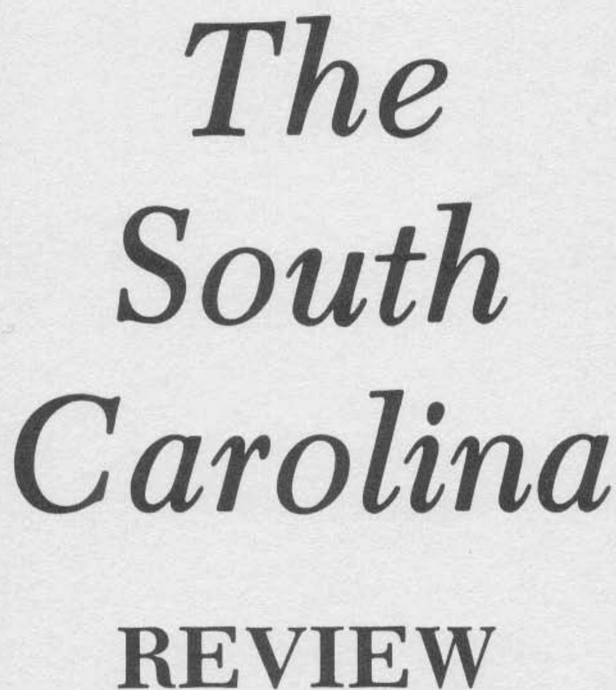

SPRING, 1983
VOL. 15, NO. 2

Clemson University Digital Press

The South Carolina Review

EDITORS

Richard J. Calhoun, Robert W. Hill
Carol Johnston, *Managing Editor* and *Book Review Editor*
Lewis Arrington, *Editorial Assistant*

ADVISORY BOARD

Hallman B. Bryant
Loretta Carrillo
Frank Day
Sterling K. Eisiminger
John L. Idol
M. Thomas Inge
G. William Koon
Ronald W. Moran
Victor A. Rudowski
Frederick W. Shilstone
Elisa K. Sparks
Mark S. Steadman

THE SOUTH CAROLINA REVIEW is published in fall and spring 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 Spring, 1983, issue is partially supported by a grant from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines.

THE SOUTH CAROLINA REVIEW is indexed in *Index of American Periodical Verse, American Humanities Index*, and *Index to Periodical Fiction*.

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. Unsolicited manuscripts are not read during June, July, and August.

Subscriptions in the USA, Mexico, and Canada are $5.00 a year, $9.00 for two years. Overseas subscriptions are $5.50 a year, $10.00 for two years. A limited number of back issues are available for $3.00 each.

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

ISSN: 0038-3163

THE SOUTH CAROLINA REVIEW

SPRING, NINETEEN HUNDRED EIGHTY-THREE
COPYRIGHT © 1983 BY CLEMSON UNIVERSITY
CLEMSON, S.C. 29631

The South Carolina Review

VOLUME 15, NUMBER 2 SPRING, 1983

CONTENTS

ESSAYS

James Dickey's War Poetry: A "Saved, Shaken Life," *Ronald Baughman* 38

The Serious Play of Interpretation, *Marjorie E. Cook* 77

D. H. Lawrence and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Dan Schneider* 96

FICTION

A Letter That Will Never Be Written: An Excerpt from the Novel *Elizabeth & James*, *George Garrett* 5

Come On A Coming, *Stephen Dixon* 21

Myrtie's Salvation, *Bo Ball* 27

Heavy Weather, *Otis Douglas* 49

Tullia, *Harriet Gay* 61

Survival, *John Eberth* 90

The Rat's Scalp, *James W. Lillie* 109

POETRY

Two Poems by *Laurence Lieberman* 3

Montauk Point, New York, *Jon Daunt* 17

Three Poems by *J. W. Rivers* 18

Dover (AFB), Delaware, *Karl Watson* 26

Two Poems by *Susan Schaeffer* 58

The Accident, *Mark DeFoe* 88

The Gramma Poems, *Theresa Bacon* 94

After the Wedding, *Quitman Marshall* 116

REVIEWS

Invade Mecum: Coleridge, Austin, and the Tones of Deconstruction, *Luther Tyler* 117

The Image of the City in Modern Literature by Burton Pike, *Alan Axelrod* 126

The London Muse: Victorian Poetic Responses to the City by William Thesing, *Hallman B. Bryant* 128

Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain by Geoffrey C. Field, *Victor Anthony Rudowski* 130
The Coincidental Art of Charles Brockden Brown by Norman S. Grabo; *Critical Essays on Charles Brockden Brown* by Bernard Rosenthal, *Eric J. Sundquist* 133

CONTRIBUTORS 134

TWO POEMS BY LAURENCE LIEBERMAN

SPACE AND TIME

I. Space

Behind the air is a hole.
What falls in it

will never break. Take a deep
breath. The hole is in your head. That

is no way to bury the dead.
The souls of the saved and damned alike

range freely in the ether, each
in its allocated

space. Their sighs are heard
by the terminal foetus, craving its first

breath, and are echoed
at birth. Not to bury our dead is the gravest

disservice to the alive. In the void
the stillborn and unburied are as one.

II. Time

In life, the body fears
pain, the sharp much less than the long. Time

is the chief
destroyer. We endure atrocity for a short

term; the lasting afflictions
are fatal. It's better

to be scorched by a bitch
than to prolong holy union

with a shrew. In death, the worst
is to fall without limit. . . .

SUICIDE ATTEMPT

Surprised to find you have reached
The other side of the impasse and looking back,
Behind you moves ahead of you

The hole you fell through eating yourself
And forgetting the taste digesting only the silence

Narrower than a needle's eye

Admits only one ray of light only one. The pieces
Of your life return to you in tomorrow's blood

Safe, but to get here you had to save up
Enough fear from yesterday's dreams
And to salute the day of your death winking

At you through the veil of the future years
That row of headstones you dare not count, compatriots

Fellow travelers into the ash

A LETTER THAT WILL NEVER BE WRITTEN
AN EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL
ELIZABETH & JAMES

GEORGE GARRETT

This is the spring of the year 1626. The place is London. The person here, the young man, is employed for the time being as a kind of clerk, secretary and companion to Robert Carey, newly made (by the new King) Earl of Monmouth. Carey is an old man, a cousin to the late Queen Elizabeth, who in his day was a courtier, a soldier, an inveterate gambler. His young clerk is only just down from Oxford. Where he has developed certain Puritan inclinations, not enough so that his spirit is possessed and afire with zeal, but, rather, enough so that he is somewhat uneasy with the Earl, with the City, and, of course, with himself. . . .

* * *

Ah, Priscilla . . . she of skyblue eyes and white straight teeth and of the softly lightly pouting lips . . . lips looking to be as fresh and sweet to taste as finest ripe fruit candied with Barbary sugar and sprinkled with wine . . . she of smooth unblemished skin the color of good ivory, of Devon cream . . . her dark hair clean and well-brushed . . . she always dressed in the new plain and neat and sober styles, in gray or black accented with snowy splashes of starched white collar and cuffs . . . she always without any jewelry or geegaws . . . she the roses of whose cheeks are painted there by nature, not by art. . . .

How much now he would offer up anything (everything) he has or has hopes for to be the wildly lucky one who will unbutton and untie and unlace, who will peel and set free (O whitely shining!) the essential and mysterious her from those so proper layers of clothing . . . !

She for whom, and for the sake of whose undoubted pleasures (so whitely smoothly cool and graceful) he would be glad and be blithe to dress himself, also, in shades of black and white . . . and be like any other common solemn Puritan fellow . . . if that be what's required, then so be it . . . if only he could have and hold, could feast (lawfully) famished eyes upon the wondrous banquet of her . . . all that whiteness . . . all those secret places. . . .

Except for the clenching of fists by his sides, he lies still. As if he were stark dead. Unmoving, though his spirit is restless as new-caught flame in kindling wood, though his innards are wincing and seething and murmuring from much abuse. Lies atop the bed in a chamber lit only by the dying moon. Trying to fall asleep. Has heard the Bellman pass by on his rounds softly calling the hours. Can count the strokes of every bell from here to the

Clemson University Digital Press

farthest corner of London Wall. A little while ago he heard voices, a man and a woman, then the two of them laughing out loud (is that what has raised and wakened the memory of Priscilla?), then running feet in the dark. Dogs at the Earl's gate barked at that. He has not slept a wink yet.

Only this morning the Earl had business to attend to and so set him free, gave him leave to spend the day as he pleased. Oh, why did he not go and join the Godly people, the Puritans, who gather daily in and around Curriers' Hall? From which, and in that good company, he might have gone to bring some succor, some food and drink, to the prisoners at Newgate. Or perhaps to the sick at the Hospital of St. Bartholomew in Smithfield. Or, as far out as the north road beyond Bishopgate to Bedlam. Where they keep mad folk. These Puritan people will bring food and drink and medicines and clothing (together with prayers and psalms) to any and all whose need is great. They will even go and stand at the edge of the gallows. And will pull the legs and break the necks of some poor hanging, strangling wretch, for the sake of a quick death, if he has neither friends nor family to perform those offices. When Plague comes calling in the City in summertime, they will not flee from it as others do. They will remain here, whole in faith and careless in charity, to do what can be done to help the living and the dead.

Well, if not works of humble love and charity, he could at least have gone forth to improve and to instruct himself. Maybe—it being not yet Ascension Sunday and therefore the Easter Term of the law courts being still in busy session—he could have gone to Westminster Hall to observe them. Which at the least would have pleased his father and his brother who have been urging him to take up the study of Law at the Inns of Court.

Well (he could tell them) *I have in fact spent this day in the company of certain scholars of the Law, though we went to no courts and spent no time or energy upon points of Law. . . .*

Trying to forget what he has left undone that he ought to have done, to still his shame and contempt, to ease himself into sleep, he composes a letter to Priscilla. She whom he sometimes believes (especially after a time of shameful waste and debauchery, such as last night) he loves with all his heart and soul. Never mind that her dowry would scarcely buy him a new pair of boots. He would marry her and cherish her for love alone, if he could. Then she would take him into her cool, smooth arms. And soon he would be clean and whole again.

"Believe me, it can be done," he imagines writing to her. "Even at this late day and age of the world. After all, the old Earl admits that he married for love and not for gain and ambition. It cost him dearly at the time. But now he says that he has never had any good reason to regret it.

"No, that is not entirely the case. At first he had cause to rue his action. For Queen Elizabeth (he says) was in a fury with him. Never mind troubles and affairs of state, she was never too busy not to watch over the lives (like

a mother hen with her chicks, he says) of her Court. And when any of them, and most especially those who, like the Earl, were kinfolk, would marry without her consultation and permission, why she was in a terrible rage. And, says the Earl, the Queen would never, never have given him her permission to marry out of love and affection rather than for advantage.

"Why would that be?" I asked him.

"Because she considered affection to be false. Because she considered a disadvantageous marriage by one of her kin to be unworthy. And so insulting to her. Because ('The Queen always cultivated a most strictly practical kind of wisdom in the matters.') if he did not marry for gain of advantage, then where would his necessary resources come from? Sooner or later, directly or indirectly, it would fall upon her to support him. If she did not, then when he fell on bad times, as he certainly would without money or land for cushions, he would blame her and become, instead of her cousin who could be trusted, yet another discontented subject. From her view, it seemed clear that one way or another it would be at her expense if he chose to marry for love and affection. ('Besides which,' said the Earl, 'since it was not ever possible for her to marry for love, or indeed, never really possible for her to marry at all, she was injured as well as insulted by it.') Better that Robert Carey should have married wisely (meaning richly). Allowing for affection to grow and bloom with time. And no matter if it didn't. For husband and wife and family would soon be too busy in service to Queen and country to concern themselves with such trivial matters.

"There came a time, not long after his marriage, when there was an encounter between them. Which, as he tells me, was altogether stormy.

"Robert Carey had been asked by the King of the Scots to bring a private message to the Queen. This was in '93 in December. He had married in August of that same year and by then the Queen had learned the news. Rode down hard and fast on those wintery days from the fortress at Berwick. Arriving and finding the Court at Hampton Court on the day after Christmas, St. Stephen's Day.

" 'Tired and dirty as I was,' he told me, 'I ran into the Presence Chamber. Found the lords and ladies dancing. But the Queen was not there. My father, Lord Chamberlain in those days, went directly to the Queen to tell her I was there with my message from the King. She willed him, then, to bring my message and any letters to her. . . .

" 'This was a bad sign for my case. Indeed I had no case at all unless and until I could meet with the Queen.

" 'So I lied to my own father, saying King James had especially ordered that no one else, under any circumstances whatever, should deliver these messages to the Queen. Or to be present until they had been delivered.

" ' "Ah, son, I pity you, then," my father said. "For the Queen is in her worst rage at the news of your marriage."

" 'Dirty and bedraggled, I went at once to her chamber. Knelt at her feet and presented her the letters. She held them, yet did not trouble to break the seals. Instead she stood up and paced back and forth, cursing myself and my wife and the day we were born. Heaping imprecations upon my head like so many hot coals.

" 'No one there except her guards. Who were standing, struggling to be like waxwork figures and to seem to hear not a word. Which was exactly as I had wanted it, hoped for. For she would never have exploded in the presence of the Court. No, she would simply have spurned and ignored me. And probably have been more inwardly furious than ever at the sight of my face. But by seeing her all alone I gave her apt occasion to vomit up her rage at me. And so, perhaps, if I acted wisely enough, to dispose of it.

" 'I continued to kneel, humble on both knees, before the throne, until, spent and breathless, she returned to sit herself down there. She was tearing at the seals of the letters when I first spoke.

" 'Ma'm, you are yourself the fault of my marriage,' I told her.

" 'Well, now. That made her pause. She had had her pleasure and had spent her wrath and her breath. I immediately added that if she had only shown me any form of favor, then I would never have had any cause to leave her and the Court. Added that since she was clearly the chief cause of my unfortunate marriage, I would not rise up off my knees and leave, not now or ever, until I had obtained pardon from her and had kissed her hand.

" 'After a moment, while she squinted her eyes and frowned at me and I sweated drops the size of beans, she suddenly laughed out loud and offered me her hand to kiss. And it was all over and done with. I was back in her favor and good grace. And I remained at Court for all of the Christmas until Shrovetide came and put an end to pleasure and festivity. The Court's no place to be in Lent. When the competition among courtiers is all to do with fasting and self-denial.

" 'Of course my wife could never come to Court while the Queen lived. And, indeed, her name was not to be mentioned there. But we lived happily and well enough on the Borders and never regretted what we had done.

" 'And the paradox of it, lad, is this. In the end my marriage has proved the most fortunate and advantageous thing in my life. For in the reign of King James, and in this new reign as well, it has been no advantage at all to have been among the kinfolk of the late Queen. But since the little Prince Charles was well and lovingly cared-for by my wife (when no other lady in England wished to take on that burden, fearing he would die in his youth) and the Prince came to love her like one of his own kin, why my profit has been considerable. Thus I owe all such offices and honors as I have held to a woman I married out of love.

" 'Still,' he told me, 'I thank God that my encounter with the Queen went well. For I often think that if I had failed or slipped on that one occasion, it may well be that I would never, never have seen the Queen's face, or known her good favor, again. Never!'

"Forgive me, my dearest Priscilla for retailing these old stories of old people. Such things are my daily bread now. The Earl talks to me and I must listen.

"Often I only seem to be listening. I set my face and nod and smile. And find myself thinking of home. And always when my mind wanders and I remember home, I think of you.

"Does that trouble you—to know that I often think of you? I hope not. For what should I do, what would I be and become without the thought of you? Always the memory and picture of you calms and restores my foolish spirit.

"Do you sometimes think of me?

"When I think of life at home, so plain and so simple and yet inimitable and irreplaceable, I grow weary of this busy, noisy city with all its restless newfangledness, with all its irremediable follies and vices. . . ."

Most especially weary of it all tonight. After a day devoted to the pursuit of folly. Which day began with gray wet air, with a dense, lazy fog over the river and half of the town. Day which began early when he gathered together a bundle of things—some of his best books, a good gown from his college days, a small jeweled dagger which had been in his family from better days and times—and hurried away to deal and bargain with the pawnbrokers of Fetter Lane. To convert these things into money for his hungry, gaping purse.

"Certainly," he continues, "there are very many pious, Godly believers, brothers and sisters, here in the City. And as often as I am able to, I try to spend my free time in their good company. I have been to the Dutch and the Huguenot churches for their services and sermons. Which churches, being for foreigners, are not so strictly required to follow the latest papistical practices which are everywhere more and more infecting and corrupting our English church—by which I refer to the vanities of vestments and candles and organ music and prayers recited by the book and all suchlike signs. Why, Priscilla, I tell you that many of the churches here these days, and especially in Westminster, close by the Court, need only to say their offices in Latin to be precisely the same as the Romans. And everyone knows how the new young Queen is permitted to have her French priests to say the Mass in St. James Palace.

"It is said by some elders that the terrible Plague this past year was the punishment of God on us all for permitting such superstitious excrescences to continue.

"I am compelled to attend devotions in our parish church with the Earl. I lack the courage to say no and to take the consequences. Though I fear he would never understand and would attribute my attitude to bad digestion—which is the Earl's explanation for most knotty spiritual and theological problems. But, whenever I can, I have slipped away to the haven of Curriers' Hall, to attend the meetings there."

How can you lie to the woman?

Closest and nearest you have yet come to the doorway to Curriers' Hall has been a jolly place called the Sun Tavern. Which is no more than a bowshot from the Hall, on Little Wood Street. And you did not meet a single pious, Godly brother or sister at the Sun Tavern.

Tell the truth. That though in intellection and disputation you have often (safely enough) favored the arguments of these purest of the Protestants—if partly because full acceptance of their premises does put an end to intellection and debate, still you have never much relished their styles and fashions. The company of these people is all too often as tedious and dreary as it is solemn. Admit that although the idle repetition of rituals and ceremonies seems to have little or nothing to do with the truth of death and resurrection, with the good news that our salvation (when we are all unworthy) has been earned for us by the precious suffering of God's Only Son, even so you do delight in the music and beauty and orderly service of the Church of England. You cannot believe that it is harmful to your own soul, especially since you are undeceived as to any merit in it.

And it can hardly work mischief on the Earl's soul; for he is as armored as a turtle in its shell or a snail in his castle by ignorance and indifference.

"Well," he has told you when you dared to speak up about these things. "I cannot speak of such deep things as the efficacy of our forms of worship as measured against those of the papists and Puritans and so forth. I attend services because it will cost me money if I do not. And because it is an occasion to see how my old friends are faring. Where else would I see most of them these days?

"I sometimes wonder if God ever feels as old as I do. If He does, I can assure you, He yawns and shrugs away most of these theological problems."

Why not tell the woman you love the truth?

As, for instance:

". . . Priscilla, truly I had every intention of trying to live wisely and well whilst I was in London. I knew the dangers and temptations which awaited me. And, after all, I have enjoyed the privilege of reading and studying the great philosophers of all the ages of man.

"Nevertheless, in spite of my education and best intentions, I have dedicated myself chiefly to eating and drinking, to gaming and whoring. And the only checks upon my immoderate appetites have proved to be not philosophical at all, but rather the limits of my body and the emptiness of my purse.

"If my purse were not as empty as my stomach at this moment (for I confess that I was forced to kneel and to vomit in the gutter before I reached home tonight), I would most likely even now be found in the ample arms of a large, handsome young woman who's called Kate of Turnbull Street. A member of a well-known sisterhood in this City, the Maids of Lambeth Marsh.

"I suppose I should be grateful and consider it good fortune that I had spent all my money before I encountered Sweet Kate. Else I should have to

pay for my pleasure with the itch of the crabs and the pain of the French Pox.

"Yet perhaps it would have been a worthwhile bargain. For my poor, tormented, roused and untested groin does ache with a pain as if I had been kicked by a horse. If my member could speak for itself, it would groan and howl. It would argue in French that surely the French Pox could not hurt worse than this.

"This Sweet Kate promised me that if I would lie with her for the rest of tonight, I would never forget or regret it.

"She stated to me that I would experience such shiverings and flutterings, such indescribably delightful and inspiring sensations that I would imagine that a wild bird had been startled and flushed from deep within me and had flown away to freedom out of my puckering arsehole.

"Pardon me, dear Priscilla, but these are the exact words and persuasions Sweet Kate of Turnbull Street used in the presentation of her argument. Proving, to be sure, that she has never studied the great philosophers of all the ages of man. Yet proving also, as I reckon it, that she can endure and thrive in this world very well without them.

"Ah, Priscilla, dearest Priscilla, I do confess that I am no more than a beast and a fool. An ape disguised in a scholar's gown. Except that I pawned my best gown this morning to pay for my vices.

"Priscilla, if you would only marry me, I am certain I could be saved from myself. With you as my wife and helpmate and bedfellow I could take heart again and be renewed and reformed by your goodness.

"And your beauty. . . .

"Now, I imagine you will most sweetly and modestly deny that you have beauty. You will remind me that youth and beauty fade sooner than the summer flowers and, anyway, that the attractions of beauty are a snare and a delusion.

"And I will have to agree with you. I will agree.

"Priscilla, I will gladly agree with anything you think or say. If only you will agree to marry me.

"If only you could . . . now . . . come to me as lawful wedded wife in this dark chamber . . . Shuck & shed those layers of dark, plain, sober, decent, black & white clothing . . . be naked as a trout in my bed . . . all shining with sweaty lust like a wild nymph . . . oh never mind what that is & who they were . . . it's enough for you to know that they were very lively young women of ancient times. . . .

"Anyway we could wrestle in love's immemorial embraces insatiate until this bed collapses into kindling wood & pillows & mattresses burst open to make a storm of feathers (like a hundred startled pheasants) in this room!"

No. Best not to write any of that. Or even to think it.

