked on the telephone with someone who has been our friend for twenty years, walked in the woods with someone who has been our child for ten. There has been no satisfying click of the box, no triumphant placing of the last piece of the puzzle, the last stone of the arch.

And yet the day has not really been random either. The sun has followed its orderly rhythms, and so has the body. The day has had a beginning and an end. The little tasks, which compose the larger ones as perfect cells compose the larger body, have been completed and have their own integrity. In short, we have been in the presence both of order and of something too large or too sprawling for us to perceive as order.

Something of this sense of form within formlessness characterizes Stephen Dixon's novel *Work* and, to a lesser extent, his collection of short stories, *No Relief*. One could say that Dixon has no sense of form at all, or one could say that he deliberately avoids structure in an attempt to express the anarchy of the world, or perhaps just the random character of life in the city. Happily, neither of these statements would be true. The careful and programmatic cultivation of chaos seems to appeal to theoretical critics and French publicists more than to practicing writers, who know that the arrangement of words on a page is a serious matter requiring intelligence as well as luck. And besides, those carefully contrived pieces of anarchy are much easier to talk about than to read, and Dixon keeps his reader turning the pages in a very old fashioned way, from beginning to end. In fact, both *Work* and "Last May," in my opinion Dixon's best short story, have primitive but vigorous plot lines: man gets job; man loses job—man gets woman; man gives her up. They are not intricate plots to be sure, but they are fundamental and functional.

The charge that he has no sense of form at all is tantamount to a charge that he is a bad writer or a madman. This charge is a little harder, though by no means impossible, to refute. What gives it some substance is Dixon's occasionally maddening sense of pace. *Work* is 189 pages long. The main action is that the hero, an unemployed actor named Claude Martez, gets a job as a bartender and then, for various interesting reasons, loses it. But it is not until page 62 that the hero applies for his job at "BurgBrew Drew's." Before that, we get an account of some other jobs he's had, some tedious telephone conversations with his girl friend, Oona, and descriptions of attempts to find work writing captions or collecting blood. Much of this is, if not irrelevant, uneconomical. The novel is full of issues and characters that are raised and dropped. With the obvious exception of Claude himself, not one of the characters, Oona included, to whom we are introduced at such length in the first part of the novel, is mentioned again after page 62. The fact that Claude is an actor is also, finally, of no significance. Dixon simply lets his character wander

about at random for sixty pages or so until he catches the thread of an action, at which point the irrelevant narrative bric-a-brac is tidied away and we begin to concentrate exclusively upon the matter at hand.

Even after Claude gets work as a bartender, however, our interest tends to wander off into odd corners. How does a fast food chain hire its employees, transfer them, check up on them? What is a bartender's *modus operandi*? How do his responsibilities relate to those of cooks, waiters, dishwashers? These things prove to be interesting in themselves, and Dixon obligingly, even lovingly, leads us through all the details of a bartender's daily routine. The relevance to Claude's character and to the narrative line, while never wholly forgotten, is charmingly incidental.

There is an attractive aimlessness about all this, and it reflects the sort of structure that we all experience from day to day: actions that are dropped or begin again at unlikely times, digressions that are never wholly irrelevant, events that are never quite to the point, characters that appear and disappear. Once we give up on the hope that everything will be drawn together in a giant, symmetrical web, we are pleased by occasional glimpses of pattern: the bartender's rituals, the constant return of regular customers, the consistently shiftless, consistently shifted, managers, the inevitable, and inevitably unmerited, loss of the job, which closes the circle. All this could be made more intense, but the lack of intensity is part of Dixon's truth. Life is neither grand opera nor the babbling idiot's tale. Its rhythms and the rhythms of art are at variance.

The short stories in *No Relief* are more tightly constructed, but there is the same sense of episodes proceeding in an almost random fashion. The best of the stories, "Last May," describes the love felt by a young man whose father is dying for a young girl whose mother is dying. They meet in a sickroom and make love there, but the love survives only until the last funeral is over. Then, for no obvious reason, the young man breaks off this affair, whose soil was death. The apparent motivelessness of the characters in this story is a feature of all the other stories, all of which are about love. Love begins and ends mysteriously. It has its own, unknown, cycle and laws, and the characters are as puzzled by it as the readers. No one in the stories falls in or out of love willingly. It happens, as death happens, and they adjust to it as best they can. It is the characters more than the author who refuse, or are unable, to provide a structure.