Tell her how the trouble today was this. That you were to meet some friends you had known at Oriel who are now at Middle Temple. So, out of vanity and without sufficient fear of the Devil in your heart, you rose and

washed yourself, then dressed yourself in your best clothes. Including a very expensive new pair of shoes. "One of which, I deeply regret to report, ran away from me and its mate and is even now out there lost in the dark somewhere." Shoes of the newest style with red cork heels and with elaborate rosettes and silver buckles. "At home the children would throw stones at me on account of those shoes alone."

Then you went to Fetter Lane to pawn your stuff and to fill your purse.

At which precise time, as if in a sign from Nature, herself, the wind shifted, the fog lifted, the sky cleared. And it was a glorious sunny morning.

And off you went to find your friends and to spend the day with them. Each and all of you like any other fine young gentlemen of City or Court without so much as a single doubt or cloud of worry trapped in your cheerful skull.

"You must understand, Priscilla, that it was not in any way such an unusual day for such a fellow as I.

"First thing while others were busy with their arts and crafts, or buying or selling, or learning their trades, we occupied ourselves with bowling. And I am pleased to be able to say that I won wagers against all of the others. Which (I'm sorry to say) proved to be my last net income of the day.

"Afterwards we went to a pleasant tavern to refresh ourselves with some adequate cream cakes and ale. And then and there to try our skill at some common games of chance. And either my luck deserted me for a more worthy player or one of my friends (who shall remain nameless) had himself a fine pair of Fullham dice. No matter. In either case I lost and lost somewhat more than I had gained at bowls.

"By then it was nearly dinner time. And nothing would do but that we, a crew of gallants if ever there was one, must take ourselves to the celebrated Horn on the Hoop. Which is the most excellent tavern on Fleet Street. Where you will find many of the most excellent rogues and knaves of City and Court gathered to dine well and to drink deep and puff upon their silver tobacco pipes.

"The weather having turned so bright and balmy, we paid something more than usual to be served our dinner in the garden under a rich canopy of leaves. Ate our dinner, then smoked a pipe or two while we strolled back and forth and argued among ourselves what could be the best way to waste the afternoon.

"Time on our hands. For we were all agreed that the next important event of the day, not counting supper, would be when we came to the New Exchange between five and six o'clock, before the shops close there. To see what ladies in coaches (fresh from the China Houses, no doubt) were there. For these ladies, it is said and we were willing to believe it, are only one story higher and better than whores. And come to the New Exchange for a different sort of marketing than was ever intended for that place.

"Well, someone wanted to go next to see a stage play at the Fortune—

which lies beyond the wall, outside Cripplegate, between Whitecross Street and Golding Lane. Another argued that the Hope, across the river, would be the better choice. I spoke up then for the Globe, but was hooted down. Because they did not wish to see any play that might be so well-spoken and well-acted that they might be tempted to listen to it.

"Out came the Fullham dice again to settle it. And so we hired wherries and crossed the river to see a baiting of bears at the Hope. Our disputes about drama had been a waste of time; for it was the day for the bears at the Hope.

"The bears were old, but nevertheless had the bloody best of the dogs. Who were a mangy lot and deserved what became of them.

"Now, Priscilla, I must tell you that these places—playhouses, bear gardens, bowling alleys, cockpits, etc.—are as wicked as the pious authors claim them to be. They attract a great crowd of wicked people. And the only thing to close them down and scatter the crowds is the Plague. Which was very busy here last summer, carrying crowds of souls swiftly out of this world. And not merely the wicked either. It fell as hard upon the just as on the unjust. Perhaps the harder—for the just are always fewer in number.

"Indeed, I have to tell you my best judgment is that, Plague or no Plague, there is an inexhaustible supply of wicked folk in London. Quick as they are rooted up they spring back again. Like weeds. And flourish like weeds. London is the right place, which proves there's no answer to King David's question—'Why do the ways of the wicked prosper?'

"The wicked will be here and will continue to prosper until Judgment Day.

"I suppose I must count myself among them. Perhaps that means I shall prosper yet.

"After we wearied of watching lazy bears disposing of cowardly dogs, we left the Hope to hold another council. And determined that we needed some drink to restore our equilibrium. Which commodity (I mean strong drink of every kind) is never in short supply over there on the south bank of the Thames."

Now he recalls that, before it became too inwardly foggy and embarrassing to remember much, they found themselves seated at a large table in *The Cardinal's Hat*. An excellent and commodious place not far from the Bridge and close by the Bishop of Winchester's Palace and the prison named the Clink. A place full of travellers (for it serves as an inn as well as a tavern) as well as a flock of every kind of odd Southwark bird. A place most popular with the very best sluts and drabs of that neighborhood—the kind who dress themselves as well or better than any Court ladies. And who can look as pure and haughty as the wives of Bishops. . . .

"Soon we were as cheerful and content as can be, trading the stalest of quips and jests. As if these things were the fruits of deep study, as if they were shards of golden wisdom. And all of which were no more than the worn-out lewd and merry tales of such jesters as Solomon's Marcoflus, of Howleglas, of Skelton and Tarleton and Armin.

"Priscilla, here is the jest that I told. It was one I had read in an old jest book, but it delighted them no end, as if I had invented it on the spot.

"There were three gentlemen drinking in a tavern. And at this tavern the tapster was a fair young woman. And the more they drank, the fairer and younger she became.

"Well, she said she would let each of them kiss her once. And then they discussed what might be done about it. 'I cannot see,' one says, 'how this good woman can give pastime and pleasure to all three of us unless we are to divide and share her in three parts.' 'Well,' says another, 'if we could do that, I would claim her head and fair face so that I might always kiss her.' 'Ha!' says the second. 'I'll take her sweet breasts and her heart. For there lies pleasure and also the place of her love and affection.' 'God's wounds, fellows,' says the third, 'you have left me nothing but her buttocks and her nether parts. But I shall not complain. I am content, believe me, truly content.'

"So when they later rose to leave the tavern and go home, this third and last fellow suddenly seized the tapster and kissed her full upon the lips. 'Why, what on earth are you doing, man?' cries the first man. 'You have just kissed the part that belongs to me!' 'O pardon, a hundred pardons, please,' says the third in reply. 'In all fairness and justice you are now welcome to kiss my part of her, yourself.'

"Such laughter from one and all you would have thought I was the direct and lineal descendant of the famous Will Somers. Who was Great King Harry's favorite fool.

"O Priscilla, I would gladly be your fool and even wear motley and a cap and bells to prove it, if only I could kiss any least part of you!"

Pastime and good company.

But not for long.

One young scholar, the first to desert, departed with a fair-haired young Southwark slut. To take a chamber in the inn, as if they were man and wife, for the rest of the night.

As he left us, he raised his hand in benediction.

"Not good night," he called, "but rather, God send us a joyful Resurrection!"

"Amen."

"What does he mean to say?" I asked.

"Ah, country mouse," said one to me, "You have been spared the sad knowledge of it so far. For that was the most common farewell last summer, in the worst of the Plague. When you were never sure to see each other again."

"A kind of jest, then?"

"Less so than you might think. I have it on good authority that there have been a number of deaths by the Plague and spotted fever already this year."

"And the worst, as usual, is here in Southwark," another added.

"Well, then," says the first. "We must drink seriously to ward off the infection of it. Never mind this beer and ale, these small wines and hot wines. Not even sack or canary will do. No, sir, it is cordials and spirits that will laugh Plague and pestilence to scorn."

"And so, Priscilla, they elected to introduce me to the incomparable experience of a drink made part of malmsey and in equal part of burning waters which have been three times distilled and flavored with wormwood leaves and anise seeds. It is called absinthe. And when you drink it you are in real hazard that you may stun your conscience to silence and even forget your own Christian name.

"So we soon lost yet another of our brave company. A most promising young scholar of the Law. Who will likely be a judge some day. But who for now was dead asleep at the table and would not wake up when it came time to leave. So, after appropriating his purse to spare him the shame of being robbed by strangers, we used the contents of it to hire ourselves a mercenary coach to cross the Bridge and come into London again. Leaving him quietly snoring there at *The Cardinal's Hat*."

And then the afternoon, and the evening until full dark, begins flashing in bright disorderly pieces in his memory (seeming to be memory even as it was happening) like a shower of playing cards shuffled and scattered on a table top.

Maybe there were cards. Real cards played. For his purse seemed to be much lighter than it had been.

Fists on table . . . loud voices singing . . . black jack leather tankards & flaring of rush lights in another and much plainer place. . . .

Voices loud in anger & then outside in the dark alley & himself laughing & pissing against the wall while there were fists & daggers & cudgels all around him.

"Run!" one shouts.

And he runs & staggers leaving yells and someone groaning behind him in the dark. . . .

And now there are only two of them left. Himself & another whose face he cannot now recall. In part because it was a bloody face & partly covered by a cloth. His own bloody also, nose bleeding freely. But laughing & laughing & not (yet) a pinch of pain. . . .

Turning a corner they see the Watch coming. Run for safety, ignoring the shouts & footsteps behind them. Running, for it is past curfew now.

And then alone in some poor place . . . it would surely be in or about Turnbull Street. Weeping like a child for sake of a lost shoe. While a round-faced handsome woman called Kate cleans the dried blood from his face with a soothing wet cloth.

"There, there," she says, "that's a fine young gentleman if ever I saw one. And all will be well. All will be well. . . ."

Then next penniless & yet somehow, like a dog, finding his way in the darkness to Blackfriars and to home. Stopping to kneel and puke in the gutter. Managing to waken the Porter (who is not much surprised) and to walk straight enough through the gate. But crawling on all fours up the dark stairway and (*quietly, quietly, for God's sake quietly, please . . .*) into his chamber.

To lie atop his bed and not to sleep.

To wish that a certain Priscilla from his own home village in Devon would come here now and rest one smooth cool palm on his sweaty forehead. And forgive him and absolve him.

"Until this night, Priscilla, I never understood the madness of people in the time of the Plague. Could not comprehend how so many, infected and healthy alike, could give themselves over to drunkenness and dissipation and lechery. Or how the infected rejoiced to carry their sores and breath out among the healthy so that all could be infected together and would die together.

"The City's a fearsome, terrible-like place in this sweet season with summer and the black Plague coming soon.

"Priscilla, London is old, old, old. And weary as all old things are weary. There is much building of tenements and of great houses for great men and of shops and places for businesses and commerce. But the only new public building here for years and years is the Banquet House, so well-proportioned, which was made for King James at Whitehall.

"A banquet house is all.

"Churches are old and rot and fall into decay. St. Paul's is crumbling. And still, with all the wealth in this City, no man has paid to have the steeple rebuilt. The steeple which burned in the year the old Earl was born.

"London is old. England is old and weary. There is no health or hope here.

"Let us make a new beginning. Let us leave and go to the New World. Which has not yet been corrupted by the generations of sinful men.

"Marry me and let us go to find new lives and new hope. We can never do any good or be contented here."

Pictures a fine stout ship in a fair breeze. Himself on board. Richly, yet soberly dressed. Standing beside him, holding his hand, beautiful though clad in plainest black and white, blue eyes shining, there stands his new young wife. Behind them the coastline of England falls below the horizon and out of sight forever. As they sail south, the south-westward, smoothly, smoothly carried by a steady breeze. . . .

He is asleep at last.

He must be and must be dreaming, too. For a pounding on the door of his chamber wakes him up with a start. He sits up. And next the lad called

Geoffrey, a groom or a turnspit, someone in the household of no importance at all except (occasionally) to run with messages, the lad enters grinning broadly.

How many times have I tried to teach that young fool that you do not, not ever, pound and knock on the doors of your betters? The correct thing to do is to scratch with your fingernails until you are heard and acknowledged.

It is full daylight already now and noisy with birds outside the window.

"Sir," says Geoffrey in a voice loud enough to shatter a man's head into pieces of pain.

"The Earl, he's in the garden and waiting for you to come there promptly. And sir. . . ."

Here produces from behind his back a single, somewhat battered, expensive shoe, a shoe with a red cork heel, a rosette and a silver buckle.

"And sir," he goes on, "a woman has left this for you at the gate. Woman said she is known to you, sir, as Sweet Kate of Turnbull Street."

Winks!

The boy dares to wink at him!

Sweet suffering Jesus, forgive me and love me. For I do truly hate myself.

MONTAUK POINT, NEW YORK

Spring is a lonely place.
Roads follow the shadows
of hovering gulls.
Seaside children
nail a starfish
to a board.
They throw stones a while.
Spring, you idiot Spring,
an overwhelming day will dawn
and carry us
lazy of spirit
away.

JON DAUNT

THREE POEMS BY J. W. RIVERS

THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE STEPS ASHORE IN THE NEW WORLD AND GOES TO CHARLESTON

Tawny as sand dunes,
lifeguards in flesh-colored briefs
pump iron and spread their lats.
Blondes in bikinis rub themselves
with cottonseed oil,
azaleas peer from the forest.
A jolly-boat plows into the beach.
Swearing to vanquish America's enemies,
Lafayette lifts his sword,
inquires after the road to Charleston.

Proceed, sir, a lifeguard replies;
if you see Negroes dancing on verandas
and eating pickled melon rind,
if you pass burned-out trailer camps
reconstructed into mobile home communities,
you surely are on your way.

Vowing to represent the nation
which declares itself free,
the Marquis moves on, passes great lawns
decked out with oleanders and flowering plums.
Seated among ancestral statuary,
ladies are fanning themselves
and eating she-crab soup.
Have I the pleasure
to be in Charleston? the Marquis inquires.
Sir, the ladies reply before they vanish,
you are in that place.

A booming of cannon
softly sounds in his ears.

EN ROUTE FROM CHARLESTON TO CAPE FEAR, THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE STOPS AT DIGGS PLANTATION

With his Toledo blade the Marquis
slashes through webs of Spanish moss.
Servants inside are rubbing furniture
with myrtle wax and cork.

In once-white shoes and faded wedding gown,
Colleen Diggs smiles from the spinet.
A servant with a flannel cloth
dusts the keyboard.

A huge Negro briefs the Marquis:
Master will be with you momentarily
and bids you refresh yourself.
A bottle encrusted with sand
stands on a silver tray.

Sniffing rum from Maracaibo,
Lafayette replies, I tend your master's post
and trust he is at his prime. I am here
to aid him against the British ruffian.
A passage from Berlioz sounds at the spinet.

Wearing a blood-red bandanna,
Patrick Diggs appears. Let me show you
the grounds, he says, slipping outside
and sprinting for squirrels,
whooping with laughter as they bite his hands.

With a dropper he inserts
sugared rum into honeysuckle blossoms.
I like my hummingbirds drunk, he says.

The Marquis starts to leave.
We beg you stay for dinner, says Diggs:
rack of bay lynx with jessamine roots—
General Washington's favorite.
We hope you make this your resting place.

Clemson University Digital Press

IN HIS REVOLUTIONARY UNIFORM, THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE ATTENDS A FISH FRY

The Nation's Guest removes hat,
gloves, scabbard and sword,
hangs them from a peg, and sits.
Something scampers up his trouser leg.
Babies are crying and people are eating
catfish and hush puppies.

Face down, an old woman in musty shoes
brushes crumbs and bones from the table,
serves him mullet roe mixed in grits.
Dogs are licking plates, and cows
are eating Spanish moss from trees.

A nearly palpable aura
of light proceeds from the woman.
The Marquis eats grits and roe.
Strains of Berlioz sound in his ears.

COME ON A COMING

STEPHEN DIXON

"So come on up" and I say "Okay" and start climbing. But not enough what for my feet and hands? Places, ledges, perches, niches, nooks, holes or whatever they're called to put my feet in or on and my hands to get a good grip on to climb up more than eight to ten feet on this wall. My hands are holding on though I can feel them about to slide off.

"I can't make it up this way" and one of them says "Sure you can, don't give up now. Climb. All you got to do is climb."

I try to but can't find anything higher to stick my foot in or on or anything also for my hands to hold on.

"No, I can't make it up another inch" and one of them says "Then drop down and we'll throw you a rope."

"I might break an ankle or something if I drop" and one of them says "From that height? Don't be a baby. Just drop."

I drop, landing on both feet and hurting one around the ankle. "I knew I shouldn't have" and one of them says "Shouldn't have what? What happened, you hurt your foot?"

"Not the whole foot, just the ankle. What I said before. What I told myself not to. From now on I'll stick to taking my own advice."

"Could be you didn't fall right. But watch it—here it comes" and the rope drops from the top of the wall to the ground.

I pull on the rope. Seems a bit slack. "You sure you have it real tight up there—I mean, where it won't fall down when I climb? Secure, I mean."

"Secure, sure—you think we'd take someone's life in our hands?"

I pull on it again. It still feels slack and I say "I don't know. It doesn't feel that secure. What do you have it tied around?"

"We have it around this and that and something else. Not only do we have it secure but the rope's the best you can get for climbing. You coming or not, for if not we'll pull the rope up and leave."

"But it's secure" and one of them says "Secure as it'll ever be. I'm telling you, it's taut."

I grab hold of the rope with both hands. I've climbed ropes before. In high school: not very well but it was a start. In college, where we still had to take, at least in my college, four physical science courses they called them then to graduate. One of those courses had rope climbing in it. Twenty feet to the ceiling I think we had to climb. Maybe thirty, because it was in the same gym the college basketball team played in—and then with our feet wrapped around the rope in some way, we slid down. I remember the physical science teacher saying when I got down "You ought to be a genie." I remember saying to him—

"Hey, you coming or not? We only have so much time."

"Coming, coming," and I start climbing. It all comes back to me as I hoped it would. As my hands pull, my feet and knees push. Something like that. I'm about fifteen feet up when the rope suddenly feels loose in my hands and I yell "It's coming loose" and someone on top says "Where? What?" and just then the rope comes off whatever it was around above and I fall.

I come down hard. This time I know I really sprained a foot, maybe broke one. It certainly hurts.

"Didn't I tell you to check the rope?" and someone says "You didn't say to check it. You asked if it was secure and we said it was. Anyway, we did check it. You must have been too heavy for it. What do you weigh?"

"You said that was the best rope around for climbing, so what does it matter what I weigh? If I weighed three hundred pounds it should've been able to hold me."

"You weigh three hundred pounds?" and I say "No, but that's not the point."

"It would be if you weighed that much. This rope might be the best, but it only holds till around two-fifty, maybe two seventy-five. What do you weigh?"

"Less than two hundred, way less. Oh, forget it. I'll never be able to get up there no matter what I do, and certainly not with a broken or sprained ankle, so I'll be seeing you all."

"Sure, give up. That's what you do. That's what almost all you guys who want to come over do, though it hardly seems the attitude to take if you're sincere about being in here. Look, if you want, we can throw you a rope ladder."

"Rope ladder attached to what? No thanks. You have a regular ladder—wooden, aluminum? But wait. What do you mean all us guys? That rope wasn't my fault but yours. What were you giving me, some kind of test?"

"No. And I was only talking for all of us here about hundreds like you. 'I want to come up.' 'I want to be over.' 'I want to be in there,' etcetera, etcetera. But give them two good shots at it and when they fail for their own reasons—"

"My own reasons?"

"—then that's it, they give up, but don't you worry about it, because when they get home they'll complain we're keeping them out, we don't want them in, we're only playing with them, etcetera, etcetera. You wait and see. You'll be just like the others."

"Okay, throw over the rope ladder. But secure it, will you?" and he says "Don't worry, it'll be secure. We want you here. We've nothing against you or the others. But we can't just let everyone in, can we? People who don't even want to make an effort? Believe me, you get in, you'll feel just like us. So make the effort. Climb. We might be serious but we don't play tricks" and he throws the rope ladder down.

I pull on it. It's tight. "It's tight" and one of them says "You mean good and tight. Start climbing."

"Because of my foot it might take me a little longer than usual, but I'm on my way. You have someone to fix a foot there?"

"We have everything. Someone to fix a foot, someone to make a new foot if you want. Anything you want with feet, arms, head—any part or any one thing in the world. Maybe the one thing we haven't got so much of right now, or at least for you, is time, so come on."

"Right" and I start climbing. The foot really hurts, but what they said makes it seem worth the pain. Once on top they'll probably give me something to ease it, and it also should be much easier getting down the other side. Who knows how they work it? Maybe they've a sliding pond. Or more rope ladders or wooden ladders or steps, even. Probably steps. They take good care of themselves. They have the means and ingenuity. Whatever it is, they got. Probably steps or maybe even some motorized car. An elevator or funicular or seat car or whatever it's called that's used in skiing to go up and down a mountain—a chair lift. Anyway, they want me now. Want me? I'll say they're still interested in having me, but if I don't make it now, then that'll be the end of their interest for a while. It first came in the mail. "You're invited," it said. To such and such place, "which you'll have to get out to on your own. We know you want to be with us and will be excited at receiving this. Now we're inviting you to be with us. Though it won't be easy for you, we also don't think it'll be that hard. In other words, you've more than proven to us because of your past deeds, industry, sincerity, perseverance and honesty that you're the kind of material we want and could even use here, so come on a coming." That's what the letter said. "Come on a coming. We'll be waiting," and it gave the directions, time and date and said to wear my work clothes. So I came. When I got here and looked around and didn't see anyone or anything but this wall, one of them said from on top of it "You there—up here." "Where's the door?" and one of them said "Door? You have to climb up, old friend, up up up." "With what?" and someone else said "Your hands." I tried, couldn't make it. Tried the rope, couldn't make it. So now I'm climbing the ladder. Seems easy enough despite the ankle pain. They didn't make it that tough for me. Probably some sort of initiation, those first two. Though I just about knew I couldn't make it by hand or rope. I went through both figuring that falling ten to fifteen feet each time would prove even more to them how sincere and persevering and so on I am. It worked. I'm not sure that's how I felt those two times, but they have given me a third chance and this ladder is relatively easy to climb.

The strut—no, what's it called?—the ring, the rung, though maybe also the strut, or even the crosspiece, beneath my bottom foot feels loose. I climb a step higher and the next strut, rung or crosspiece is loose, so now both feet are on loose crosspieces, I'll say. I climb a step higher and that one splits in two, so now one foot's on a loose crosspiece and the other's

dangling in the air. I'm twenty feet up and have about fifteen feet to go and the crosspiece in my top hand is loose too. I climb a step higher and the crosspiece above the broken crosspiece splits in two and the next crosspiece my top hand grabs is loose, so now I'm dangling there, two feet in the air, hands holding on to two loose crosspieces that I'm sure are going to split, and I don't know what to do.

"Help, please, the ladder crosspieces are breaking or coming loose" and someone yells "Hey, what's happening down there? We know you've a bad ankle or two, even a broken one, but we got to get down our side of this thing one of these days too."

"Do something, I'm about to fall" and one of them says "Fall? From where you are? You'll be hurt. Look, you've fewer feet to climb up than down, so I'd advise, and I think I can say this for everyone here—yes, they're all saying I can—that you just come on a coming, because there's nothing else we can do for you now."

"You can quickly pull the ladder up" and one of them says "Okay, good idea, that's what we'll do, that's really thinking, sorry we didn't come up with the idea ourselves" when the crosspieces I'm holding split in two and I fall to the ground, my feet breaking every crosspiece along the way.

"Hey down there, how do you feel?"

I'm lying on the ground, hurting all over, and for all I know I was out for a few seconds or even minutes.

"Hey, hello down there, I said how do you feel? Any broken bones? You alive? Answer us. Anything we can do?"

"I think I definitely broke a foot this time and I think also my arm which I landed on. Yeah, it's limp, won't move. What kind of ladder did you give me?"

"The best kind" and I say "If it was the best it would've had secure crosspieces or rungs or whatever you call those damn bars."

"Both will do. In fact, all three are good. And they were secure till you started going through them. How much you say you weigh? Less than two hundred? Don't try to fool us. Anyway, you can't do anything. Okay, you followed our directions and got yourself out here, but what have you done since? You can't scale a wall on your own. You don't know how to use a rope. We give you a perfectly good rope ladder which a child could climb, a person twice or even three times your age could climb—"

"Nobody could be three times my age. And anyone twice my age who could climb it would have to be in extraordinary shape and have a ladder whose bars are strong. But the bars on my ladder were weak, once I got up around twenty-five feet—"

"Twenty at the most. Don't exaggerate."

"Twenty then. But after I got up that high, all the bars were either very loose or splitting the second I stepped on them, and I didn't step on them hard, nor pull on them hard either. That ladder was defective."

"If it wasn't, it certainly is now. Look, I'm sorry, we like you and you're a nice guy and all that—sincere too, which I think is what we said in our invite to you. And you come with good recommendations, though maybe in the future we'll have to check everyone's recommendations out a little deeper, seeing what yours came to. But it just doesn't seem you really want to be in here."

"What are you talking about?—I do."

"You still do?" and I say "Sure, why not? I heard great things about the place, and it'd be a terrific achievement for me and I think a big improvement over what I have now. So yes, I absolutely still do."

"Okay, then you're in. We only wanted to see how much you'd take before you quit. But it doesn't seem anything's going to break you, which is just the kind of material we want and need, so come on in. Door into here might look like part of the wall from where you are. But if you look close enough about ten feet to your left, you'll see it and a latch to pull, which will let you in easier than any other way. Congratulations."

"You mean it?" and one of them says "Mean every word we just said" and I say "Why thanks." I get up, fall, my right foot is useless for the time being, and I say "You sure you have someone to fix a broken, or if that seems like an exaggeration, then a badly sprained foot and arm?" and someone says "Everything, just like we said. We have every kind of doctor and profession and healing art and all the other disciplines and arts and whatever you want and the very very best. But show us again how much you want to come in, by not having us come out to get you, though if you're really that hurt, we will."

"I'll show you, don't you worry" and I crawl to the place they said the door was, but don't see any outline of one or a latch. "Say, you said ten or so feet to my left, correct? So I'm here, looking—looking at nine and eleven feet to my left also, and I don't see any kind of anything that looks like a door or a latch, handle, lever, button or whatever it might be to open it."

Nobody answers. I can't see anyone on top, maybe because I'm so close to the wall, and I say "Any of you still up there?" Nobody answers. I crawl around, cover every inch of the wall I can see from one to twenty feet to the left and right from where I fell, but always crawling because of my broken foot, and I'm sure it's broken. Crawling's made even more difficult because of what I'm also sure is a broken arm, but there's no latch, door seam, nothing but wall.

"Say, I don't see anything resembling what you said would be here, so give me some more instructions how to get in, though don't forget to take into consideration my bad foot and arm."

I yell and look for another half-hour. By this time it's dark. I wouldn't try to make it to the road to get the bus back the way I am, so I just lean against the wall, roll down the sleeves of my sweater and shirt, and to help

keep out the cold, roll my socks up far as they'll go and button the top shirt button and buttons of my shirt cuffs. In the morning I should probably be rested and strong enough to not only yell to those people inside what I think of them, but to limp or just crawl to the bus stop.

DOVER (AFB), DELAWARE

'Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean . . .'

Matthew Arnold "Dover Beach"

Phantoms in their patterns tonight
gear down to ground themselves
like fallen angels.
Low over the evening traffic, they thunder
toward a lighted strip beyond the trees.
If Sophocles could hear this ocean-like roar
and remember the napalmed shadows
of Asian bones, would he still think misery
has an ebb and flow, or just
an Asian sunset clouded over
by bark of rifle and towers of fire?

And Arnold, too, would he see
this backed-up traffic waiting like
refugees in a war novel, or just say
we ride to clash like armies
each night on this darkening road.

KARL WATSON

MYRTIE'S SALVATION

BO BALL

She didn't know what denomination she was, but she knew she had been baptized and born again and that she had to fight every waking breath to hold onto both of them. Some people could just ease into salvation. Her mama heaped coals of fire on the heads of sinners by smiling into their faces, but Myrtie had a hard time. When somebody bad-mouthed her or she got her finger caught in a gate latch, she had to swallow fast to keep from saying "sumbitch." She often woke herself up cussing out a string of oaths, but she figured that if Jesus had her every waking breath, she didn't have to lay her night thoughts on the altar. Sometimes she woke her husband Stirt up and he'd say, "Myrtie, you losin' yore religion," and she'd say, "Praise be His holy name," and fall right back.

Holding onto what she had was easier before they moved to Copperhead. The old holler on Red Sow Branch had only two houses. Her mama that smiled at sin lived in one of them. Copperhead had many hollers of houses that led to a hard-top road with more, and on to Nat's Store and Post Office. With Stirt at the sawmill and no garden to speak of, she and Stirt's children by Wife Number One had time to stop.

The first day she passed by more sin on front porches than she had seen in all her life on Red Sow Branch. Radios threw out love and wine in pickup trucks. She rushed the children by, but when the screen door slapped them inside Nat's, she knew she'd have to work overtime to hold onto what she had.

Big Buster, who could read, pointed to a homemade sign and said, "No sin permitted on these premises," but she could sniff it out. Rat poison and fertilize and galvanized tubs. Big Buster and Little Sadie thrived on it. They sashayed up and down eating green gum drops.

"Where'd youens come from?" Nat asked from the Store's one rocker.

"Red Sow," Big Buster said.

A skinny woman in a straightback giggled.

Nat grinned. His wife Alafair smirked behind the counter.

Myrtie felt mortification take her face in blush.

Big Buster tugged her out of it and to the Post Office side where he pointed out pictures of swarthy men that had robbed, killed, and raped the Government. One had a special poster to himself with more names than she could count.

"Sidney Harelip," Big Buster read. "Angel Eyes, The Man, Satan Sid, A Caution."

"They lord god," she said.

The poster gave only three of his pictures—one with a right cheek, one with a left, and one head on. From the bread rack, he looked like Stirt, but

with busy burnsides and a curly moustache. From the little Post Office window, he had the long hair of Jesus Knocking at the Gate. Square dab on, he was the meanest sumbitch she'd ever seen—swimmy eyes, dog-gnarl lips, and chin bones sharp as a reaphook.

"He's in th'Top Ten," Nat said and buttoned on his radio.

"Number One," Alafair said and buttoned it off.

"He's wanted th'most," Big Buster said.

Myrtie felt a chill run up the bushes of her spine.

Little Sadie took her by the hand to the pictures tacked onto the back of the Store door—a two-headed heifer, an eight-legged cow, two babies joined at the haunches, and a man up to the middle where a woman set in with painted lips and earbobs.

Her mama once had a cow with eight working tits, but Myrtie said, "They lord god."

She wondered what sins the fathers had visited upon them.

The pictures from both sides were drawing salvation from the very corners of her eyes. She tried to focus straight ahead on Cow Chow, Pig Starter, and when her eyes did roll gee or haw, she batted hard to hold onto what she had.

The Truck came from the U.S. Mail.

Big Buster and Little Sadie lined up with strangers on the Post Office side and waited for Nat to open the little window and shake his head yes or no.

There was no Mail for Stirt's house.

On their way home, they guessed the crimes of Mr. Number One.

"Tore 'im up some school girls," Little Sadie said.

"Cut thoats on a whole ranch a cowboys," Big Buster said.

"Robbed Mailboxes," Myrtie said.

The next day Big Buster squinted up close to read so they wouldn't have to guess. They had all been right—everything from Mail fraud to rape was on his list.

Big Buster read the descriptions, but only four stayed the same on all his shapes—West Virginia, six-feet-two, eyes of gray, and a long blue ape scar on the left side of his belly.

Myrtie puzzled how the Government got him to strip down. The three pictures didn't show him below the neck, and she'd never heard of an ape scar, but when she closed her eyes she saw a big blue gash three feet long.

"How'd ye like meet up with 'at on a dark night?" Nat asked.

"I'd run scream," Little Sadie said.

"I'd rock 'im," Big Buster said.

Myrtie couldn't say what she'd do. Her heart jerked her tongue. She crossed over to the other side.

No letter came.

On their way home, they guessed new crimes.

"He hacks a heads off babies," Little Sadie said.

"Slits necks on women an' dranks th'blood," Big Buster said.

"Robs gardens," Myrtie said.

Until they ran out, they packed a face from a Wanted Man home with them every day and made up his life. Then Big Buster would thumb through the pictures to see who was right. He and Little Sadie grumbled when Myrtie got forgeries mixed up with fornications. She started keeping her best guesses to herself.

The children could throw the faces away, but they went to bed with Myrtie. The three Mr. Number One had got all jumbled and she'd toss and turn and moan and cuss.

"Myrtie, you losin' yore religion fast," Stirt said.

"Mr. Number One," she said.

Stirt thought she was leading him on and bruised her into the featherbed.

One day while Big Buster was reading a Wanted Man that had gagged a postmistress and tied her up to a live potbellied stove, the screen door slapped slow and Myrtie turned her head and there He stood—swimmy gray eyes, dog-gnarl lips, and chin bones sharp as a reaphook.

She elbowed Big Buster's ribs, but he frowned and turned right back to his reading. Little Sadie was salvaging candy wrappers from the coal bucket. Myrtie had to hold what she knew inside.

"Where's Th'Fox been?" Nat asked.

A new name. A new shape—chin beard and a white cap with a pistol stitched on its bill.

"West-by-God-Virginia," he said.

She scrunched into the feed and fertilize corner.

"Bought me a truck load a monkeys from a roadside zoo," The Fox said and opened him a red pop. "Got me a room full of 'em."

Big Buster and Little Sadie walked right up to him and fronted his thighs.

"What ye wont with a room a monkeys?" Alafair asked.

"Show folks where 'ey come from," The Fox said.

" 'Ey come from acrost th'waters," Big Buster said.

The Fox rested his bottle. Red stains rimmed his mouth. "West Virginia," he said.

Myrtie felt her knees take weak trembles.

"I seed 'em in geog'phy," Big Buster said.

"I wont see 'em," Little Sadie said.

"Ten cents a head. Fifteen for two," The Fox said.

"Look a monkey in a face ye'll become one," Lily Clifton said from her straightback.

"Monkey see, monkey do," Alafair said.

"Aman," Lily said.

The Fox winked at Nat, but Myrtie caught the last of the flutter and almost fainted.

Little Sadie found Myrtie's hand in the dark corner and pulled. "I wont see 'em monkeys," she whined.

Myrtie looked at her hard and yanked her out crying before the Mail Truck came.

Myrtie tried to get them to guess who The Fox was, but Little Sadie pouted and threw gravel at her, and Big Buster, full of geography, said that The Fox didn't know his ass from a hole in the ground.

Little Sadie asked Stirt if she could have a dime to see Fox's monkeys.

Stirt cut a hickory switch.

She cried and danced out why and Stirt told her. " 'Em monkeys just to draw moonshine trade. Use't have a Polly Bird got drunk an' talked tongue."

"I wont see th'Polly Bird," Little Sadie cried.

Stirt gave her the switch on the calves of her legs.

Big Buster hid under old shucks in the corncrib.

"Myrtie, you run around, you run around. Swear't God, how you run around." He waved hickory at her.

"I know who He is an' where He's from," she said.

Stirt wouldn't hear. "If you take my youngens see 'at blackguard, I'll tan yore hide an' send ye home."

He had returned his first wife to her mama.

Myrtie didn't dream that night, but she played like she did. When Stirt got sound, she whispered "ape scars" in his ear.

He raised his head from the pillow. "Myrtie?"

She puffed out sleep through mouth and nose.

When he got sound again, she whispered, "Sumbitch."

And she made runny gravy for his breakfast sop.

At the Store, she kept her ears and eyes open.

One day Lily said The Fox was from afar and looked like he might have served time.

Myrtie faced the poster of Mr. Number One. The resemblance held.

Nat said The Fox was one of them. That books had turned him curious.

The face of the left cheek softened.

"He's a no-heller. 'At much I know," Lily said.

Nobody disputed her word.

"Dresses 'em monkeys up like Chrustians," Lily said.

"Ought be a law," Alafair said.

Nat buttoned the radio on and found sin through static.

"Said he's gone name one for ever' soul on Copperhead," Lily said. She made the front legs of her straightback knock on the floor.

"Blastphemes th' Holy Ghost," Alafair said.

"Pays 'is debts," Nat said, "cash an' carry." He turned the radio's sound up higher.

" 'Em monkeys done marked Bugle Ann Lambert's baby," Lily said loud. "Got a tail four-five anches long. Head's so tiny Bugle won't open th'flaps on its blanket."

Until the schoolhouse opened doors, Big Buster and Little Sadie daily wished they could see the monkeys dressed up like Christians and the baby with a tail and a tiny head.

"Ast ye daddy," Myrtie said.

"Wish in one hand," Little Sadie said.

"Shit in t'other," Big Buster said.

A new Wanted Man came, but without Big Buster she couldn't tell what he had done. He had razor swipes on black cheeks and forehead. She wondered if Little Black Sambo in Little Sadie's book would grow up look so mean.

She left him for the new pictures The Fox gave Nat to go between the babies and the heifer—three monkeys that had become men.

" 'Ey come from Bible days," Nat said.

" 'Ey come from Hell," Alafair said.

Myrtie studied them up close—The Peeking Man, Ole Neander, and Mr. Crow Man—and then turned to the nearest face.

"They lord god," she said and nodded acquaintance.

Alafair tore a picture from her Bible and nailed it over the one The Fox had brought. It was Jesus Walking on the Waters. But it wouldn't cover all three and Mr. Crow Man's nose and mouth pooched out from the right foot of Jesus.

Myrtie looked at Jesus and then at the Store men. She shook her head sideways. She looked at Mr. Crow Man's nose. She shook her head up and down.

The next day, Jesus was on the bottom. Bible clouds topped the Monkey Men. Bible waters bottomed them.

Nat turned the radio on and went outside to pump a miner some gas.

Alafair buttoned the music off and ripped the Monkey Men down and threw them into the coal bucket that served as spittoon.

Nat didn't let on he knew when he came back in. He hummed songs the radio had lent him.

Alafair's eyes tried to turn him into a salt block.

Myrtie waited til the crowd swelled. When everybody was drinking pop and arguing over where they came from, she bent over and jerked the picture from the bucket. She turned toward feed and fertilize and with one flick of the hand put it inside her bosom.

She hurried home without waiting for Mail. She got her box of pictures from the chester drawyers. She put the Monkey Men in the middle of the bed. Pictures of her kin on one side. On the other, the Sunday School cards the Free Wills had given Little Sadie.

She didn't recognize the Bible Men. Esau, hairy top to toe, seeped in her brain and reminded her a little of the Wanted Men, without lamplight from Heaven to set their heads off, but she couldn't hold onto him.

The other side was easy. The Peeking Man's head looked enough like her granpappy's to be his twin. Ole Neander had her mama's chin, and she had glimpsed the parts of Mr. Crow Man every day of her life.

She looked at cousins, first and removed. Mouths. Noses. Foreheads low. The spitting images froze her. She couldn't remember frying up supper.

That night she dreamt men from afar dug up the graves of her kin and cut their heads off for a Kodak. She screamed damn and sumbitch.

"Myrtie, you losin' yore religion fast," Stirt said.

"Praise be His holy name," she said and tried to fall right back. But all night long the faces of her kin grinned by her. Big Buster and Little Sadie—dwarf Peekings—threw green apples at her and laughed.

When the first crack of dawn came through the curtain, Stirt turned over to make the springs squeak. She looked him in the face and almost fainted. His ear and cheek belonged to Ole Neander.

As soon as he left for the sawmill and the children for school, she looked at herself in the mirror. Paint had never touched her lips, but what she saw made her charge up a tube of tangee. And what The Fox drug in to Nat's that day made her charge some rouge to go with it.

She was in a circle around Nat's rocker and The Fox stooped to turn the pages of a whole book of pictures. A little tadpole came up for air and crawled out on marshy land where it became a frog and a snake, and as the pages turned, nasty birds flew over jungles and lizards big as log trucks gobbled up tree tops—and on and on until a little monkey grew into a big one and The Peeking Man and Ole Neander and Mr. Crow Man hunkered in hides and stood upright. Before it all ended the tadpole became the Mail Man that slapped the screen door and broke up the circle.

"And 'at's where we all come from," The Fox said.

"Ain't no monkey in my tree," Alafair said.

"I come from th'Bible," Lily said.

The Fox looked straight at Myrtie and scratched his ribs with both hands and winked.

She robbed three Mailboxes on her way home. The circulars were the same—a lip-spread family walking hand-in-hand toward a steeple. She put them in the box with her other pretties.

Then, for the mirror, she opened wide her eyes. They belonged to frogs. She closed them. On the lashes' way down, she saw a lizard wink.

Her right hand trembled when it applied the paint to lips, cheeks.

When she finished, she winked. Mrs. Crow Man winked back at her.

She straightened her spine and practiced smiling, but with each pucker or spread, the book's pictures peeped at her. She covered the mirror with a blanket.

She let her back hump into its place.

Stirt brought home a mess of frogs for supper. She had to fry them up or risk flogging. When the meat hit the hot lard and twitched, she saw little people waist down jigging in Hell.

Big Buster and Little Sadie greased their faces. Myrtie fasted and hummed "Froggie Went a-Courtin' an' He Did Ride, Uh-Huh."

Stirt noticed her lips and cheeks and said, "Myrt, you done lost yore religion."

"We's all frogs," she said.

Big Buster laughed, but Little Sadie's feelings were hurt.

That night Myrtie bit Stirt's ear and quoted under-th'-root.

Stirt prized himself against the wall.

The next morning she doublecoated her lips and cheeks without looking into the mirror and went to take everwhat the Store and Post Office could throw out at her.

It was empty, except for Alafair and Lily.

" 'Ey's all gone monkey huntin'," Alafair said.

"Somebody turned 'em monkeys loose," Lily said.

"Ought send 'at Fox to th'penitentiary," Alafair said. "Ought be a law."

"County's writin' up one," Lily said.

Myrtie got no Mail.

She stole a mushymelon on her way home. She sat under a cucumber tree to eat. She looked up for monkeys in the limbs. She saw only what she reckoned was squirrels.

She knelt to drink water from her spring. She caught a glimpse of herself and shivered.

Buster and Sadie came home from school full of monkey talk.

" 'Ey's mixin' with th'squirrels," Little Sadie said.

"Teacher says 'em fellers grow so big up North 'ey throw women off a tops a steeples," Big Buster said.

"We's all monkeys," Myrtie said and looked at them long.

"You done gone stare-crazy," Big Buster said and took his geography to the crib.

Little Sadie hid under the bed until Stirt came home and yanked her out and the blanket off the mirror to slick down his hair.

Myrtie walked backwards and put the blanket up again. "If we's human th'woods is full of 'em," she said.

Stirt backhanded her hard on the mouth. He went out into the yard to whisper with Big Buster. Little Sadie followed.

Myrtie tasted blood. She went to bed and covered up her head. All night long she heard monkeys clawing at the window and sniffing at the door.

"May's well get up an' let dem fellers in," she yelled through covers across the room, where Stirt was sleeping with the children.

They whispered.

She sang what she knew of "Monkey Chased th'Weasel."

Big Buster laughed. His daddy slapped him. He cried.

Little Sadie cried. Her daddy slapped her. She quietened.

Stirt layed off work the next day to go fetch her mama to cook.

Myrtie lay in bed. She watched her little mama monkey play around in pots and pans.

"Where'd I come from, mama?" she asked.

"Red Sow," her mama monkey said.

"Where'm I gone, mama?"

"Hell if ye don't change ye ways."

"Where you gone, mama?"

" 'At golden city four-square."