They are not, to be sure, apathetic. They are self-willed, stubborn, and deeply passionate—romantic characters, really—but they are not in the habit of criticizing their desires. They know what they want but not why they want it. All of the works are informed by the suspicion that any analysis of human behavior is bound to be false and laughably pointless. This is reflected to some degree in technique and style. Dixon has no use for omniscient narrators, whose very existence suggests a serene perspective from which the pitiful flounderings of a character can be made to make sense. He does not let us view things from the distance which might allow them to fall into place. Everything is written from the first-person point of view, but this too is handled in a characteristic way. The narrators do not engage in much interior discourse; they do not analyze their own actions. Instead we are given a high proportion of dialogue, sometimes witty and gamy, more often a parody of critical analysis in which dialogue becomes formless monologue.

> "Rose, the best thing for you right now is to be outside on your own having your own experiences and testing yourself out on the unknown or something, I'm convinced of that, because I'll tell you, no matter what we say or do here

> tonight I see the same things happening with us and you over and over again till you do have a lot better idea what you want or don't want, I know that for sure now or almost . . . and I'll also tell you, I'm tired of people feeling I'm a burden on them because they know I care deeply for them and especially when I thought that deep feeling was being returned or because they know I mostly like what I've done and am now doing with my life and because they didn't do what they wanted to before they met me or aren't doing now what they think they can or must do and for some reason think it's because of me or even not because of me but just whatever, all of which might sound senseless or too muddled or high-toned or pedantic or something."

A passage like this, from the story "Rose," is not ridiculous, though there is a whiff of ridiculousness about it. We feel, however, something hurried and *pro forma* in the speech. An explanation is required, though author, characters, and reader know that no explanation, no critical analysis, will ever get to the heart of anything. The dialogue, the speeches—and this is true throughout both books—cover everything with a thin lacquer of logic with which we must be content, though we know how much more there is that we cannot know.

I don't want to sound more enthusiastic about these books than I really am. Dixon's characters talk like a curious amalgam of Damon Runyon and James Joyce, and though you get used to this after a while, it's never really a strength. His fastidious avoidance of conventional punctuation is a fashionable tic which requires a speedy cure. Finally there is, despite the realistic details of *Work*, despite the avoidance of self-analysis in the stories, something curiously narcissistic about all of Dixon's characters. They begin alone and they end alone. Loves and jobs are put on and shucked off like the incidental accoutrements they are. There is a fine, old-fashioned, existentialist gloom in all of this; but a little of it goes a long way. Three hundred pages of this wintry, stoical, urban landscape is enough to drive one, giggling, to a Maypole.

Nevertheless, Dixon has his claims upon the truth, upon nature perhaps more than upon art, though he is by no means artless. His feckless, occasionally dismal world with its small momentary triumphs and large, permanent sorrows is real enough; and if we are troubled by the absence of great and satisfying patterns in his work, why then we are meant to be. "Last May" and "Rose" are painful but unforgettable stories, and *Work*, despite its many flaws, has its roots in life itself, not in some morbid secretion of the imagination. The dissatisfaction we feel when we close Dixon's books is finally not unlike the dissatisfaction that most of us feel at the close of each of the days of our lives.

THOMAS A. STUMPF
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Richard Harwell, ed., *Margaret Mitchell's "Gone with the Wind" Letters, 1936-1949*. New York and London: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1976. 441 pp. $12.95.

Laws with regard to the publishing of literary remains are very strict. In fact, numerous letters, diaries, and other primary materials are regularly destroyed by the literary executor after a writer's death because the writer has requested that this be done.

Margaret Mitchell was an especially private person who refused to allow publication of any of her correspondence during her lifetime and whose private letters were destroyed at her death. When her husband, John R. Marsh, died in 1952,

her brother Stephens became her literary executor. In 1970, Stephens Mitchell most appropriately presented to his alma mater, the University of Georgia, a collection of fifty-seven thousand items now known as the Margaret Mitchell Marsh Papers. Among these are more than ten thousand carbon copies of letters written by Miss Mitchell herself. It is from these letters that Richard Harwell (Curator of Special Collections of the University of Georgia Library) has selected more than three hundred dealing with a "literary and publishing phenomenon" never equalled, before or since: *Gone with the Wind*. With the generous permission of Stephens Mitchell, these letters are now available to the public for the first time. The letters begin in April, 1936, a few weeks before publication of the book, and end in July, 1949, shortly before Margaret Mitchell's death.