"Whad a monkey say to th'baboon, mama?"

She didn't know.

"Said ye ain't got no tail atall," Myrtie told her.

Her little mama monkey shook her head and smiled and heaped up coals.

Stirt brought three gray-tails home for supper.

Her mama monkey stewed the squirrels in gravy.

When they sat down to eat, Myrtie said from her bed, "Youens eatin' our kin."

Little Sadie went outside to throw up.

The others lost what stomach they had.

"If 'ey don't cotch 'em thangs soon I'm gone home," her mama monkey said.

" 'Ey done give up on catchin' 'em all," Big Buster said.

"Woods is full a 'em fellers," Myrtie said.

Her mama monkey pushed the table away. "Gone home," she said.

"Take her with ye." Stirt pointed to Myrtie.

"Too old to take back," her mama monkey said. But she gathered up Little Sadie and Big Buster and they risked dark jungles toward Red Sow.

Stirt pulled Myrtie's covers off. " 'Ey's cages for people like you," he said.

"Monkey see," Myrtie said.

"Ye ain't no earthly use to nobody," he said.

"Monkey do," she said.

"Gone give ye to th'State," he said.

The big black hairs on his hands sparkled in the lamplight. She looked him in the face. Ape hairs hugged for his throat.

He bruised her into the featherbed.

Then he tied her hands and feet and drug her to the mirror.

"God-damn rip," he said.

She couldn't tell. Her eyes were closed.

He drug her to the corncrib. Locked the door.

He came back once in the night to gag her from singing snatches from Nat's radio, but he didn't see that her bare feet were free under last year's shucks.

By morning her hands were loose, too, but she kept the gag in her mouth and her hands behind her when Stirt peeped through the slats.

"Gone get th'papers," he said.

"Hellion," he said. "Bitch."

When she saw that he had cleared the first curve, she kicked two slats loose and crawled out. She knew what she had to do.

She walked mountain paths through huckleberries. Gone. Through elderberries. Gone. Through paw-paws ripe. She sat to eat her fill. She took some for the pouch her dresstail made.

She heard a double-barrel roar for squirrels or monkeys.

She walked on. Through cleared land. Corn new-shocked. Through tobacco cut.

She came to the house with the sign of money.

She unlatched the gate.

She held her dresstail of paw-paws in one hand. With the other she knocked. She heard scratching. Chatter. But no steps.

She knocked again. No steps. She thought of four miles wasted.

She tried the door knob. It turned. The door creaked. She snuck inside.

Her eyes squinted out the sun.

The monkeys were to home.

Black, brown, two gray.

Naked and Christian.

One strapped around the belly, three free.

Two daddies. One mama. One baby.

She stood still as death and looked them in their faces. They nodded acquaintance.

The little gray one nussed her baby. Her tits were tiny white grapes. Baby's mouth missed. Mama took a grape in her hand and tested it for milk. She guided the grape into baby's mouth.

Baby sucked while mama looked its head for lice. She found one. She lifted it to her mouth and smacked.

Baby pulled hard. Mama bit it on the nape. Baby behaved.

Big brown scratched his rump and threw Myrtie a kiss.

"Shag-nasty," she said, but with her free hand she threw it back to him.

Big black jumped toward her as far as the strap would let him. He hissed at her through yellow teeth.

"Boo on you," Myrtie said. She cupped a hand over her mouth to catch a giggle.

Little gray clutched for her pouch. She handed her a paw-paw. She held it in both hands and nibbled. When her lips puckered in the goodness, she broke into chatter.

Myrtie knelt and let the paw-paws drop. The free monkeys circled her and tasted. She handed big black his share.

Mama gave baby its wad.

The monkeys smacked. Chattered. Danced.

And she rose to let her own toes tap.

She didn't hear him enter, but when her eyes caught the blue ape scar on his naked belly, she didn't flinch.

" 'Ey like paw-paws," he said. The scar grew with his loss of breath, coiled inward for its gather.

The monkeys paused for the boom of a shotgun a ridge away.

The scar moved from the corner of her eye to the door. "Gone to West Virginia where 'ey ain't no laws," he said.

"Need me a ride 'is very day," she said.

"Where to?"

"Rocks an' mountains," she said.

She took his silence as an offer. She helped him crate monkeys and moonshine, for the Truck bed. She got to ride the cab for the first time in her life. She knew she should lay low, but she looked straight ahead at bushes slap the windshield.

Off dirt and onto hardtop, the Truck sliced the hot air into breeze. She put her right hand out the window to catch it. She waved backwards to the red leaves, the yellow. "Gone where th'weather suits my clothes," she told them.

Between the say of gears she looked into the side of his chin beard. She nodded she was beholding.

"Where've I seed you at?" he asked without turning his reaphook.

She threw her head back so far the cartilage of her throat hurt. She laughed its way back down, in three little blasts of air. "I've knowed ye since time."

The muscles of his arms bunched into knots to help him around a curve. He cleared his throat in a cough and darted gray eyes in her direction.

"Gone hep ye clean through West Virginia," she said.

"Do what?"

"Rob Mailboxes. Steal garden fruit." She made bars of her fingers to hide the blush of her face.

On a smooth stretch of road, she heard the monkeys claw and chatter. "Listen dem youngens, I wisht ye would. 'Ey run around, 'ey run around, lord god how 'ey run around."

"What say?" he said.

"Whole woods is full," she said and pointed to the rocks the road was cut through. "Swangin' on possum grapes. Weightin' down burshes."

"Where you from anyhow?" he asked.

"Hell, I reckon." She reached over to touch the blue scar that stretched with his gut.

He slapped her hand away. Swerved the truck left. Missed a forty-foot drop by a hair.

"Whee! Make 'at muffler roar." Her feet slapped giddy-up.

The crates in back stopped walking.

"Reckon 'at baby needs ninny?" she asked.

His head crawled into his neck and his hands squeezed the wheel to go faster.

"Roll on, buddy," she said and laughed through nose and mouth.

When they came to the State Line, he drove off the road on a curve and braked.

"We done got there?" she asked.

"You hav't walk acrost," he said. "White slavery."

She winked that she knew both the law and the ways around it.

His hand, in tremble, helped her figure out the silver handle on the door.

Her bare feet felt the bruise of gravel. The ooze of tar.

She cleared the curve. Spraddled the White Line and waited.

The motor raced for runego.

She raised her right hand high to flag him down, but he swerved around her.

The bed-rack swayed from and then toward the next curve.

She stood stonestill til the birds got back their song, the river in the valley had its say.

Her shoulders refound their hump. But she didn't look back.

Two Trucks rattled past her.

Her feet chased the warmth of tar to find what lay beyond the next curve.

The fall of sun did not scare her. Nor the deep woods, which she took for night travel.

"Ain't nobody gone turn me around," she told the rattle of a lizard through dry leaves. And when she lay down on moss for her rest, she whispered for the spiders and copperheads to come on, make her their bed.

JAMES DICKEY'S WAR POETRY: A "SAVED, SHAKEN LIFE"

RONALD BAUGHMAN

James Dickey repeatedly returns in his poetry to the experiences of World War II, trying, one imagines, to create the poem that will at long last clarify the war's meaning to him. His encounters with war have so deeply influenced both his view of life and his art that he continually pursues his self-definition in terms of his combat experiences:

> In World War II I was in some awfully harrowing action in the Pacific, and in some places I didn't think it would be possible to survive at all. The result is that now, far removed from those scenes, places, and events, I view existence pretty much from the standpoint of a survivor—sort of like a perpetual convalescent. Someone wrote an article on me once which was called, "James Dickey, the Grateful Survivor," and I can very well affirm that this is my attitude. It's really the only personal philosophical implication of the war that I can think of. . . .[1]

Yet Dickey's survival causes him to experience more than just gratitude; it also drives him to reassess both his life as it presently is and his past as it was during those formative wartime years. As psycho-historian Robert Jay Lifton has convincingly documented, the combat veteran often approaches life with a psychological make-up not generally found in those who have not known the ordeal of war. Lifton's analysis of the war survivor's mind significantly illuminates Dickey's attempts to come to terms with the deep impression war has made on his "saved, shaken life."[2]

Lifton asserts that most combat veterans feel a "death imprint" referred to broadly as "survivor's guilt."[3] One who survives a war may believe that his life is saved at the cost of another's. Yet, even as he suffers the terrible loss of close comrades, the war veteran feels joy at his own survival; such contradictory emotions produce guilt, an enormous "turning inward of anger." This anger, Lifton believes, usually plunges the survivor into two successive forms of guilt, the "static" and the "animating." Static guilt is characterized by psychic numbing which causes the veteran to have difficulty in making emotional investments in others. He retreats into a

---

[1]James Dickey, *Self-Interviews*, recorded and edited by Barbara and James Reiss (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), p. 135.

[2]James Dickey, "A View of Fujiyama After the War," *Drowning With Others* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1962), pp. 51-52.

[3]Robert Jay Lifton, *Home From the War: Vietnam Veterans: Neither Victims nor Executioners* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1973), pp. 126-32. This summary of Lifton's analysis comes from *Home From the War.* Pages 126-32 cover the characteristics of survivor's guilt while pages 388-408 define the three stages in the movement from static to animating guilt.

kind of emotional paralysis, a "self-laceration," and distrusts the ordinary, apparently trivial currents of civilian life that seem to ignore the destruction he has been through. He thus entertains a "profound suspicion of the counterfeit." In order to move to an animating guilt, that form of guilt which offers a measure of "self-knowledge" or "self-illumination," the survivor goes through three stages in a "symbolic form of death and rebirth": first, he experiences "confrontation," a "sudden or sustained questioning . . . brought about by some form of death encounter"; next, he undergoes a "reordering" of his perceptions about the dead, a "breaking down of some of the character armor, the long-standing defenses and maneuvers around numbed guilt"; and finally he accomplishes a "renewal," a feeling that he can now be "the author of [his] own life story." Lifton's three stages in the movement from static to animating guilt—confrontation, reordering, and renewal—help define Dickey's progression from an initial state of uncertainty to an eventual measure of order in understanding his combat experiences.

Eight early poems illustrate the poet's varied approaches to confrontation, the perpetual questioning caused by his death encounters. "The Jewel"[4] announces his concern with the consequentiality of his life and actions both during and after the war. The protagonist is a man doubled strangely in time, caught in the vise binding his past and his present. On the surface of his present life, events seem orderly and contained; his secure smile is reflected by his coffee cup as he camps with his suburban family and recalls his satisfying detachment while he performed the technical maneuvers required within his bomber, his jewel. Beneath this emotional calm, however, arise the disorienting questions that occur in the poem's last stanza, questions that indicate his relentless anxieties about his present life and his past war responsibilities:

> Truly, do I live? Or shall I die, at last,
> Of waiting? Why should the fear grow loud
> With the years, of being the first to give in
> To the matched, priceless glow of the engines,
> *Alone, in late night?*

The protagonist senses that he may have been seduced by the beautiful machinery of war; he thus fears a psychic retribution for his acts, retribution defined by his anxieties about whether he is fully alive or is instead a slowly dying casualty of the war.

These profound apprehensions about his own possible guilt in inflicting war deaths drive the protagonist to seek solace or absolution from those who have been his most obvious victims, his Japanese enemies. In "The Enclosure," the speaker declares,

---

[4]James Dickey, "The Jewel," *Poems 1957-1967* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), pp. 28-29. All subsequent quotations from the poetry, except those otherwise noted, will be from this volume.

It may have been the notion of a circle
Of light . . .
That led me later, at peace,
To shuck off my clothes
. . . and fall
On the enemy's women
With intact and incredible love.

His action is not intended as a violation of the women but instead as a gesture of love; the protagonist offers solace to the women, hoping that they will return a measure of solace to him, the psychologically imprisoned victor. Yet the love remains "incredible," finally ineffectual as a source of release. Similarly, in "A View of Fujiyama After the War," the speaker seeks insight into the knowledge and experience of his former enemy: "Can he know that to live at the heart / Of his saved, shaken life, is to stand / Overcome by the enemy's peace?" In such a pursuit, the protagonist suggests his own sense of guilt about the relationship of victor to the defeated, and in so doing, he seems to be appealing for pardon at the enemy's shrines. Yet because neither absolution nor solace can be elicited from the defeated Japanese, the narrator is consequently forced to turn to his American comrades in his search for the meaning of his own survival.

The war survivor, Lifton asserts, believes that he is alive because someone else has died in his place. The survivor consequently tempers his joyful relief at his own escape from death by an agonizing concern for the dead. It is from those who have been sacrificed seemingly for him that the poet hopes to gain a meaningful forgiveness. While recreating in his poems the details of their deaths, he also draws a concrete portrait of his own amorphous guilt. Significantly, prisoners of war function as subjects for his homage to friends killed; in turn, the poet becomes another kind of prisoner to his friends' efforts and memories. In "The Performance" Donald Armstrong's acrobatics moments before he is beheaded dramatize the poet's admiration for his martyred friend. The cast of characters in this dreadful drama, however, expands to include not only Armstrong but also both the Japanese executioner, who must fulfill his role as beheader even though he breaks down in a "blaze of tears," and the narrator, who imagines with pained affection how Armstrong must have died. In "Between Two Prisoners," the same figures reappear, with the addition of another of Dickey's friends, Jim Lallery. In both poems, neither the American nor Japanese soldiers can escape their fates; death imprisons everybody, including the speaker. What transpires "Between" the Americans and the Japanese, and ultimately among all the combatants, is the realization that death inevitably claims every soldier, either immediately or eventually. Armstrong's and Lallery's and the Japanese executioner's performances are all too brief; the writer's recreations of their ordeals, however, burn forever in his mind. These poems about prisoners and imprisonment mark

the poet's true descent into his own piercing anxieties about death, and rather than discovering a means of gaining forgiveness from dead friends, the writer finds that he has perhaps only intensified his awareness of the lacerating guilt that haunts him.

But as if in desperate desire to find an escape from his imprisonment, the protagonist in "Horses and Prisoners" suddenly determines that he can triumph over death: "When death moves close / In the night, I think I can kill it." His belief that he can "kill" death as if it were an enemy soldier results from his strong identification with Japanese prisoners whom he observes first hand. The prisoners sustain themselves by tearing apart and eating the raw meat of horses; for the narrator these men become not only an emblem of the soldiers' fierce struggles for life but also a symbol for all men who are "seeking a reason to live." The belief that one can kill death and therefore further preserve his own life is, as Lifton points out, "the other side of the survivor's death imprint—the sense of having defeated death and been rendered invulnerable to it. . . . This feeling of invulnerability . . . [is] fragile, and [masks] a more powerful sense of heightened vulnerability underneath" (p. 106). The specter of men reduced to savagely gutting horses in order to stay alive does aid the protagonist in finding a "reason to live"; yet, of course, he cannot kill death any more than he can avoid his responsibility to those who have died as prisoners. Moreover, he knows that while he survives and continues into another life beyond war, death will be close; all the while he lives, his "grave-grass is risen without him."

The poet's strongest reasons to live are born out of the deaths of others, of strangers as well as of friends, a realization that he voices in "The Island"[5] and "The Driver." These two poems illustrate the speaker's deep sense of obligation to the dead; he attempts not only to offer his personal homage to them but also to gain understanding about his own life from those who know what death is. In "The Island" the protagonist believes that "the dead . . . nourish me" and that "I, by them, must live." Here the speaker expresses most directly the important equation in the psychology of the survivor—that he is alive because someone else has died in his place. As the protagonist, marooned on an island, buries the war dead, he becomes himself an island, a prisoner, one alive among the dead. His self-imposed homage to these comrades occurs because of his personal attachment to the dead: "Each wooden body, I took / In my arms, and singingly shook / With its being, which stood for my own."

Such an identification with the dead causes the protagonist in "The Driver" to attempt a recreation of death, to enact his own symbolic death, by diving to a sea-buried half-track and adopting the "burning stare" of the drowned former driver. He himself comes close to drowning by staying

---

[5]James Dickey, "The Island," *Drowning With Others*, pp. 53-54.

too long under water as he assimilates death while retaining consciousness. The closest the narrator can come to comprehending the world of the dead is through his reenactment of the driver's final realization: "'I become pure spirit,' I tried / To say . . . ? But I was becoming no more / Than haunted." H. L. Weatherby states, in "The Way of Exchange in James Dickey's Poetry," that "to be haunted is to take upon oneself the condition of the dead, to be possessed by the dead, and that is what the swimmer does."[6] "Haunted" refers additionally to the narrator's tortured grief for the dead who pursue him into his troubled "new peace." The dead in "The Island" appear as a general abstraction to the protagonist. But in "The Driver," the speaker's attempt to become one with an actual drowned man seems to offer a source of real forgiveness or at least a vehicle for a less petrifying, more meaningful guilt. Instead, however, the narrator's close proximity to but eventual failure in joining with the deceased man increases his anxieties about the dead and his obligations to them.

The poet's "confrontation" with death involves a movement from a recognition, in "The Jewel," of his guilt to an examination, in the seven later poems, of possible sources of absolution or potential means of coping: asking for solace from enemies' women and shrines in "The Enclosure" and "A View of Fujiyama After the War"; seeking forgiveness or at least understanding by recreating the prisoners-captors' experience in "The Performance" and "Between Two Prisoners"; seeking a release through the extravagant notion that he can kill death in "Horses and Prisoners"; and ultimately trying to become one with the dead in "The Island" and "The Driver." The protagonist fails finally in these poems to achieve a complete oneness with the dead, but in "Drinking from a Helmet" he approaches success and thus initiates the process towards "reordering," in which he will begin to accept his guilt and to use it meaningfully.

The "reordering" process essentially involves a breaking down of the emotional numbing that may occur during "confrontation," and in this respect, the "reordering" moves the survivor towards, as Lifton states, "his simultaneous relationship to anticipated death and continuing life" (p. 390). "Drinking from a Helmet" not only allows the protagonist to embody the last thoughts of one who is dead but also provides the speaker with a vision of earthly life beyond death. Once he has formulated such a vision of death and life beyond, the poet is able to probe directly his ambivalent feeling about himself and his war involvement in "The Firebombing." "The Firebombing" is in many respects the most important poem in Dickey's war canon because it both summarizes the themes presented in the earlier war poems and suggests a new focus for the poet's speculations. In this work, the writer attempts to answer directly the questions about his

[6] H. L. Weatherby, "The Way of Exchange in James Dickey's Poetry," *Sewanee Review*, 74 (Summer 1966), 669-80.

own self-forgiveness or self-punishment. That he is unable to make an ultimate judgment is undertandable and is perhaps less important than the attempt itself. The "reordering" process concludes with "Haunting the Maneuvers," a poem that pictures the protagonist himself as the one who is dead. His death is a symbolic one, thus reflecting Lifton's contention that the survivor experiences various forms of symbolic death; yet undergoing this sort of personal death-experience prepares the protagonist for a rebirth, for his "renewal" into life set forth in "Victory."

In "Drinking from a Helmet," the central figure undergoes a psychological transformation as he transcends the boundaries between life and death through a visionary "exchange" of identities with a dead soldier. This transformation provides as well a means of communicating with the dead, the poet's long sought-after connection with death in order to clarify his own life, his own survival. When he drinks water from a dead man's borrowed helmet, the seventeen-year-old protagonist is struck with a flurry of surrealistic images signifying that a mystical occurrence has touched him; he inherits the legacy of the dead: "The dead cannot rise up, / But their last thought hovers somewhere / For whoever finds it." Richard Howard, in his essay "On James Dickey," points out that the word *helmet* derives from two archaic verbs referring to protection and concealment.[7] Joseph T. Shipley indicates, in his *Dictionary of Word Origins*, that the etymology also includes "the final hiding-place, *hell*."[8] And certainly the young narrator's fears during combat indicate that he is in a hell for which he needs the helmet's special properties of protection and concealment. But now the helmet is also used as a vessel of communion and baptism, for when the protagonist drinks the water, he shares the "pain" and obtains the "wisdom" of the dead. He goes through the transition from youth to manhood, from a stark fear of death to a fledgling understanding of the dead, from a lacerating agony to an animating acceptance of his own survival.

The dead man's final thought gives the speaker a vision of peace beyond the context of war. He inherits a serene scene of two brothers bicycling through California redwoods. Such thoughts, coming as they do in the moment before the soldier's death, offer the protagonist a lyrical, tranquil heaven which contrasts to his hell on the battlefields. The speaker is the one who suffers both the living hell of battle and the peaceful calm of death. This exchange and transformation is at once liberating and damning: the protagonist learns what the dead think and feel when he assumes their perspective as his own; at the same time, the momentary last thoughts of the dead man do not offer peace for the living speaker, especially once he returns to the actuality of combat. The protagonist decides that after the

---

[7]Richard Howard, "On James Dickey," *Partisan Review*, 33 (Summer 1966), 414-28, 479-86.

[8]Joseph T. Shipley, *Dictionary of Word Origins* (Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams, 1967), p. 179.

war he will find the dead man's brother "And tell him I was the man," echoing Dickey's quotation of Whitman in *Sorties*: " 'I was the man, I suffer'd, I was there.' "[9] This desire indicates a feature of "reordering" referred to by Lifton: "For the person undergoing this process is struggling to bear witness to the upheaval (death encounter) he has experienced, and to do so with autonomy and authenticity. Bearing witness implies being present to share pain and wisdom, and to take on the responsibility to 'tell the story' afterward" (p. 392). After "Drinking from a Helmet," after moving from "confrontation" to "reordering," the writer is able to dramatize his own conflicts about his war involvement rather than having to depend upon others as agents for his self-exploration.

The movement within Dickey's war poems has been from an initial, relatively distant recollection of the experiences of others towards a deeper concentration on the role of the Self. In the early poems, the writer clearly distinguishes between the dead and himself, between prisoners and himself, between executioners and himself. In "The Firebombing" these lines of separation dissolve as the reordering process reaches its zenith; the psychological struggle Dickey undergoes throughout the war poetry achieves a major culmination in this poem. More than any other work, "The Firebombing" seems to free the poet, allowing him to dramatize his pride, his fears, his amazement at his own war involvement. The crucial feature of this work, however, is that the narrator clearly identifies with both the victim and the executioner, and it is in the consolidation of roles that the author is able, after writing the poem, to move from a symbolic death to a spiritual rebirth, to his own self-illumination about the war and its effects on him.

The strength of "The Firebombing" resides in the ruthless honesty Dickey demands of himself in examining his reactions to bombing missions remembered twenty years later. The central figure attempts to reconcile two divergent roles operating at once within himself. He is a cool "technical-minded stranger" who glories in his own flying and bombing skills, a man in a position to admire elaborately bursting bombs. On the other hand, years later he is an American suburbanite who hides his private astonishment about war deaths behind the bland mask of ordinariness, a man amazed at his former charge over the lives and deaths of others.

Initially characterized as a "homeowner," the narrator is apparently in league with other suburbanites, American and Japanese: "All families lie together." An immediate dichotomy destroys the unity of the homeowners, however, for some are "burned alive" while "The others try to feel / For them." These first four lines present in microcosm the poem's and the speaker's conflict: as a bomber pilot, the narrator has delivered destruction to the Japanese suburbanites; as a present-day American suburbanite, he

---

[9]James Dickey, *Sorties* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), p. 159.

shares the sense of home's inviolability formerly enjoyed by his victims. Yet he can only *try* to feel sympathy for them and remorse for his own actions. To probe the nature and extent of his own responsibilities is a psychologically dangerous activity, and thus he accumulates extra body fat as a physical insulation, a telling parallel to his need for emotional protection from self-reproach. Yet, as he attempts to "Starve and take off" fat, he clearly determines to lay bare the truth of his own situation, shedding both pounds and protection.

The only direct punishment for his bombing missions as a war pilot has occurred when a mosquito, drunk on altitude, bites him beneath his oxygen mask while he flies over his target. The triviality of his punishment disturbs him, for what he has done—destroyed homes and lives—should obviously meet with appropriate consequences. Instead, he now enjoys the affluence of his suburban existence; yet, in quiet moments he knows that, because of his actions, "my hat should crawl on my head" and the "fat on my body should pale." The modal condition, *should*, suggests that the hat does *not* crawl nor the fat pale. The speaker is unable completely to accept his actions as wrong and consequently is unable to feel or to formulate an appropriate punishment or guilt.

As a pilot the protagonist remains hidden safely in the blue-light of the cockpit, as he was in "The Jewel," removed and protected from the bombs dropping on people. The airplane he flies is described in human terms, as an extension of the narrator, and conversely, the pilot adopts technical, unemotional, what Lifton calls "numbed" attitudes as he assumes the characteristics of a machine. He neither deeply feels nor morally judges his bombing performance. As a pilot, the narrator requires the personal distance involved in his powerful "charge" to kill others:

> It is this detachment,
> The honored, aesthetic evil,
> The greatest sense of power in one's life,
> That must be shed in bars, or by whatever
> Means, by starvation
> Visions in well-stocked pantries. . . .

Because he is forced to imagine what he cannot see actually, the poet internalizes the entire event of the bombing mission. He becomes not only the executioner of other people but also the victim of his own re-creation of the destruction. And because he becomes one with the victims as well as with the destroyer, it is impossible for him to pronounce judgment on his actions; he can neither completely absolve nor completely sentence himself. Rather, the poet must continue starkly and nakedly to confront the ambiguities of his situation. If he could choose either absolution or sentence, his emotional quandary would be solved. Instead, Dickey adopts a much more authentic but terrifying honesty; he is condemned to an unresolved ambivalence that will not let him achieve any peace.

Significantly, only after he has attempted connection with the dead in his earlier poems and after he has clearly seen that he is both the victim of and the executioner in war deaths does the poet dramatize himself as the one who is dead. In "Haunting the Maneuvers"[10] the narrator's death is a symbolic one, the result of a mock-killing during a training-camp war game. Instead of bombing others, the speaker is "bombed" by a sack of flour and becomes the "first man killed" during the war exercise. The whiteness covering him gives the protagonist an appropriately haunted or ghostly appearance. The poem's tone is, for a while, comic and ironic; since his is a sham death, being killed is "easy" and without blood. The tone changes, however, to a more solemn one when the protagonist ascends in "self-rising" sleep into his dream of death. As he moves in the night air above his comrades, he hears the mass laughter given to the "chaplain's one / Dirty joke," the cleric's false, romantic slogans about battle and death. The speaker perceives the truth behind such shams when he sees "nothing / But what is coming." The glory that he had once thought possible in battle now turns into damnation in the "Hell" of combat. Lifton's perceptions of a symbolic death and rebirth are clearly suggested by this poem, for it is after this "death," prepared for by the exercises of his self-scrutiny in "The Firebombing," that the writer begins to move beyond death into what Lifton calls a "principle of improvement" (pp. 124-25). This "improvement" occurs in the final step moving the survivor from a static guilt to a more complete form of self-knowledge—"renewal." "Victory" may be seen as a manifestation of the poet's emotional "renewal" to life, accomplished by a symbolic rebirth after the war's end.

Dickey's process of "renewal" is dramatized in "Victory,"[11] a poem that presents a series of images of the Self's rebirth. Lifton states that "renewal" is "a process that, once established, can combine enduring forms with perpetual re-creation . . ." (p. 405); the survivor feels the assurance that his life will continue while simultaneously experiencing its varied moments as if for the first time. This reawakening to and assurance of life are, however, tempered by the death and suffering the survivor has endured. "Victory" is ostensibly a celebration of the Allied victory over the Japanese, but it is much more dramatically a personal rejoicing about the protagonist's successful escape from death and his opportunity for a renewed life. With his survival assured, he celebrates with whiskey two birthdays: the date of his actual birth and the occasion of his symbolic rebirth. As he drinks the whiskey, the narrator begins a transformation into his new life, his "life/After death." He feels his navel burn "like an entry-wound" as he drinks heavily and moves within himself towards the memory of home. Through this Dionysian baptism, the speaker halluci-

---

[10]James Dickey, "Haunting the Maneuvers," *Harper's*, Jan. 1970, p. 95.

[11]James Dickey, "Victory," *The Eye-Beaters, Blood, Victory, Madness, Buckhead and Mercy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 38-41.

nates a snake's head coming out of the bottle and biting him, forcing a "brotherhood" between himself and this "angel / Of peace." The brotherhood that the speaker and the snake share is comparable to the blood-brotherhood dramatized between combatants and enemies, the sharing of life amidst and sometimes beyond death.

In his drunkenness, the protagonist indicates that he drinks not only to the war's end but also "to what I would do, when the time came, / With my body." What the narrator does with his body is to gain a new skin, the skin of a snake, in a tattoo parlor in Yokahama: "Naked I lay on their zinc / Table, murmuring 'I can't help it.' " The clause " 'I can't help it' " is repeated three times at key moments of his struggle for rebirth, a repetition suggesting either that his transformation is beyond his control and volition or that he has consciously surrendered himself to the process. The tattooed snake coils over the speaker's body, beginning at his throat and cutting through the V sunburned on his chest; it encircles him as the "peaceful enemy" depicts scales on his side. As the snake design nears completion, the snake-skin begins to assume and consume the life of the protagonist: "I retched but choked / It back, for he had crossed my breast, and I knew that many- / colored snakeskin was living with my heart our hearts / Beat as one."

Though the narrator's badge for his survival is ironically that of death—the snake is a figure that Dickey frequently uses as an emblem of the underworld—the protagonist is nonetheless resurrected into a new "life / After death." The new life that he gains depends upon his intense awareness of the ambiguities he will encounter, of both the jubilation and the guilt of his survival. He is the Lazarus-like figure who returns to life to face and to examine overwhelming complexities; he is the poet-seer who must face these complexities profoundly, not easily. He will never say simply that he is innocent or guilty, that war is good or hellish; he has witnessed and realized too much to reduce his knowledge to such small equations. He is reborn into life not with a psyche washed clean but rather with a mind immersed in the greater, more troubling comprehensions with which he must constantly confront the issues of his survival. By incorporating the actual and symbolic qualities of the snake into his own skin, the speaker experiences his "Second Birth"; this image, borrowed from the title of Dickey's 1964 essay, emphasizes the nature and the magnitude of the poet's artistic origin.

The writer's new life bears the results of war's paradoxes: the public glory and the private doubts of heroism, the excitement and the horror of bombing, the camaraderies of battles won and the isolation from friends lost, the joyful relief in and the agonizing guilt of survival. The poet acknowledges the unsettling questions about his life and the war he has survived; and in this respect, the war becomes a vehicle for his encounters with the terrifying truths about life and death that drive him towards profound answers. The insights into the war survivor that Robert Jay

Lifton provides dramatize the depth of Dickey's exploration of the Self. It would be, however, misleading to assess Lifton's characterizations of the war survivor as flaws of a tragic figure or of an emotional cripple; rather, in regard to James Dickey, Lifton's research illustrates another kind of courage resulting from war encounters: the painful process of the poet's bringing himself to life again, experiencing a second birth into a profound, dark wisdom about his "saved, shaken life."

HEAVY WEATHER

OTIS DOUGLAS

My father was trying to strike a storm jib in heavy weather when the thirty-eight-foot boat pitchpoled—turned end over end. The first crewman to come topside after the boat finally righted herself found that the helmsman was dead in his safety harness and my father was gone. Because all this happened two days before I was born, I grew up without ever knowing my father in that somewhat arbitrary mode of experience that my seven-year-old daughter, a TV addict, calls "true life." My first contact with him in his own realm did not occur until I was nearly grown, and on that occasion I was dead drunk.

I was sixteen then, and toward the end of that summer one of the students from the school I went to had called to invite me to a partially sanctioned party he was giving at his parent's beach cottage over in Maryland. I commissioned our hired man to buy me a fifth of rye whiskey, borrowed my mother's car, and sallied forth.

Later in the fifth I discovered that I had a talent for falling. The first fall had been accidental—while lighting a cigarette I had simply toppled over and struck the ground before I had time even to attempt to catch myself—but after that, cheered by onlookers, I very quickly developed falling into a new sport. I found that I could fall backwards, forwards, or to either side and still maintain the posture and dignity of an oak tree right up until the moment of impact. I could hear the sound of my body hitting the ground but nothing seemed to hurt me. The other males at the party all tried it, of course, and some of them were pretty good, but nobody else could maintain the correct expression—a faint and unperturbed smile—all the way to the ground. Even today I am, so far as I know, the foremost practitioner as well as perhaps the inventor of this little-known art.

Driving home that night I had no feeling in my hands and had to keep checking to see if they were still on the steering wheel. My reaction time was so slow that I would find myself staring down foolishly at the backs of hands (somebody's hands) while I wondered if perhaps anything of interest might be going on back up on the highway. The sensation was curious—like being the operator of a body that was itself the operator of an automobile. I was finding the whole business intensely interesting while, at the same time, enjoying the serenity of being off at a great distance, unconcerned.

Then, as I approached the draw span of the Potomac River Bridge, climbing higher and higher into that drunken summer night of twenty years ago, I became aware that there was someone in the back seat talking about me.

I suppose I must have suspected that the voice was an hallucination, but at the time, any possible distinction between the back of my mind and the back seat of the car seemed hopelessly subtle. I didn't know who he was talking to, if anyone, but the speaker sounded like my Uncle Larry and his opinions were similar to some that my Uncle Larry had expressed about me in the past.

"All he does is spend money and drink whiskey, and run after tail," the voice said, and continued on like that—nagging, mocking, delivering the whole catalogue of dreary complaints that I have been hearing all my life. Because I still thought there was only one speaker back there I was tempted to turn around and silence him. I realized, however, that during the course of such a maneuver the car would certainly cover five miles or more, and that seemed unsafe to me—particularly on the bridge.

". . . and he never cleans up his room and he smokes too much and he spends all his money on comic books and all he ever does is go to movies and listen to jazz and jack off."

I had just resigned myself to listening to this kind of trash the rest of the way home when another speaker cut in. A stranger. His voice was unlike any I had ever heard before—rich and free and careless.

"Hell, Larry," he said, "leave the boy alone."

At this the first voice became even more petulant: "Somebody has to offer him some guidance or he'll never amount to a thing. —He never had a father, you know."

"The boy's doing all right. You weren't such hot stuff yourself when you were his age."

"I was better than you. I always kept my shoes polished and got good grades. I never looked up little girls' dresses and I never played with myself. And I always did what Mommy told me to. I *made* something of *my*self."

"Can't make chicken salad out of chicken shit," the stranger said.

This laconic remark struck me as so hugely amusing that I felt compelled to turn around and see who the speaker was. It seemed to take me a long time to move, however, and when I was finally looking behind me there was nothing there. Not just *nobody* there, *nothing* there. I panicked and tried to turn back, but by the time I was looking forward again there was nothing there either—no strange hands on the steering wheel, no road, nothing.

"Is he dead?" somebody asked.

"I don't think so. But, God, he sure is drunk."

These voices, as it turned out, were those of the young police officers who found me the next morning. When I passed out my foot must have slipped off the accelerator because the car had rolled along the shoulder for a hundred yards or more before drifting quietly through the churchyard of a colored church and coasting to a stop with the front bumper nuzzled against a tombstone.

Later my Uncle James was to say that he didn't see how a thing like that could have happened unless there had been someone in the car with me. My Uncle Larry said he didn't think there had been anybody else in the car, but God knows I needed somebody to look out for me. Both of them agreed that if I lived long enough I was going to turn out to be exactly like my father.

Although I had felt a warm kinship of some kind with the man in the back seat of the car that night it never occurred to me until much later that he had been my father. Perhaps I failed to recognize him because he had never been more to me than a fictional character—a wondrous figure as portrayed by James Dean or Paul Newman. I knew from all reports that he had been an obstreperous adrenaline addict who had loved motorcycles and sailboats and too many women, and I had seen the serious-looking man in the picture on my mother's dresser, but that was all; I never would have guessed the identity of that first apparition if he had not decided to show up a second time.

By that time I was a sophomore in a small private college for men located just north of Richmond, Virginia, and I was completely unhappy. This was college in the button-down fifties, when to be intellectual was regarded as eccentric and to be eccentric was regarded as little short of criminal. Without bourbon and masturbation and Dave Brubeck, I doubt if I could have survived those four years.

While my fellow students all seemed to be running for political office, I kept to myself, read good books, drank alone, listened to jazz all night and took long afternoon walks through the countryside. Looking back I suppose that except for the drinking it really wasn't such a bad time for me, but if it had not been for occasional discussions with a malcontent philosophy major who hid out across campus somewhere, I would have been utterly alone in that place.

My father showed up in April of my sophomore year. I remember that it was April because in Virginia that's when I used to get intoxicated just from breathing the air, and that afternoon I had called up a girl—something I rarely did in those bourbon-soaked days. I remember telling myself that all I needed was a girl to talk to, but it happened that the girl I called was so lovely that the only time I had even been in the same room with her I had experienced difficulty catching my breath properly.

It took a long time just to get through to her on the phone and then she repeated my name over and over again. "—Chandler? Martin Chandler?" she kept saying in a do-I-know-you tone of voice. Even after I explained where we had met she remained dubious, but then her voice, already rich and, in a distant sort of way, sexual, became suddenly intimate.

"Oh God," she said. "I know who you are."

I could tell that she was impressed: "Everybody does."

I told her that although some did perhaps consider me unconventional, I was really a very discriminating and intelligent person—could we perhaps get together for dinner sometime.

"No, I'm sorry," she said, her voice shifting into that impersonal I-know-my-way-around tone that Becky—my daughter—uses whenever she is reciting the rules to some little game she's made up.

"I'd like to," she said, "I'm really sorry. Look, don't tell anyone you called me, okay?"

As I hung up the phone I noticed little groups of students already starting for the dining hall, but I decided, as I often did, to skip supper. Upstairs in my room I had a quart of Virginia Gentleman. I went up and poured myself a glass of that and I put on my record of Duke Ellington at the Newport Jazz Festival. I knew that soon I would be too drunk to deal with the hi-fi so I fixed the changer so that over and over again it would play *Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue*—that great Ellington piece in which Paul Gonsalves breaks off on his own and blows twenty-seven straight choruses. Then I moved the bottle and cigarettes and ashtray over to the windowsill where everything would be handy, and I pulled my chair over by the window and settled down to watch the darkness come. Martin Chandler's Bar and Existential Blues shop was once again open and ready for business as usual.

Shade by shade the light withdrew from each leaf, each blossom, each molecule of air in exact and random order, but I could see now that the active ingredient in all this beauty had never been anything but my own aloneness and impermanence. For one clear and utterly desolate moment I was able to see all the way to the end of my life and know that I was never going to have any of those things that I so desperately wanted.

I knew that, try as I might, I was never going to be able to bring the divergent elements of my nature together. The girl on the phone had been exactly right about me—I was too weird, and her beauty, like all the beauty of Earth, had been nothing more than an enticement designed to keep me running on the same old elaborate and tawdry fool's errand.

By this time it was dark and I had already drunk most of a full glass of bourbon. The other students were on their way back from dinner, their cigarettes glowing intermittently in the distance. Just before I passed out I remember thinking, well, if nothing is going to work out for me anyway, at least I don't have to stay in this dismal place. Then I was still in the same dormitory room, but I was trying to build a boat.

At that time I had had very little firsthand experience with boats, but I knew the story of how my father had escaped from the malaise of his own undergraduate life in a twenty-four-foot sloop salvaged at an insurance company auction for $150. Nineteen years old and with no experience whatsoever he had sailed that wreck all the way up the coast to Labrador and halfway back.

While living on beef stew that he ate cold from the can, he had taught himself singlehanded sailing in a boat that required fifteen minutes of pumping every hour. Then he discovered that by lashing down the tiller he could go below for long enough intervals to start rebuilding the boat

underway. By the time he started back down the coast he had to pump only one hour out of twelve and had begun studying navigation out of a volume of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* commandeered from the Dartmouth College Library. Given more time I'm certain he would have made it to the Islands and, after that, who knows where, but in a three-day storm off Newfoundland his boat started to come apart under him; he was lifted off by some Nova Scotian fishermen just seconds before the last of it dissolved in the sea. The fishermen told him that they would not have been anywhere near that area if they hadn't been lost themselves.

My boat, the one I was trying to build, nearly filled my little room, but in my dream I was serenely unconcerned about how I was going to get the completed hull through the door and down three flights of stairs. My immediate problem was how to get the side planks to hold together at the bow. Again and again I rebeveled the joint and tried to fasten the planks together. I tried holding them together with every device I could think of—paper clips, rubber bands, hair ribbons—but each time they sprang apart again.

When I had been working at that one task for what seemed like hours, I became aware that there was someone in the room watching. I stopped work, looked over into the corner where I somehow knew he would be standing, and saw a big red-headed man in his early forties.

His clothes looked vaguely nautical—nothing so corny as white ducks and a captain's hat—but something that gave me the impression that this man was used to working around the water. I remember that he was wearing a T-shirt and had just the beginning of a beer gut. He walked over and, still without speaking, wrapped a piece of rope around the two planks and secured it with a professional-looking knot. Then he inserted a short stick into the loop of rope and began to wind it up, gradually drawing the planks together. After he had the ends locked together as firmly as if they were in a vice, he picked up a plane and began to fashion the stem piece.

Each stroke he made was a miniature work of art—direct, precise, without hesitation—as though he had made that exact movement hundreds of times before. Watching, I began to feel an emotion that seemed entirely new to me—something inexplicably different about the universe and my place in it. I tried to ask him who he was, but then, without warning, I was alone at the tiller of a small boat, running before the wind in a sea that glistened and flashed and was tossed out from the bow like handfuls of diamonds. When I woke up, the Ellington record was in its crescendo phase and it was dark and I was sober again, more alone than I had been in the boat. I lit a cigarette and stayed by the window to wait for the dawn.

Too many of the stories about my father had presented him as a reckless and unfeeling character for me to recognize immediately that the man in my dream could have been him. This man's manner had been absorbed and impersonal, all right, but at the same time there had been a kind of unlimited friendliness about him. Always before I had thought of

his kind of confidence as a cold thing, but watching him I had realized that even precision itself could be an indisputable form of warmth—something requiring no further demonstration or confirmation of any kind. For the first time my own wild impulses began to seem like nothing more than the ceremonial part of some hidden orderliness, and even though I still did not know who he was, I recognized that my feelings about this man were closely akin to love. Then, up floated the sun—as warm, as impersonal, as perfect as the face of God—and I knew for the first time that the stranger in my dreams could not have been anyone but my father.

I was affected enough by this revelation to make an extra trip home in order to ask more questions about my father, but was able to add hardly more than a stroke or two to the crayon portrait of him that I had scrawled as a child.

According to all reports my father had been one of those brilliant erratic men who do everything well but never settle down to any one thing long enough to make a really substantial achievement. At various times he was an explorer and specimen gatherer for a museum, a bush pilot in the Yukon Territory, a crop duster in Kansas, a commercial fisherman, and a blasting contractor. The only pattern to his activities that I can discover is that he seemed attracted to high explosives and remote places.

He was also a man who at anytime would set out for anyplace (or no place) in any boat, but he seemed to have a special fondness for sailboats that were way too small or manifestly unsuitable in some other way, or both, and was not really happy until he was getting under way in an improper vessel, at night, while drunk, with a storm coming up.

Not all of his talents were dangerous or destructive, however, He made over a dozen prize-winning photographs and somehow found time to write a book, long since out of print, about a river in South America that no other white man had ever explored.