Editorial mechanics, according to Mr. Harwell, have been kept as light as possible, with a minimum of annotation. The table of contents lists recipient and date of each letter, making it easy for readers to find specific items. The editor's preface explains clearly why none of this material has ever appeared in print before. Cited here is the often quoted observation Miss Mitchell sent William Lyons Phelps, refusing permission to include a letter of hers in his *Autobiography with Letters:* "My book belongs to anyone who has the price, but nothing of me belongs to the public."

In a lengthy introduction, Mr. Harwell provides background information about both book and author necessary for understanding the letters. He delineates the history of *Gone with the Wind* from its birth (June 30, 1936, when it was already a Book-of-the-Month-Club selection that would sell one million copies before Christmas) and describes the making of the film by David O. Selznick (it opened in Atlanta in December, 1939, and remains the most popular of all motion pictures). He gives us a biographical sketch of Miss Mitchell and her family and—with copious quotation from the letters—makes clear how and why the book came to be written (exploding a myth or two and answering questions frequently put to Miss Mitchell on this subject). Harwell also notes parallels (overlooked by most of the early reviewers) between the city of Atlanta and Scarlett O'Hara—both a mixture of the old and the new, both defeated but rising anew from defeat. And he finally tells how the manuscript came into the hands of Harold Latham, in 1935 a roving editor for the Macmillan Company and whose enthusiastic reaction set off the avalanche whose effects continue to be felt.

The letters themselves are a joy to read, generally reflecting Miss Mitchell's own happy and outgoing personality. No one could have been more surprised than she was at the terrific success of the book; and the first third of this collection reflects her pleasure, as she writes individually to thank reviewers and others who have praised *Gone with the Wind*.

But success brings harassment. Besieged by the public, Miss Mitchell turns down (in letters) all speaking engagements, autograph parties, and public appearances; even here, however, her good nature never forsakes her. Still more trying is the making of the film, all details of which (script writing, choosing the actors) Miss Mitchell tries in vain to bypass. Involvement in various suits, worldwide copyright problems, pirated editions (in China and elsewhere)—subjects of still more letters—bring on nervous exhaustion and illness from time to time.

During the war years and later, life is less hectic and she enjoys a near normal existence—with war work, vacations, visits to New York City and to friends. She congratulates and also warns others who publish best sellers. The last letter in the volume finds her refusing a request from James M. Cox, owner of *The Atlanta Journal*, for an autographed copy of the book: she explains that she can make no

exceptions to her habit of never autographing books. At the same time she graciously sends a card with a note (to be placed in the book), along with a Yugoslavian translation of *Gone with the Wind* (Tito being much in the news at that time). Typical, thus, of the entire collection, this letter beautifully rounds off the correspondence concerning *Gone with the Wind*.

Here, then, in a way, is Miss Mitchell's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, which one can only thank Stephens Mitchell for sharing and Richard Harwell for meticulously editing. The world reflected here—a quieter time before the atomic era and the Age of Violence—is as much a part of the past as Scarlett and Atlanta in 1865.

NAN COOKE CARPENTER
University of Georgia

James Atlas. *Delmore Schwartz: The Life of an American Poet*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977, 418 pp. $15.00.

Paul Ferris. *Dylan Thomas: A Biography*. New York: The Dial Press, 1977, 399 pp. $9.95.

In his biography of that archetypal *poet maudite*, Richard Savage, Samuel Johnson remarks that "volumes have been written only to enumerate the miseries of the learned, and relate their unhappy lives, and untimely deaths." The two engrossing biographies under consideration here are recent additions to "these mournful narratives." Delmore Schwartz was convinced that he had been doomed to his miseries by his childhood, a conclusion reinforced by his reading of Freud. For this reason, James Atlas speaks of Schwartz's "overwhelmingly determinist and world-historical view of his own life."

The justice of Schwartz's sense of his predicament is hard to escape in reading Atlas's reconstruction of Schwartz's relationship with his mother and the distracted family life they all endured. Atlas gives a grim vignette that occurred when Schwartz was seven:

> One day, during a period when his parents were separated, Delmore was taken for a drive out to Long Island with his mother, his aunt Clara, and some friends of the family. As they were returning to the city, Rose spotted Harry's car in the parking lot of a roadhouse café and demanded that her friends pull over. Against their protests, she dragged Delmore into the dining room, where she found Harry with another woman. There followed a loud burst of accusations before an audience of horrified patrons and waiters. Clutching Delmore by the hand, Rose called the other woman a whore, denounced her husband, and would only cease her torrent of complaints when Harry, numb with silent rage, led his small son from the restaurant.