I know from my mother, my Uncle Larry, and others that he drank too much, drove too fast, spent money recklessly, and had love affairs. But I've also heard stories which, if true, prove that he could be almost absurdly generous and, while absolutely nobody ever approved of him, a lot of people liked him, and some otherwise calm and stable people (my mother included) loved him inordinately.

Occasionally my mother would look at me and comment about how much my father would have loved me, but then, immediately, she would become pensive and say, "Probably too much. He always loved everything too much."

For reasons still unclear to me, my father's older brother, my Uncle James, will not speak of him at all. Never. Once, when I was pressing him hard, all he could find to say to me was this: "Your father was a very smart man."

All through my disastrous first marriage I was seeing a psychiatrist who thought my drinking was an attempt to establish the connection with

my father that I had missed as a child. He cited as evidence the fact that my father had never put in an appearance except when I was drunk, but I remained skeptical. Drinking undoubtedly brought out in me my father's love of being up against outrageous odds, but this made me feel closer to myself than to anyone else. In those days I did not need a psychological excuse for drinking; I had not yet experienced the merciless psychophysiology of addiction, and I still loved alcohol for its own sake. Drinking enabled me to narrow my entire existence down to a razor-thin sense of incipience—the feeling that any moment now I would surely become "myself again with yesterday's seven thousand years." My doctor warned me, of course, that alcohol never solved anything, and I agreed, but secretly I felt that that was only because nobody had ever managed to drink quite enough of it.

My next contact with my father occurred on my twenty-eighth birthday. I believe now that the woman I was married to then had really wanted to make that day pleasant for me, but our relationship had deteriorated to the point where any evidence of caring was too painful for either of us to bear. Without wanting to we fell into one of those "little discussions" that occur when two people finally realize that separation really is inevitable and each is determined to destroy the last of the marriage in such a way as not to leave behind even a crumb of anything anybody could possibly want. She had stormed out of the house in order to be with her new "friend," and I was left there alone with my old one—a bottle of bourbon. When I passed out I was sprawled across the living-room couch, but in the dream I was back in my own bed in my mother's house.

My father came in and sat down on the edge of the bed. I knew immediately who he was and was not at all surprised to see him—just glad. His expression was serious, but friendly, and he didn't say anything at all. I began telling him all that had happened since the time he had helped me build the boat.

He seemed to have plenty of time so I went into detail, telling him about some of the little things as well as the big things. I remember explaining carefully why it had taken me three years to write my dissertation, interspersing my argument with comments about the folly of buying an imported car. I told him something that up until that moment I had not known myself.

"I'm an alcoholic," I said, "and that makes a lot of problems for me."

He simply nodded at this and when I saw that there was going to be no rebuke of any kind I realized something about him that I had not known before—that he was a doctor. It seemed odd that my mother would have failed to mention such an important and incongruous fact, but here he was at my bedside—skilled, confident, and compassionate. I told him that I had been suffering all my life from the same dreadful disease but that I had no idea what it was.

"Homesickness," he said.

I started to protest that I'd had this disease even when I was at home, but he only smiled and began to write something on a prescription pad. In my dream I saw what was going to happen and begged him not to leave again, but he paid no attention. When he had finished writing he handed the folded prescription to me and then he left the room.

By that time I knew I was dreaming and I became certain I wouldn't be able to read the prescription; either it would be an illegible scrawl or a meaningless jumble of words, or I would wake up as soon as I looked at it. But I was wrong. The message appeared in a calligraphy that was individualistic, but exceptionally precise and clear. It said: *Your twenties don't seem to be working out very well for you. Why don't you just skip the next couple of years and start on your thirties.*

For fully a minute after I woke up, this advice still seemed sound and workable to me, and I lay there feeling saved. Even after I realized that his message had been absurd, that improbable sense of security remained.

I met Jill, my wife, at a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. Even now, nine years later, this is not one of the things we laugh about. We are not devoid of a sense of humor and we share restrictive covenants about few subjects, but it happens that we never joke about drinking and we never joke about marriage, not even our own. If we meet people we like and they comment on how formal or scrupulous Jill and I are with each other, we always tell them yes, it's true, but that we prefer not to talk about it. That's all. We don't mention it again. If they do, we drop them.

I do not think that this attitude is a reflection of vulnerability. Neither Jill nor I has had a drink in nearly a decade, our marriage has encountered and survived most of the vicissitudes of suburban life, and for seven years we have been living with a little girl whose every movement is of the headlong variety; I'm sure that by now we are both aware that we are not particularly fragile people and that the stability of our relationship is not really all that precarious.

Upon close examination, our other apprehensions seem equally groundless. Not only do I have tenure at the University but I also make as much as a consultant as I do teaching; our modest house is completely paid for so that the substantial portion of my income that once went for accelerated payments is now providing an almost ponderous insurance estate; and, twice a year, the three of us buckle ourselves into the little Swedish-built tank that serves as our family automobile and proceed cautiously to the doctor's office for complete physicals. Nothing is likely to go wrong. We both know that, but there is nevertheless something about scrupulous heedfulness for its own sake that we find soothing. Carefulness seems to be one of those things that we need, perhaps for the same reasons that others sometimes require methodone or antabuse.

Two years ago, however, I opened my life once again to the possibilities of randomness and accident; I bought a sailboat. It was a thirty-two foot Bristol—one of those technological marvels that the old-time sailors call a "plastic fantastic." This boat had everything: furling genoa and mainsail, diesel auxiliary, even a Loran navigation system. If I got frightened about something, there was always a switch for me to activate, and if I was really frightened, two switches.

I could not have been in any less danger than I was on that boat, but, nevertheless, Jill didn't like it. Of course we never had anything even approaching one of those "either-that-boat-goes-or-I-go" scenes that other sailors are subject to; in fact, for a long time, Jill didn't say anything at all about the boat. Then one night she mentioned, very quietly and cautiously, that sometimes the boat made her nervous. The next day I turned it over to a broker to be sold.

I am sure that I would have soon lost interest in sailing, anyway. At first just owning the boat had provided me with that old, delightful, trembly sense of expectancy that I had once thought could come only from alcohol. I suppose that on some level I had the feeling that I might sail out there and somehow find my father—cold, wet, and lost, certainly, but not dead. After a few expeditions, however, I began to realize that it wasn't working; my father, alive or dead, simply was not the type to have anything to do with a boat unless there was a damn good chance of its falling apart. I suppose I must have already resigned myself to never seeing him again, because I still feel shaky about what happened last night.

Last night, while helping Becky with her bath, Jill observed her touching her genitals and made what I'm sure was a tactful, parental-type comment. "It feels really good," Becky explained, and my wife said yes, she knew that. Then Becky turned her grave little face up and said, "Mommy, why does it feel so good?" It was at that point that I was called in for a family discussion.

Jill and I sat on the edge of the tub, and Becky sat in the tub, and the three of us talked about love and sex in most of its combinations and permutations for as long as seemed appropriate—about five minutes in this instance. Although we stayed reasonable, honest, and calm, I'm afraid we did not get the whole issue resolved. It was established, however, that love and sex do feel quite good, even though nobody could say exactly why.

We dried our daughter off, put her nightgown on her, finally found her stuffed frog, and tucked the two of them in. Each of us had to give each of them (Becky and her frog) exactly two kisses—an important part of bedtime protocol around here. While Becky settled down to sleep, Jill and I drifted toward our room and into each other's arms. Now, safe, I thought yes, Becky, it does feel extravagantly good and even though I'm nearly forty years old now I still don't know anything about why. All I know is that this earth is so lovely and the source of so many pleasures already surpass-

ing my comprehension, that I'm certain that if there is any choice in the matter I will keep coming back forever to haunt this place.

Later Jill and I held each other and talked in the same intimate, but careful, almost formal, way we always talk until I went to sleep.

Then it seemed to me that my father and I were standing in the upstairs hall in the old house that I lived in while I was growing up. Outside, it was blowing so hard that the whole house rattled and swayed and shook as though it was about to be carried away in the wind. I knew my father was going to have to go outside into the storm because he was wearing foul-weather gear—the old kind they called oilskins. He looked entirely miserable. I asked him what was the matter.

"It's not going to work," he said.

"What isn't?" I asked.

"Nothing," he said. "Nothing I try ever works."

"Can I help you?" I asked—but he didn't seem to hear me.

"I don't know what I'm supposed to do anymore," he said. "I've never known what to do. —What's going to happen to me?"

He was looking directly at me, but without recognition, and I realized for the first time that he had never known who I was. When he spoke again it was as though he were trying to call to someone against the wind; I could barely hear him.

"I'm scared," he said. "I've always been scared."

I tried to reach my hand out to him then, but he could no longer see me. As though he had been alone all the time, he turned and walked toward the stairs, and then I woke up and lay awake for a long time—utterly bewildered. All day I've felt both restless and composed, like a man who isn't sure whether he has just returned from a long trip or is about to embark on one.

TWO POEMS BY SUSAN SCHAEFFER

AND WHO IS THE DOORMAN

And who is the doorman in that house of dreams?
And what does he make of them as they check in,

Coming in drozhkas, broughams, Model-T's,
Cloth-wrapped feet soaked through with blood,

Their heads bobbing under sailor hats,
Wide-brimmed straw hats, their coarse wool shawls,

Signing the register.

And who takes them to their rooms
Through corridors of clouds,

And when they look down,
Can they see our peaks beneath their feet

And do they care?

When they get there, are they locked in,
(The key, that one essential bone that failed them here)

Do they cry out when they hear it turn?
Dark empty rooms that unfold every night in sleep,

They are like the rooms of the great summer house
The maids readied every year,

Are empty of them, wait for them,
The sheets tight and neat in the blue light.

We know everything about how they left,
Whether it was slow or quick,

How much the ticket cost,
What a mistake it was to look away.

While we looked up
The curtain fluttered near the door

And they were gone.
And it seemed wrong to ask, will they come back,

When on some days, you could see them going up,
Bright spirits from lawn to roof to tree,

Climbing the brilliant rungs of air,
One by one the rungs of clouds,

Joyously, the anchor of the body gone.
That anchor weighs our feet,
Which, like theirs, moves slower every day.

And will you not return to me in dreams? we ask.
And they do not reply.

And if you do, will you return again?
And no answer comes.

And the blue rooms bloom so early now,
In the ever-shortening days,

And the wind blows a dark door open
Across our light,

And still they will not come, or say.

THE RIVER

Ah, my love,
This bruising we do in the amorous air.
This river we swam in once

Is not the same; our flesh is not us.
Downriver,
Last year's selves shout

And climb up on the bank,
A dripping child in each arm.
Further below,

Two white shapes, mouths locked,
Grip each other, as if
They would rather drown than breathe,

And father down,
Where the river pours over the rocks,
Two white wraiths

Do their mad dance
On the broken shells.
They cover the banks;

They stretch for miles.
Today, as the sun sets,
As the sky bruises to blue and black,

We climb out of the water
Onto the old rock.
I hand you the pure white shell we find here.

You hurl it like a wineglass at the rocks.
As it shatters,
You are what you were.

We are what we were.

TULLIA

HARRIET GAY

It came so quickly, that sharp jab, right in time with the boat signal; a dark noise, so out of place on this beautiful blazing June day, made to order to celebrate his return. Well, you're sixty-one, Link Collier. These aches and pains are bound to come and go. 1900 had sounded futuristic and unreal when it had come on his birthday, six months ago.

He looked high up at the Statue of Liberty and thought of Roberta. She had sent him one postcard, he had sent her two. He'd gotten a dry peck on the cheek two months ago when he'd left to take the train. And never a wave or smile as she stood beside Nathan, fifteen and taller than she was. He'd looked grave and eager as he waved and leaned forward towards the window, memorizing the sight of his departing father.

Even when Lincoln was courting Bertie twenty-seven years ago she never laughed or smiled. She'd had plenty of distant admirers all right, with that long blonde hair, the lightly fringed pale blue eyes and perfect small ears, eyebrows, everything physical in fact. But who had been her only Sunday caller for years? Always he. He could still see her bright hair hanging down against her blue and white checked dress as she sat at her easel in the afternoon sun and painted watercolor flowers in her back yard.

Would it have done any good to argue with her when she moved into the nursery after Nate was born? It had happened that all at once everyone was after him . . . the school committee, library board, then came the deaconship of the Congregational Church. They seldom had meals together. He had cut down on some of his meetings and brought his work home, but nothing seemed to change her angry manner. She was always the same.

They had been very careful not to be too harsh with Nathan. Bertie remembered Sister Kate and herself being slapped hard on both cheeks for being late for breakfast, for speaking too loudly, or sneezing; Link had been caned for interrupting his elders, for not finishing his dinner . . . all those other punishments they'd taken for granted at the time. So Nate never got much more than a small scolding. He had a violent temper and wouldn't have any decisions forced on him. They couldn't stop him at ten, for instance, when he had brought his orange crate cage full of snakes to his bedroom, but the snakes had settled matters by expiring within a week.

Standing on the platform in April Lincoln had heard someone mutter, "There's Link Collier taking off for Europe. And what I think is, he's taking a vacation from Bertie." But as he chugged off through the grey moist morning he felt that what he was escaping from was the smothering, primitive beauty of Mattawanset, whose highest emblems of culture were

the church choirs and the brass band that marched on Memorial Day; what was on the other side of the Atlantic he knew only from the Famous Paintings book in black and white that he'd been given when he was twelve; there were the improbably high snowy mountains; cathedrals, tall square church towers tolling their bells across oceans with gondolas; enormous half-clothed marble figures in public squares.

Each Sunday on board he had gathered all the fellow-worshippers he could find for morning services of Bible reading and hymn singing, and he warmed at the touch of home in this. But the first muffled sight of Land's End in the April mist was so much more exciting and unlike any previous sensation than he could have ever expected.

He stood before the Arch of Constantine for a whole hour and quoted James Russell Lowell to himself:

> Still by cracked arch and broken shapes I trace
> What here was once a shrine and holy place. . . .

He made a list of as many items in the Louvre as he could remember; he sat and counted all the pipes in St. Sulpice while he listened to an organ recital. He climbed to the top of the campanile in Venice. "Gee! Was I a wreck!" he wrote in his book. He spent a perfect day touring through Oxford with the larks singing and the meadows sweet with clover and poppies. He frowned at the decor in the throne room of the Belgian monarchs, "a bit too loud for my taste." He reflected, in Germany, where he couldn't make any sense at all out of all the signs, that "education is really *everything* to a man or woman." He met many fine fellows and nice young ladies and got their addresses. All the way home on the boat the American voices sounded harsh and grating after the florid and rather gracefully complicated phrases he'd been hearing all through Europe. Now he would have dreams to dwell on as he watched Bertie working around the house or pulling things out of the garden with her quick, fierce gestures.

The book of paintings he was bringing to her was beginning to seem unbearably heavy. He felt in his pocket for the meerschaum pipe he'd bought for Nate. He was near enough now so that he could see the faces on the pier, and he spotted his son at once in the front of the crowd. He was starting to feel quite dizzy, and hoped he could keep smiling when he reached him. He waved from the deck, but Nathan didn't see, and he tried to walk quickly down the gangplank while he was still able to move. He pitched forward into his son's arms at the end of the ramp, and he could hear Nathan's voice fading in his ear . . . "Father, what's the matter? Oh Father. . . ."

* * *

After a while people stopped infuriating Roberta by asking if Nathan's temper explosions had been less frequent after his father's death. Nate had been known to have broken a little girl's front tooth in school when he was eight and to have beaten up a big boy twice his size. When he became a teenager he was sent to a military academy in Boston and had graduated with high praise. Nowadays it was only from her spinster sister Kate that Bertie put up with comments about Nate or any other subject. Kate could be even sharper than Roberta when she was annoyed.

"I was at town meeting last Friday when Nate blew up at the school superintendent; told him they didn't need a new furnace . . . he'd damn well fix it himself. I heard he went down there afterward and did it, and it's been working fine ever since. He *does* go into such rages, though, my-soul-and-body! Whenever I took him to a show in Boston he'd turn around and swear at anyone who even breathed noisily. He wants power, I think, and lots of it. He wants to be president. Or maybe king," said Kate.

"Well actually it's just that he's very sensitive," said Roberta, her voice rising a little.

"How's his fan club?" asked Kate, putting a little more dryness into her tone. On Nate's twenty-first birthday some young ladies had put together a book of magazine clippings illustrating his life. They even found a picture of a boy in knickers building a cage "for his snakes." He had taken each one of these girls to yacht club dances now and then. "No one's winning," Roberta smiled very slightly. People around town said he'd never leave his mother. "When you gonna put one of these Mattawanset girls out of her misery?" his bachelor neighbor asked him while he was working on the house one Sunday morning. "When you gonna walk into the noose?" "No noose is good noose," Nathan muttered and went on hammering and sawing and planing.

In 1917 Nathan went for Officers' Reserve training in North Carolina, and shocked everyone beyond belief when he came back married to Sally Rae Lyons, a honey blonde with a carefully marcelled boyish bob and laughing brown eyes. The whispers went around. "Have you seen the way she Charlestons at the Yacht Club? I heard the wedding took place so fast Roberta didn't get down there to the South. She'll be living in the same house with them, though. Uh-oh. And Nathan's thirty-six years old, you know, and the girl's only twenty-two."

Sally wore ruffled orange chiffon and pastel crêpe de Chine when she first came to Mattawanset, but after Connie Rae was born she dressed in grey linens and dark cottons for the afternoon teas. After Connie's birth no one saw her around town much; her health hadn't been good after the baby was born, and it was said she'd been thinking of going back home for a long rest. No one had expected Nathan to have much patience with a baby.

But Roberta died the next year, and Sally took to going down to North Carolina every four months or so and staying for weeks at a time.

Connie had her father's black curls and was said to be a very quiet child. She had come to think of Coltown, North Carolina, as her real home, and a refuge from her father's yellings, slappings, and shakings. He seemed always angry at her, for no reason she could understand.

When Jamie was born two years after Connie's birthday Dad got worse than ever, but to her, not Jamie. She conjured visions of her father tied very firmly to a tree while she danced around him sticking out her tongue and making donkey ears; and he would yell and strain so ferociously that he would finally break a blood vessel. Would it make a pop noise when it burst? The veins that stuck out in his temples were blue, she had noticed, so how could the blood be red?

One day she was in the Coltown house playing slapjack with her grandfather, and her grandmother sat looking at her and murmuring, "It's so nice to see her happy. Her father's too strict with those children." "I don't think it's a matter of strictness, really," her grandfather whispered back. "Children get on his nerves; he's forty-five years old and he hates working in that bank, and well. . . ." They stopped when they saw her looking at them.

Connie managed to keep out of her father's way by reading in the attic most of the time. She found *The Last Days of Pompeii* and *Don Quixote*; she liked the pictures in the volumes of Shakespeare but couldn't understand the strange speeches, and she had trouble getting started with the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Her favorite item was a dark mulberry-colored book called *Famous Paintings of the World*, collected and edited by the author of *Ben Hur*, named General Lew Wallace, who looked eager and troll-like behind his wealth of beard and tiny silver glasses. The pictures were of young couples courting; children feeding small animals; battle scenes and seascapes with snowy mountains; there was one of a girl in her wedding dress, lying in a cage under a lion's paw, called "The Lion's Bride."

One picture that always halted Connie was called "Tullia." It was of a wild-looking girl with her hand raised high, one breast bared and great clouds of drapery floating out behind her, driving a Roman chariot with two spectacular rearing horses over the body of a fluffy-bearded man lying in the folds of his great black cape on the cobblestones, a bloodied sword lying beside him. The caption told about "Old Servius Tullius . . . one of the most primitive kings of Rome. Like Lear, he had a most wicked daughter . . . a sedition arose, and her father was dethroned and slain. Did she sorrow over her father's death? Nay, nay; she rejoiced, rather, and led the insurgents." The people around her in the street were in various affected poses expressing horror. The preachy tone of the description didn't arouse Connie's sympathy, but the girl had such a look of triumph on her face, a kind of blank ferocity.

One dark rainy day Jamie came to the attic and found her staring at the picture. "Is that what you'd like to do to Daddy?" he asked her, and she

laughed and said no. Jamie wore glasses now, and got all A's in school. Every time this was pointed out to her she resolved again to try as little as possible. They'll never know what I can really do, she said to herself.

By the time Connie was fourteen her father's black curls had been replaced by a white fringe around his head, making the sharp outline of his skull more threatening than the dark wavy hair had been. His cheeks had lost their high coloring long ago, and he seemed to be getting thinner, crankier too, by the minute. The day after he was taken to the hospital her grandparents arrived from Coltown, and there were whispers around the house.

His funeral a while later hardly seemed to involve her, but she remembered the minister saying, "His one fault, if he had one" . . . she held her breath . . . was he going to tell the truth? . . . "was that he worked too hard, even on Sundays." Jamie cried a little, not very much. Her mother hardly shed a tear, but she was constantly red-eyed and she later reproved Connie for whistling in the kitchen while weeping friends and relations came to visit in the living room.

* * *

After her father's death Connie lived in a long dream of listening to the radio music programs and reading everything in the Paul Pratt Memorial Library. They kept giving her certificates for reading over five books a week, but she threw them away when she'd collected about twenty.

On a damp April day just after her sixteenth birthday she stayed at her school desk for a while after everyone else had left. She went and stood at the window below a ceiling ventilator, wondering if she could get home on her bike before it started to rain. She suddenly realized that there was muffled music coming from the ventilator. It must be somewhere in the school loft, where she had never been. She hurried up the stairs before any teacher could appear and stop her. She recognized the music coming from the open door as the "Danse Macabre" which rose to a climax as she entered a big, many-windowed room.

It was empty except for a long debris-covered table at the back, and there was someone standing behind it. She realized almost immediately who he was because she remembered having seen him in the halls. He was Jeremy McGrath, the son of the school janitor who had recently died of cancer. He had lots of dark wavy hair, black-fringed eyes, and was very handsome! She remembered that he'd been attending college in Boston before his father died, so he must be about nineteen. She told him her name and asked, "Is it all right if I stay and listen to the music?" "Of course," he gave her an enormous grin, and went to get another record.

The whole table was covered with electrical paraphernalia, with an uncovered turntable at the far end. At the opposite end was what appeared to be a homemade cage, and in it was a fat robin with his leg bandaged in a

splint. "I found him on the ground outside the front steps," Jeremy told her. "Some boys were fooling with him and I brought him up here two days ago. He should be well in about a week. I had a mouse with a sore foot in here once too, but he sneaked out."

He put on "The Swan of Tuonela" next. She tried not to stare at him while he worked. There was something gentle and affectionate about the way he manipulated the wires. His whole manner expressed humility and respect, but also a willed detachment. I must look like some little high school girl to him, she thought. He didn't look at her at all, and seemed to have something on his mind. He was so handsome, he must have a girlfriend, perhaps somewhere in Boston. Connie decided she'd better not come up here again. She stayed about twenty minutes and told him she had to leave. "I hope you'll come back," he said.

After that they ran into each other in the halls all the time. She went and listened to his records every Friday, and they said very little to each other. He seemed to know all about her, but the only thing she found out about him was that he was studying electrical engineering in Boston and hoped to go back to it next year. She dreaded the day when school would be over, because he showed no signs of asking her out.

On the last Friday of school Jeremy was waiting for Connie at her classroom door. "My Uncle Si's at the house with his violin," he told her. "He plays square dance music in Boston. Can you come over?" His house was right across the street from the school, and Connie hoped she could be in and out of there before her mother had any chance to wonder where she was, so she agreed.

His front door opened onto a dark oblong room with an upright piano at the far end. His mother was seated at it with a balding dark-haired little man standing beside her holding a violin. She turned and grinned at them and said, "Hi Jed." Then, grinning wider, "You must be Connie." Jeremy winced and introduced his Uncle Si DeVito. Mrs. McGrath had an enormous mop of greying frizzy hair and two or three gold teeth, and her shapeless loaf of a body was bursting the seams of her flowered dress. But how she and her brother could play! The only other live music Connie had ever heard was from the choir in the church . . . four lady singers about in their seventies.

Connie stayed fifteen minutes past supper time, and her mother was waiting at the door when she arrived. She explained as briefly as she could, hoping that the idea of the music would ease matters, but Sally looked as though she were about to cry, shook her head and said, "Oh Connie!"

That night Sally was on the phone a long time, and the next day Connie found herself packing for Coltown, to spend the summer there. They had intended to leave in two weeks, but they managed to make the getaway remarkably fast. Connie decided not to give Jeremy a goodby call. She mailed him the Coltown address on a postcard just before they drove away.

After she had been at her grandparents' house a week a small fat envelope appeared in the mail basket by the door. She ran to her room with it and locked herself in. The typing was completely perfect, and he told her he used to write for the college newspaper, "so this is the style you'll be getting."

The letter consisted mainly of something he'd made up about her fourteen-year-old neighbor, who was an eccentric prodigy and a laughing stock at the school:

> The Mattawanset P.O. is in plenty of hot gruel this week.
>
> Ralph Littlefield sent an old bicycle frame down to the P.O. to be bundled off to the factory for realignment and conditioning. The new clerk called for the stationmaster and together they surged into the dark, dank storeroom in back of the P.O. The new clerk groped around, seized something angular, and he and the stationmaster wrapped it up.
>
> Well, when the parcel had been returned from Detroit, Ralph rode it home. You know Ralph. His mind is and it isn't. It wasn't until he tried to readjust the sprocket that he discovered that the new shipping clerk had shuffled up his old bicycle frame and Miss Christine Tower, somehow, while she'd been looking for something in the storeroom.
>
> Ralph is suing the Post Office. And our postmistress is a chromium-plated nervous wreck. With twin electric horns and speedometer, and a tool kit.

He told her he was writing the letter at 3 a.m. and signed it "Good Night." Connie couldn't decide whether to show it to her mother or not, but finally brought it to her in the sewing room. Sally took it with a great show of disinterest, but her eyes rounded as she read it and she smiled a little stiffly at the end. "Kid stuff," she said. "Tell him not to stay up so late."

Connie tried hard to imitate Jeremy's style in her letters to him and hoped he wouldn't notice how difficult this was for her. He wrote every two weeks; but at the end of the summer there were only two postcards, written from Duxbury, where he was vacationing.

On her return to Mattawanset in September she went straight to Woolworth's and bought two toy flutes. Then she bicycled past Jeremy's house tooting shrill notes and rode off in the direction of the beach. She turned and saw him pedaling toward her and waited.

She wasn't prepared for what happened when they stood facing each other. They stared, hypnotized, and couldn't say a word. Then they said "hello" nervously, in unison, and she smiled and handed him one of the

flutes. They rode down to the beach, leaned their bicycles against the bathhouse and walked to the farthest rock, still not speaking at all. They sat down, and to avoid another staring fit she started to play "Annie Laurie." Gradually they worked up a recognizable duet. But then there was another long silence, and he yelled at her, "Dammit, why can't we *talk*?" She answered in a tiny voice that she didn't know, and finally there was nothing for them to do but go back to their bicycles. She rode with him towards his house, then said "See you." "Right," he said in the same muffled, dead voice.

She went home and sat at her white child-size desk and started a letter to him. At the top she wrote "REPEAL INHIBITION" and went on to tell a fable about two Indians from different tribes meeting on the road, hopelessly trying to figure out each other's language. She went and left it in his mailbox, riding off again quickly. His answer was in her box next morning. It must have been left there after midnight, because she had stayed up until then, watching.

"So that's where you are," he started out, "on paper, yes?" He described his sitting up almost all night "scribbling and scrapping" while he listened to the cat purr and the kerosene stove mutter, and finally boiling everything down to the fact that he wanted to see her again very soon, and very much.

School began the next day, and he was waiting with his bicycle beside hers when she came out of her last class. They went to the beach or around the town nearly every afternoon after that, speaking little but not really uneasy with each other. His notes appeared in her desk every morning. There were made-up stories about the teachers, students, townspeople, usually with little cartoons. He brought her books to read: Stuart Chase's *Tyranny of Words*; science books by A. S. Eddington, A. N. Whitehead, James Jeans.

Sally knew what Connie was doing with her afternoons and seemed grimly resigned to the situation. But as the weeks went by Connie wondered, won't he ever come closer to me? Or at least invite me to a movie?

Towards the end of October he stood by her door one morning as she entered her classroom and asked if he could take her out Friday night. She nodded yes, whispered "Come at eight," and rushed to take her seat, because the glittering-eyed prow-bosomed Miss Dorothy Chandler was glaring at her from the front of the room.

When she told Sally, her mother stared at her a long time, then, head on one side, said, "Well, you'll learn about men from him as well as anyone else, I guess. Oh and darling, I have some big news for you. Uncle Arthur has asked me to marry him and we're going to live in Coltown. We leave next Monday."

"That's great," said Connie, and began to calculate very fast. Uncle Arthur had always known the family, and had been widowed about two years. He wasn't really an uncle, merely a neighbor, in an enormous house

she'd always loved. He had white fringes around his ears and looked like a golf-playing Scotsman, which he probably was; anyway he was nice. He'd been writing her mother every other day recently, and he'd called two nights before. The wedding, her mother told her, would be in about two months. They would keep the Mattawanset house, renting part of it and coming back summers, Sally told her.

She really should tell Jeremy the news before Friday. Monday was November first, and later on, during the long winter vacation, perhaps her mother would let Connie come back and visit Aunt Kate for a few days. Connie would tell Jeremy this and hope he wouldn't find another girl while she was gone. Connie and Jamie had always gone over to Aunt Kate's for Saturday lunch. Her aunt wouldn't be at all happy to have the family leave.

She biked off early next morning to look for Jeremy and finally found him in the basement working on the furnace in his grey, smudgy sweat-shirt. When she told him the news his face elongated in shock, then he clamped his mouth shut, lower lip thrust out. "I guess there's nothing I can say," he spoke with bitterness and some reproach. She stood savoring his expression as long as she could, then, "But we're keeping the house, and I can come back at Christmas for a while and stay with Aunt Kate." His face was transformed very quickly by a wide grin. She told him she'd see him Friday and ran to her classroom.

Jeremy was at her door exactly on time in a navy pinstriped suit, a red tie and a grim expression. Sally was out, so they didn't have to go through the business of meeting her. He offered her his arm slowly, watching her, and led her off the porch.

It grew dark quickly in the October evening. The silence was heavier than usual between them. They always chose their words, oh, so carefully. "I won't allow you to be banal," he had told her once. This was among the several things that kept her pretty well tongue-tied. But he'd been talking a lot more, lately. The last time he'd sat with her on the beach rocks he'd talked for a whole hour about an electrical apparatus he was trying to invent, describing it in very close detail.

They drove to a nearby town and ended up at a favorite beach of theirs, facing the shoreline and the distant lighthouse whose 1-4-3 signal spelt *I-love-you* to all the local couples who came and parked there. They sat in a painfully tense silence until with a gasp he reached for her and they buried their faces in each other's necks. Then their lips met and they stayed in an unrestrained clinch for a long time. Finally he moved away from her and said, "Ah Connie," so mournfully that she felt he'd come to some decision, then "I'm taking you home," and he drove the three-mile distance to her door very fast.

In the car he held her for one long last time, burying his head in her shoulder. "I can't do anything, anything," he was murmuring. She looked past him out of the car window at the stars and thought, why don't I feel sad

or sorry at all? I'm flying right up around those clouds, a mile a minute. After a while he walked her to the porch and stood looking at her. "If only I could get away from you for a moment . . . the feeling of you, the sound of your voice." He started to walk away, and she said, "But I'll see you in two months." He straightened up, waved from the driveway and said, "Right, all right."

° ° °

Sally enrolled her children in a very good and expensive day school near Coltown. This Connie attended in almost complete oblivion of her surroundings, remembering past scenes with Jeremy, visualizing those to come, waiting for his letters; these she always answered on the day she got them. Jamie got tired of trying to talk to her on the bus to school; she acted deaf.

It was 1943 and Connie was in her senior year. The fact that a war was going on in the distance seemed irrelevant to her own life, but Jeremy's letters showed that there were changes in his. He had gone back to Boston to college, he told her, "But I'll have to leave because I've got a good new job in the shipyard." As the letters went on he seemed to keep getting promoted every other week, and finally he was given a highly responsible status which Connie didn't understand, except she knew it included the hiring of personnel.

By December 25th Connie had come to an agreement with her mother about a visit to Aunt Kate for a few days in Mattawanset. "I'll call every morning at nine, and you be in every night at eleven *sharp*." "You don't need to worry about me, Mother," Connie said, and Sally looked at her a long time. "Oh, I don't, exactly. I just know there's no one like you, and no one does things quite the way you do. I know you'll be all right."

° ° °

When Jeremy came to Aunt Kate's door she hurried into the front room and waited. But there was nothing unfit for her eyes. Connie and Jeremy stood staring, transfixed, into each other's faces, not even trying to make a move. After a long enough while Aunt Kate came towards them, swishing her long black skirts, and Jeremy said hello. She peered at him over her tiny oblong glasses, then nodded as they said good-by and left.

The December stars glowed over them as they walked to the car. As they rode along she stared at Jeremy's profile, the sharp nose, slightly thrust-out lower lip, and the wonderful dark curly hair. He looked purposeful and not at all happy. "Jeremy, I made it," she whispered. Banal? "Yuh," he was breathing a little hard and gave her a quick look in the dark of the

car. She saw that he was heading into the long, forested driveway of a deserted Victorian mansion that they'd often visited on their bikes. When they parked he turned toward Connie, hesitated, then lunged for her. They sat writhing and clinging together for what seemed like an hour, then stopped and gazed at each other through the dark. There was a foot of snow on the ground, and the temperature was probably about thirty degrees. "It's not safe here," Jeremy whispered. "The police might come." "I have the key to our house," Connie said. "Mom told me to check up on things while I was here." Jeremy gave her a long look. "Let's go," he said.

"Don't forget that the electricity and everything have been turned off," Connie reminded him as they entered the house. She handed him the large flashlight that was always on a shelf beside the door—an old rule of her father's—and led him to the top floor. As they mounted the stairs he slowed down to look at the photos along the wall. He stopped before the one of Lincoln Collier, taken when he was elected deacon of the Congregational Church. Jeremy thrust the corners of his mouth way down and his eyebrows far up, imitating Grandfather's expression and looking silly and grotesque. Connie turned away quickly when he peered at her to see if she was amused. Beside Grandfather's picture was a large black and white photo of the Quad at Magdalen College. "What's this dreary looking place?" "It's at Oxford in England. Grandfather went there just before he died." From about age ten Connie had set this place as a distant goal far ahead of her, and had stood before the photo every once in a while saying to herself, "Oh please, some day, some day. . . ." "Those old-timers," Jeremy muttered, "Such a bunch of necrophiles. Always clinging to the past," and he put his hands on Connie's hips to move her up the stairs more quickly.

At the door of her room he directed the flashlight around until its beam hit her bed, then led her to it and sat beside her. He studied her expression for a moment, then turned the flashlight away from them and eased her down. They squirmed together for a while, then he started to unbutton her blouse. She pushed him away from her. "I'm sorry . . . really . . . I didn't mean for us to. . . ." He muttered something angrily, then took a deep breath, sat up and reached for the flashlight. "We'd better get out of here," he said.

He quickly drove back to Aunt Kate's, and Connie was afraid to glance at him, knowing how angry his expression would be. It was. When they arrived he came to a quick stop, turned to her, and said, "I can't stand this any more. Look, I'm making a really big salary now. A friend of mine at the shipyard has an apartment in Quincy. His girl lives in it and works at a hospital. They . . . don't know yet if they want to get married. He told me there's a vacant apartment near his. Do you . . . do you think you could . . . you know? When you come back next summer? Then we could see how things go."

Connie found herself breathing hard and unable to stop. "I'm really so tired from the trip," she said. "I guess I'd better see you in the morning."

She didn't recognize her own scared voice. "I'll be over at eight after I call you," he said, giving her a look of something like scorn and not making a move to see her to the door.

She had thought it must be at least midnight but Aunt Kate's kitchen clock, always right, said nine-thirty. She ran up the stairs to the daisy-patterned room that had always been hers whenever she stayed with Aunt Kate and sat on the bed without turning on the light. She turned and lay face down on the ancient horsehair mattress and began to cry as quietly as she could. Aunt Kate opened the door and stood there with the light behind her. "Constance," she said in her cracked New England voice, "it's the women of the world that keep the men decent." "Please go away and let me alone," Connie wailed. Aunt Kate hesitated, then made a gesture of impatience and helplessness and shut the door.

Now what? She couldn't possibly let him go for good, not now. And she couldn't stand another evening like this one. There was a plane at noon tomorrow . . . she'd better pack tonight. Whatever was going to happen, they'd have to settle it by mail . . . in any case, get packed. It didn't take her long. She fell asleep, wiping her eyes.

Jeremy called exactly at 8 a.m. "I'm down here at the cove. I've got the biggest surprise for you *you'll* ever see! I'll be over in twenty minutes."

He stood at her door in a checkered golf cap that was new to her, his face rosy from the December wind. Whatever his surprise was, it wasn't making him happy. He seemed grave and depressed as he led her to the car. "Well, what is it?" "Wait and see," he said, shaking his head and frowning.

At the entrance of the cove an impossibly long black rock seemed to have been added. "But it's a big dead fish!" Connie said. "A whale, about eleven feet long," said Jeremy. "Let's go look." There were three small boys exploring all sides of it.

The rubbery sloping blob in front of them must have been a very young creature, just learning to spout. Grandfather Lyons had read *Moby Dick* to Connie when she was ten, skipping the long boring parts about making rope and candles and all that. She'd cried over the last chapter about when the ship went down. She still remembered mental pictures of a dark ballooning mass spraying and seething along like slow music; making the waters roar and swirl around the creature as he leaped miles into the air; diving down and vanishing in a boiling maelstrom.

The three boys went on climbing around and over the whale and kicking its sides but there was really nothing about the featureless hulk to hold their interest, and they finally ran away. Jeremy stood there mournfully, lower lip thrust out, looking like a doctor who had despaired of his patient. "How will they ever get rid of it," Connie wondered. "It's much too big for a truck or anything else to move." "Maybe they'll have to move Mattawanset," said Jeremy.

They stood for a moment looking over the wintery grey sea at the dilapidated shack far out on the bluff where an old coast guard was said to

have shot himself after many years on the job. "Come on, I want to talk to you," Jeremy took Connie's hand and they ran back to the car.

"Look, I was wrong about last night; maybe we could . . ." but Connie stopped him with a quickly formed lie. "Mom called last night and wants me home because . . . Grandpa Lyons is sick and I'll have to take care of things while she goes and stays with him." She didn't see a solution to the problem in any direction. He gave her his sad dark-blue-eyed look, then turned to drive back for the luggage.

Connie confirmed the airplane flight, then relayed her news to her mother, who sounded only a little worried. "Not having a good time, sugar?" "The worst. But I'm all right."

They drove towards Boston under the bright sun with its glaring white all around them, past skeletal trees in fields, then black structures of buildings and bridges in the distance. After some searching they found an isolated place to park near the airport. They held each other for a long time, and then he asked when she'd come back. He looked so mournful that she told him it would be after the exam break in February.

On the flight home she thought, I'm probably as happy as he is miserable, but it can't be helped right now. After three days a scrawled, torn piece of paper came from him, part of a rambling letter full of crossed-out words like "bordering," "tendency," "illumination"; he'd finally put a line through the whole thing and written on the front: "I'm so much alone without you. It can't get worse. Will write later." She waited a week and received nothing further.

In the second week she sensed that he was gone. She was astonished at the change in her spirits. Had he hired some new, wonderful discovery of a girl at the shipyard? She must have one more word from him . . . it couldn't end this strangely.

On the day she was about to mail her questions she got a card in round, unfamiliar handwriting from his mother saying he'd gotten a bad cold that had turned into "something worse" and was in the hospital. He'd like to hear from her but was "unable to write." His mother must hate me, she thought. She wrote quickly, but over a week went by before a nearly illegible note came saying he was sitting up for the first time and "would soon get back to her."

Again she wrote immediately, and wasn't surprised to have to wait still another week to hear from him, but she was overwhelmed by the letter that finally arrived. It was from a new address, nearer his place of work. He'd gone back to his office and been promoted to the very top, he said, with an enormous salary. Sally's eyes widened at the figure Connie quoted to her. He'd bought a new brown and white house, he added, remembering how she disliked the type of white saltbox her aunt lived in; he promised her a photo of it.

He had revived enough to send her another local color story:

> There was a notice in the *Globe* about my friend Warren Tumpster who fell for forty-five minutes down the UP escalator at the South Station Subway during the practice air raid two nights ago, and, while lying in pain, his spine reduced to a limp and clattering string of wampum, he was mistaken for a Practice Victim by Emergency Nurse Eunice Applebaum of 2045 Blue Hill Ave., and set upon forthwith. The photo of the incident was printed on the front page next morning as an example of the dispatch with which the Womens' Emergency Nurse Unit worked. The happy group centered around poor Warren, who, his left foot bundling and stark with bandages, was apparently photographed in the act of dragging himself unobtrusively to some unlighted corner to die quietly.
>
> He has tried to sue Eunice, but without success. She states, quite logically, that according to schedule, any Victim on the Park St. side of the subway was supposed to have "Fractured Foot," and that's what she treated him for, and that was that.

There were no more stories or cartoons in his letters after that. He wrote a lot about his new role as "supervisor of planning of ship assembly and fabrication," a "pedestal-forming position." He told about his schemes to cut down on fabrication errors, labor and material waste, and that he was working on a measurement system. He was getting bonuses left and right for his ideas. "Forgive me my outpourings," he wrote, "but I must have someone to tell, and you're always with me." Sally seemed more round-eyed all the time at Jeremy's accomplishments and looked at her daughter now and then as though she had a question to ask.

Connie kept congratulating Jeremy and asked again for a picture of his new house. The photo he finally sent showed a barren yard with a brown-shingled house very much like the place Sally used to take the laundry to while Nathan was still alive. The windows were white-trimmed with no blinds, and there was no shrubbery, no garden to be seen.

That night after dinner he called her, speaking in a high tense voice. "I couldn't wait any more. I'm asking you to marry me. Well?" Connie, in a voice constricted with what felt like shock said "Yes."

It was as though a bubble had popped in mid-air. After a long pause he sent up another one beside it as he said, quite tonelessly, "I'm very happy." Then, "When will you come here again?" "I'll write tonight," Connie said, "phones are such terrible things anyway." He agreed and they signed off.

Shall I tell my mother I'm engaged? But I'm not! Connie sat on her bed and contemplated the machinery of reversal inside her. The sudden and total feeling of deadness didn't even sadden her; it only seemed inevitable

and right. The short note she wrote him came so easily and naturally. "How can I know how I feel until I hear what I say?" she began, and the rest was cold and formal: let's not try to be friends, it would only make things harder. Perhaps they'd meet again some day. Of course she'd miss him, but now at last there was a feeling of honesty and truth.

Three days later she got a long, enormously fat envelope from him. How could he possibly find so much to say? She locked the letter in her jewelry box until dinner time, then brought it to the dinner table. Uncle Arthur was away on business, but her mother and Jamie were there, watching her with curiosity. Jamie got better every year, she thought. He was sixteen, had marvellous wavy blond hair and an amused look behind his glasses, most of the time. Girls kept calling him, but he hadn't gotten to concentrating on one yet.