It is possible that Schwartz was too ready to believe that fate determines character and that, as Johnson says of Savage, "having accustomed himself to impute all deviation from the right to foreign causes, it is certain that he was upon every occasion too easily reconciled to himself. . . ." But as I read this excellent biography, I returned over and over to the moving photographs of the two young boys and their handsome parents, convinced that the key to the poet's distress lay therein, and I accept Schwartz's own interpretation. One of his wittiest remarks was "even paranoids have real enemies." His were at home.

If in the behavior of Dylan Thomas the etiology emerges less clearly, the pathology is as gross as that in the lives of Savage and Schwartz. A Vassar professor

who played host to Thomas described the poet's unhappiness as "just misery, misery, which seemed to me so pervasive that it had no source except a psychological source. That is, the man was deeply neurotic." The neurosis does not in this case seem to be attributable to the mother, but rather to lie in a tangle of his attitude toward his father and his fears of personal inadequacies. Or at least so Mr. Ferris seems to think, and he writes sensibly. It is his claim that the "pattern" of Thomas's life "was in some measure a response to D. J. Thomas and his wishes. . . . There was something about his father, the man of letters, to which he aspired." Ferris speaks early on of Thomas's preoccupation with the "littleness" of his own body, and in a later passage probing the "real cause" of Thomas's plight, says "it is a matter about which it is impossible to be more than tentative. But ever since those early poems where he wonders if he 'dares', and his letters to Pamela with their reiteration of 'littleness', there is a sense in which he was always uncertain of his powers: both as man and poet."

Ferris clears up the question of Thomas's medical treatment on the night of his admission to St. Vincent's Hospital. In brief, "A normal dose [of morphine] to relieve acute pain is one-sixth of a grain. Thomas received three times as much. In the absence of other factors it is well below a lethal dose. But other factors were present. . . . If Thomas was suffering any difficulty in breathing, the effect of half a grain of morphine could be catastrophic."

These two biographies depict lives that were painful and often lived under great strain. Johnson's concluding moral drawn from Savage's bitter career comes from a far-off age and does not please me: ". . . negligence and irregularity, long, continued, will make knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible." If I were drawing a moral from the lives of Delmore Schwartz and Dylan Thomas, it would be a softer one.

FRANK DAY
Clemson University

NOTICES

Mina Curtiss. *Other People's Letters: A Memoir.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978, 243 pp. $9.95.

Mina Curtiss went to Paris in 1947 to ferret out the postwar remains of Proust's universe of aristocratic salons. Her memoir reconstructs, from her journals and letters, her encounters with such intimates of Proust's as the Comtesse Greffulhe, the Duchess de Clermont-Tonnerre, Prince Antoine Bibesco of Rumania, the bluestocking hostess Madame Marie Scheikévitch, and Céleste Albaret, Proust's devoted housekeeper. Some of these characters—*e.g.*, Comte Robert de Billy—put in only brief appearances, but the best sketches—those of Prince Antoine, Mme. Albaret, and Magda Sibilat—animate their subjects quite deftly. Various British acquaintances of Mrs. Curtiss's also turn up in this memoir, most notably David Garnett and Rebecca West. A fragment from a contrived epistolary novel of 1893 will interest Proustians.

E. Bruce Kirkham. *The Building of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."* Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1977, 264 pp. $12.95.

Professor Kirkham's study of the genesis of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* begins appropriately with sketches of the remarkable Beechers at home in Connecticut and Cincinnati. They were "a reading and writing family," and Kirkham has studied profit-

ably the numerous periodical essays written by Harriet in the 1830s and 1840s before moving to Brunswick, Maine. Serial publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* began June 5, 1851, in the *National Era*, published in Washington, and its progress makes an interesting story as told by Kirkham. Josiah Henson's claim that he was the original for Uncle Tom is treated skeptically by Kirkham, who falls back on Mrs. Stowe's statement that "The characters of Uncle Tom and George Harris had no living proto-types but were created by me." The analyses of the manuscripts and the revisions are thorough and detailed; the collations and the study of Negro dialects will be of interest to future students of this novel.

Derek Brewer. *Chaucer and His World*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978, 224 pp. $20.00.

It is the stated aim of Derek Brewer "to give as vivid an impression as possible of Chaucer's life and historical circumstances." Toward this end he and his publisher have conspired superbly, producing a handsome book that is gorgeously illustrated and beguilingly written. Although original scholarship is not Mr. Brewer's goal, it is unlikely that even Chaucerians will read this narrative without profit, for it is full of various rewards for the attentive reader: the word 'podicicinist,' for instance, is a totally unexpected pleasure, and the account of the mysterious *raptus* of Cecily Champain ("a delightfully fizzy name") is balanced and sensible. A satisfying book to handle and peruse.

Andrew Welsh. *Roots of Lyric. Primitive Poetry and Modern Poetics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, 276 pp. $14.50.

In such forms as chants, charms, riddles, and ideograms Professor Welsh finds much that illuminates the nature of all poetry. In an opening chapter on "Coordinates," the uses made by Pound and Frye of *melos*, *opsis*, and *lexis* are juggled into position for an assault on "Wordsworth's central question—What is the poet's language?" The answer comes in two parts: an analysis of phanopoeia in riddles, emblems, kennings, poems by Pound and Williams, and Japanese and Chinese lyrics; and a tripartite division of the origins of melopoeia into the rhythms of charms, the rhythms of dancesongs, and the rhythms of the speech of Wordsworth's poet as man speaking to men. The discussion of Fenollosa, Pound, and the ideogram is an especially stimulating chapter in this careful and excellent study.

Wallace Fowlie. *Journal of Rehearsals*. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1977, 219 pp. $12.75.

Nobody writes more graceful prose than Professor Fowlie, and it is put to the best service in this rich memoir of the people and places that have made his life so apparently satisfying. Among the many creative teachers and artists whom we glimpse in these pages, Irving Babbitt and Austin Warren remain most vividly in my mind. Professor Fowlie's remarks on teaching are excellent, and I suspect his students were wise in their choice of his courses.

CONTRIBUTORS

BETTY ADCOCK, a North Carolina poet, is the author of *Walking Out*.

A former NEH fellow at Princeton, CLARK BROWN lives in California and is the author of a novel, *The Disciple*, and many stories and articles.

OTTAVIO M. CASALE is Assistant Chairman of the Department of English at Kent State University and is translating the poetry of Giacomo Leopardi.

ANN DEAGON is Professor of Classics at Guilford College and the author of five books of poems, including *There Is No Balm in Birmingham*.

GRACE FREEMAN has published in many magazines and lives in Rock Hill, S. C.

Author of works on James Fenimore Cooper and Ralph Ellison, JAN NORDBY GRETLUND is a Danish scholar who spent 1977-78 as an American Council of Learned Societies Fellow at the University of South Carolina.

WILLIAM S. HILLMAN is a New York poet making his first appearance in *SCR*.

ELMO HOWELL has published many articles on American literature. He teaches at Memphis State University.

MICHAEL MCFEE is poetry editor of the *Carolina Quarterly*.

MARION MONTGOMERY is Professor of English at the University of Georgia and the author of many studies in American literature.

Before her death in 1964, *FLANNERY O'CONNOR* had attained an enduring reputation as one of America's most distinguished fiction writers.

WYATT PRUNTY is a widely published poet who is now finishing a doctorate at Louisiana State University.

The poems of LEE M. ROBINSON have appeared in such magazines as *Harper's* and *The Hollins Critic*. She is an attorney in Charleston, S. C.

BRUCE SMITH raises Angus on a farm in New York. He co-edits the *Graham House Review*.

PAUL STRONG is Associate Professor of English at Alfred University in New York state.

Director of the Program in Writing Arts at SUNY College at Oswego, LEWIS TURCO has published poems in many journals, including *The New Yorker, Georgia Review*, and *Sewanee Review*.

The short stories and novels of EUDORA WELTY have formed a large part of the remarkable creative output of Southern writers in the twentieth century. She lives in Jackson, Mississippi.

A reporter for the Richmond, Indiana, *Palladium-Item*, HAROLD WILEY shoots straight arrows from his hunting bow.

MARY C. WILLIAMS teaches at North Carolina State University and is the co-editor of a forthcoming anthology of recent Southern poetry.

R. B. WILLIAMS lives in Columbia, S. C., and this is his first poem in *SCR*.

MARLENE YOUMANS is a South Carolinian educated at Hollins College and Brown University. She has published previous poems in *Intro 8, Black Warrior Review, Southern Poetry Review*, and other journals.

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.