Connie showed Jamie and her mother the unopened letter and explained what had been happening. "I'm going to put 'return to sender' on it and put it in the mailbox at the corner right now, before I change my mind." she told them. "Don't be silly," said Jamie. "Steam it open, read it and *then* send it back." But Connie couldn't smile. "I'll have to skip dinner and run right down there now," she said. "I don't feel much like eating anyway." "No, we'll wait dinner for you," her mother said. "For that, we'll wait."

She pushed the letter in hard and it landed with a considerable thud, inside the small green mailbox attached to a telephone pole. Perhaps I should have read it and gone through what I had to, she thought. Maybe once you've been led to the rack there's no avoiding it. You should go through the whole Armageddon, right to the end. She wondered if she might cry, but arrived back at her door completely dry-eyed.

* * *

Four months later, in June, she received a smudged postcard with a Greensboro postmark. "On my way to Georgia, to be inducted into the Air Force. I'm very close by you." At the bottom he had crossed out heavily in pencil a line she could still read: "Cutting you out of my system is an operation I'll never be able to accomplish." She put the card away with the rest of her Jeremy collection. It filled two shoe boxes. He'd probably saved all her letters too, along with the photos he'd taken of her.

In July she and Sally and Jamie went back to the old house for the summer. Ever since Connie had sent the farewell letter in April she'd had a feeling of total meaninglessness. She wasn't sure life was worth living and didn't even want to look around and find out.

On the second night in Mattawanset she sensed something mysterious and portentous in the air. There was an enormous, perfect orange moon rising, and she took off on her bike.

Across Bates Lane and up on the hillside she saw the ghost she'd been expecting. A dark-haired young man was pedaling slowly up the hill away from her in the moonlight, refusing to dismount in spite of the steepness. As she stood and watched he stopped, then started back downhill in her direction.

When he was near enough she saw that he was someone who didn't look at all like Jeremy, although he had almost the same striped T-shirt she remembered from high school.

She sped back towards her house, trying to preserve the effect of what it would be like to see Jeremy. She went to her back yard and sat on the old stone bench in front of the rose trellis, with her feet up, resting her arms on her knees. She looked out over the moonlight-whitened lawn and tried to imagine him walking his bike towards her under the apple tree as he had sometimes done the summer before.

That tree must have been around when Grandfather Collier was alive. So many diseased and rotten parts had been cut out of it that she kept expecting it to die and have to be chopped down. But each spring it went on putting up a preposterously large umbrella of leaves and reproducing lots of hard, sour little apples that were good for absolutely nothing, it seemed. Her father may have sat on this bench and looked at it, feeling as modern and firmly entrenched in the present as she did now. If he had seen Jeremy coming in his striped shirt, blue jeans and sneakers, he would have chased him away ferociously, treating him as a dangerous interloper.

Connie tried to visualize what Jeremy's expression would be like if he should come towards her again some day. If only he could be serene and implacable as any work of art from the past . . . the superbly impractical manticore of her private collection; always available for her to summon. But maybe he hated her by now. It would be better for him if he did.

She put her head down on her arms, shutting out the moonlight and the apple tree with its leaves silvered in the night air, retreating into her own singularity and trying to obliterate the thought of Jeremy's feelings. Did survival always have to mean related destruction? There must be a way to prove that this wasn't the inevitable answer.

She'd see Jeremy again after a long time and by then maybe she'd know what to do to free him from his spell, to make him see himself differently, and better. It suddenly occurred to her that her four-month-long burden of deadness seemed to have left her, at least for the moment. She got up and went into her back door, turning for a last long look at the unearthly beauty of the whispering, palely glowing yard.

THE SERIOUS PLAY OF INTERPRETATION

MARJORIE E. COOK

> The style is the man. Rather say the style is the way the man takes himself; and to be at all charming or even bearable, the way is almost rigidly prescribed. If it is with outer seriousness, it must be with inner humor. If it is with outer humor, it must be with inner seriousness. Neither one alone without the other under it will do.
>
> —Robert Frost, "Introduction to *King Jasper*"

Turn-of-the-century thinkers encountered the principle of irony exalted into a philosophy. This philosophical irony was simply the principle of irony—the possibility of unexpected reversals—become the fundamental way of viewing life: one comes to expect that what one expects will not occur and that its opposite will occur; the sharper the contrast, the greater the irony.[1] This modern prevalence of irony stemmed from a general predilection for positivism, an overweening desire for absolute rational certainty and, by implication, for perfect rational order. Insisting on mathematical or scientific "proofs," these philosophical ironists could see nothing worthy and certain (for some that was the same thing) on which to base their faith or commitments. Moderns, such as Frost, who wished to move beyond this immobilizing skepticism had to explore the implications of being a limited person in a world of change and process. They learned they must move beyond irony because it is difficult to live meaningfully in it. But how could a person sufficiently ground his interpretations so that he dared risk acting on them? This perennial question had, in the modern world of relativism, produced a philosophical crisis centering on irony and interpretation.

Frost approached the interpretation of appearances as an invitation to serious play, to play seriously. Significantly, the major objection to Frost's vision has focused on this recurring attitude of serious play in his poetry.[2] Some critics have judged Frost's attempts to blend the serious and the

---

[1]For a more complete discussion of irony see D. C. Mueck, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen, 1969) and Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

[2]For instance, see George W. Nitchie, *Human Values in the Poetry of Robert Frost: A Study of a Poet's Convictions* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1960); Isadore Traschen, "Robert Frost: Some Divisions in a Whole Man," *Yale Review*, 55 (October 1965), 36-48; and W. W. Robson, "The Achievement of Robert Frost," *Southern Review*, *NS* 2 (October 1966), 735-61. Donald Greiner summarizes this charge against Frost: "Watts, Pearce, and Traschen . . . believe that had Frost committed himself to the social and intellectual crises of his day he might have been capable of the development which characterizes Yeats and Eliot" (*Robert Frost: The Poet and His Critics* [Chicago: American Library Association, 1974], p. 130).

playful as inappropriately serious, moralistic, an "artistic lapse."[3] Others conclude that Frost will not go beyond "the game of poetry, beyond playacting in the role of the poet as wise man," beyond playing the game of "as-if."[4]

Frost himself maintained an extremely active dialectic between faith and doubt, always giving the Devil his due, but the crucial difference between Frost and the philosophical ironist is that Frost does not have the ironist's bias for *rational certainty*. He admits that in matters philosophical "A melancholy dualism is the only soundness," but then adds, "The question is, is soundness of the essence?"[5] That question is a key to moving beyond total doubt; something besides necessity is sanctioned. Frost is among those "poets of reality"[6] who concentrate on a reality without absolutes but with its own benefits, and thus he can affirm interpretations as a serious play, advance beyond philosophical irony into meanings and values, and risk acting on his best judgments.

Frost's view of interpretation must be considered in the context of his "ironic consciousness."[7] Frost knows both that interpreting is necessary and that interpretations cannot be held as absolutes. Human knowledge is limited, but people must interpret and act on those interpretations with some detachment, with some sense of play, so that they are not destroyed by the inevitable difficulties and defeats. By consciously acknowledging his metaphors, he maintains his saving grace; he knows he might be wrong. Frost values the right to fail and the right to suffer as necessary possibilities in one's right to interpret. We do venture into the unknown, positing premises and acting on probabilities. As Frost has Job say in *A Masque of Reason*, "we know well enough to go ahead with. I mean we seem to know enough to act on."[8] Frost, and many of his characters, enjoy putting to the test their skill, shrewdness, courage, wisdom, and luck in what he calls "play for mortal stakes" (*PRF*, p. 227). The serious play of interpretation is play because one must engage in a dialectic without absolute or necessary meaning, and serious because one's meaning depends upon the patterns he

---

[3]Richard Foster ("The Two Frosts and the Poetics of Confession," in *Frost: Centennial Essays III*, ed. Jac L. Tharpe [Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978], pp. 350-67) and Robert Twombly ("The Poetics of Demur: Lowell and Frost," *College English*, 38 [1976], 373-85) have attacked what they see in Frost's poetics of "confession" and "demur" as his coyness and condescension. Randall Jarrell ("The Other Frost," *Nation*, 29 Nov. 1947, pp. 588-92) criticizes Frost's playfulness in *The Masque of Reason* as a serious artistic lapse.

[4]Marion Montgomery, "Robert Frost: One Who Shrewdly Pretends," in *Frost: Centennial Essays II*, ed. Jac L. Tharpe (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1976), p. 217.

[5]*Selected Prose of Robert Frost*, ed. Hyde Cox and Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 112. Future references to this work will be designated *SP* in the text.

[6]J. Hillis Miller in *Poets of Reality* (New York: Atheneum, 1974) details the confrontation and movement beyond nihilism by six modern writers.

[7]For further discussion of Frost's "ironic consciousness" see Frank Lentricchia, *Robert Frost: Modern Poetics and the Landscapes of Self* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1975).

[8]*The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 483. Future references to this work will be designated *PRF* in the text.

discerns, the values he establishes, and the actions he takes on these interpretations in varying degrees of commitment.

Frost is ironist enough to enjoy showing where the reality is different from, even opposite from, what the appearances suggest. Such a reversal is often the twist that gives a poem a surprise ending. Moreover, he is generally somewhat restrained in interpreting appearances; he can be content with a fact or an occasion in and for itself: "The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows" (*PRF*, p. 17). Frost is not an avid typologist nor an unbounded symbolist; in interpretation he prefers to be a synecdochist, capable of inferring and implying the whole from an integral part. Like the ironist, Frost is aware of the element of irreducibility—and its value—in what is now fashionably referred to as intersubjective reality. Interpretations must "square" with such irreducible actuality. This particular aspect of Frost's vision can be emphasized to make him something like an Existential Hero; Lynen, for instance, sees in this "unflinching honesty" an assertion of one's spiritual strength:

> Unflinching honesty in the face of facts is a recurrent theme in Frost's nature poetry. For it is in this that he sees the basis of man's power and indeed of his spiritual being. Man can never find a home in nature, nor can he live outside of it. But he can assert the reality of his spirit and thus can exist independently of the physical world in the act of looking, squarely at the facts of nature.[9]

Unlike the theoretical Existential Hero, however, Frost is often very much "at home" in nature. One supreme instance occurs in "Two Look at Two," which we will consider later.

Nonetheless, such an attitude of facing the facts of nature and refraining from interpreting—or from overinterpreting—may seem counter to a recognition of the imagination's essential work in constructing meanings. James Potter sees the poet affirming the imagination's "saving illusion"[10] in "A Boundless Moment." Certainly, as we will see, the imagination's "as-if" is fully recognized and valued in "Two Look at Two." In this poem, however, the poet seems rather to be cautioning us to test the imagination's illusions against (intersubjective) reality.

> He halted in the wind, and—what was that
> Far in the maples, pale, but not a ghost?
> He stood there bringing March against his thought,
> And yet too ready to believe the most.
> (*PRF*, p. 233)

[9] John F. Lynen, *The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 151-52.

[10] James L. Potter, *Robert Frost Handbook* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), p. 137.

Rather than remarking a "saving illusion," the poem seems to have the opposite emphasis, a saving disillusionment. The "too" in "too ready" implies "too much, an excess." The first character is right in "bringing March against his thought": our illusions must not be counter to intersubjective reality, though our conclusions necessarily are interpretations of facts and events. The positiveness associated in this poem with a "boundless" imagination[11] is overpowered at the end by the strength of one word—*truth*—and by the power gained in the abruptness and in the matter-of-fact and even casual tone at the end: "And then I said the truth (and we moved on). / A young beech clinging to its last year's leaves" (*PRF*, p. 233). Understated, that last statement becomes the strongest assertion in the poem. The speaker's earlier words for accepting the illusions all have negative connotations, most clearly in "Myself as one his own pretense deceives." Not all fictions are useful; the imagination in its unboundedness can be destructive, deceiving, a point Poirier effectively develops elsewhere.[12] Interpretations must be grounded in what is. In "A Boundless Moment" the pair, having realized and accepted the truth, can move on, which is better than staying "in a strange world" with a false "luxuriance," an unrealistic dream.

"The Most of It" details another instance in which the poet resists an opportunity to "find" the meaning he wants and thus to indulge simply a desire. The creature swimming toward the lone man's island turns out to be, not the "person additional to him" for whom he had hoped, but a buck—"and that was all." The buck remains a fact, not capable of "counter-love, original response." Nature itself offers only echoes for humans:

> He thought he kept the universe alone;
> For all the voice in answer he could wake
> Was but the mocking echo of his own
> From some tree-hidden cliff across the lake.
> Some morning from the boulder-broken beach
> He would cry out on life, that what it wants
> Is not its own love back in copy speech,
> But counter-love, original response.
> (*PRF*, p. 338)

Rather than the predictability of echoes or of narcissism, the protagonist prefers, and even claims that life itself wants, the necessarily pluralistic

[11]Richard Poirier, *Robert Frost: The Work of Knowing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 213-14. Poirier identifies the poet's aim as, in part, "to preserve or renew in human consciousness an innocence that will prevent our mistaking the starkness of reality for the whole of it" (p. 213). In his reading of this poem Poirier emphasizes the characters' willingness "to play with the belief" (p. 214).

[12]Poirer,, especially chapters III and IV.

world implied by the existence of other autonomous and willful persons, capable of interpreting the world for themselves. Dogmatism makes hard demands on relationships; abstractions are often easier to deal with precisely because they are more rigidly prescribed. "Original response" has elements of ambiguity and contingency which rule out dogmatism and which are the reasons we cannot legislate interpretations. (Some interpretations may be more adequate interpretations than others and can be so shown, but that is a different matter from considering any interpretation to be absolute.) In other words, the protagonist prefers the serious play of interpretation to having everything his way. Significant relationships involving dialog can be built only between and among persons capable of such original response, capable of interpretation.

As the title suggests, the protagonist will have to make the most of the ironic situation: there is, after all, nothing to make of "it." At least, the protagonist's need for dialog cannot be met. In a broader context, however, the event has a tone of affirmation, like that in "A Boundless Moment." The protagonist and poet do not "pretend": the buck cannot substitute for a person—"and that was all." In refusing the temptation to wrench the events to fit our hopes or fears, we keep a certain detachment that gives us a willingness to accept the events, whatever they imply. If we do not take our interpretations more seriously than a pluralistic world will allow, we can be secure enough to risk failure.

In "On the Heart's Beginning to Cloud the Mind" the poet does risk the serious play of an interpretation. An appearance, as he shows here, may have different and even opposing interpretations, each possible (unlike those in "A Boundless Moment"). Through such inevitable ambiguities we keep our freedom to interpret. That ambiguity is inherent in appearances is here heightened by the appearances being just the barest of fragments, but from which the poet draws enough facts for two possible interpretations. The opening statement is a sentence fragment, and the narrativf framework shows that the incident is only a glimpse into the distance, about "Something I saw or thought I saw / In the desert at midnight in Utah" (*PRF*, p. 290). In addition, the last four lines are set off, emphasizing again the narrative framework for the incident-as-fragment:

> This I saw when waking late,
> Going by at a railroad rate,
> Looking through wreaths of engine smoke
> Far into the lives of other folk.
>
> (*PRF*, p. 291)

This ending seems to suggest that the fragmentary nature of the incident cannot lead to any final interpretation; we simply don't have enough evidence, and we've gained what was to be gained through speculating. The tone in these last lines shifts from the serious comic vision in most of the poem to the merely humorous in these last four lines, to mere word play. Frost's throw-away endings usually gain ironic force from understatement, as in "A Boundless Moment," but here the throw-away conclusion seems to accomplish simply that—to destroy the significance built carefully by the rest of the poem. Indeed, here the reader is returned to his own world and left to build his own significances from these appearances.

The poem's unresolvable ambiguity seems intentional, marking some of the difficulties in interpreting. The title and thirteenth line, "But my heart was beginning to cloud my mind," could mean either the "clouding" effect has just finished, having produced the pessimistic interpretation of the scene in the first twelve lines, or that the "clouding" effect is just beginning and produces the optimistic interpretation that follows after the thirteenth line. The poem has been interpreted both ways.[13] Is it the head or the heart which inclines toward a "Godforsaken brute despair" in explaining why there are no human lights in the black night? Again, the poem can be interpreted either way. The darker interpretation may stem from an emotional despair, an unduly fearful imagination in "a boundless moment," or from a coldly objective intellect, a rational bias leading to complete skepticism. Thus, a pessimistic interpretation could come from either the head or the heart, the optimistic also from either. The poet emphasizes the ambiguity by repeating the crucial line. Readers, however, seem unable to rest in this mystery; they are lured into blaming one and praising the other by their preference for definiteness and by the poet's subtly leading them on in his juxtaposing heart and mind. The poem sets up the readers to do precisely what it has denied them the evidence to do.

The poem, however, is clear on a different point: the worst possible tales may be true, but here they do not square with the probabilities. The flickering light does not necessarily signify the pathetic state of humans; the "spots of gloom" are merely trees, after all. Furthermore, the poem implies that some of the seriousness in interpretation is that we become what we believe. "Matter of fact has made them brave": making sure of the facts saves them from the fearsomeness in boundlessness. "Heartened," a person can accomplish much that had not seemed possible at first. The encouraging interpretation the poet affirms here includes much discipline and toughness. Futile repeating, regretting, or dreaming is not "indulged."

---

[13]The usual interpretation has been that the darker view stems from a sentimental heart, the "bitter tale" from the realistic mind. See, for instance, Lawrance Thompson, *Fire and Ice* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1942), p. 18; also see Richard Forster, "The Two Frosts and the Poetics of Confession," in *Frost: Centennial Essays III*, ed. Jac L. Tharpe (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978), pp. 364-65; Montgomery, p. 221; and Poirier, pp. 154-56.

What Frost objects to in interpretation is what he sees as the abuse of either reason or imagination—that is, when either is offered as sufficient in itself: imagination by itself may dwell unrealistically in "boundless moments"; intellect alone leads to irony. The imagination synthesizes rational and emotional values, produces metaphors and analogies, and is not made ineffective by relativism. Frost sees the ironic futility of philosophical irony, but he will not easily dismiss reason; he has too much respect both for Yankee shrewdness and for the Greek Golden Mean. Nonetheless, he knows that intellect by itself, though it may produce great rational systems, cannot predict the future with certainty nor give absolute answers to the great questions of human meaning. Frost is neither anti-science nor anti-philosophy, though he will remind us of the limits of both. More exactly, he is anti-systems; he finds that much systematizing both in science and philosophy presumes that rational structure should be supreme. In any system, as any careful student knows, much variance will remain unexplained, and Frost insists that that variance be acknowledged.

Although the point of interpretation as serious play is that interpretations cannot be absolutes, still some interpretations are clearly more adequate than others. Irony, insisting on attention to the hard facts, is instrumental in forcing us to the more adequate interpretations. But this ironic consciousness is the particularly modern burden as well as blessing: how are commitment and belief possible? Many found it difficult to keep faith once their beliefs were acknowledged as interpretations, fictions, even if Supreme Fictions. Frost is too much the ironist to subscribe to fictions as the only reality; he knows the imagination has limits and cannot permanently change the realities of time and place. As Poirier perceptively notes, Frost does not make a religion of either nature or art.[14] Still, humans do interpret their situations for meaning. Inevitably interpretations will differ; we each are capable of "original responses." Where, then, is reality? Where is the seriousness in the play? How do we achieve the certainty of at least conviction?

Frost affirms that we can achieve "momentary stays against confusion." Such a moment (and whatever are its lasting effects) occurs in "Two Look at Two." The deer in "Two Look at Two" participate in a greater meaning for the couple, as the buck in "The Most of It" does not. Here nature's events suggest that "earth returned their love" whereas, in "The Most of It," nature offers only echoes. That the epiphany occurs to the couple and not to the single man is not a coincidence: as implied in "The Most of It," the couple's relationship itself means they must already understand and engage in the serious play of interpretation and, given that, they are more likely to respond to the unexpected appearance as an "unlooked-for favor."

---

[14]Poirer, pp. 32-49.

For Frost the ideal attitude seems to be a dynamic balance of irony and metaphor, a knowledge of facts and a sensitive openness to interpreting those facts, a faith suffused with an awareness of potential irony. "Two Look at Two" shows a couple capable of such sense and sensibility. The couple have a great sympathy with nature; even the animals seem unaware of alien presences. The couple even have sufficient imaginative relationship with nature to be playful, to engage in the fantasy of saying "Goodnight to woods." Perhaps such an "unlooked-for favor" as they receive can come only to those who already believe in the possibility.[15] Although playful, the couple are not especially naive: they are sufficiently rational not to court disaster in continuing up the rough path. Their sign because they cannot go farther reveals their reluctant but realistic resignation to necessity. Accepting reality, they are then surprised by the unexpected events, which seem special favors.

The meaning of the event—two people unexpectedly seeing two deer on a hillside—is posited through an "as-if," and the interpretation of these events is believable because, in contrast to the similar situation in "The Most of It," here the "design" seems to the couple to compel a meaning beyond itself. The closing scene suggests an epiphany:

> Two had seen two, whichever side you spoke from.
> "This *must* be all." It was all. Still they stood,
> A great wave from it going over them,
> As if the earth in one unlooked-for favor
> Had made them certain earth returned their love.
> (*PRF*, p. 230)

The situation has a perfection about it; the first and last words in the poem are *love*, and the positive tone throughout supports the significance posited in the "as-if."

With each pair in the poem remaining on its own side of the wall, some readers insist communion does not occur, and thus the "epiphany" is ironic because not warranted. Communion of the Romantic kind, however, is not claimed; what *is* claimed is that a rare event has occurred—at least for the

---

[15]In a study of the hermeneutics of suspicion and the hermeneutics of belief in *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), Paul Ricoeur develops the concept of a "second naivete" as essential to one's intellectual maturity: one must believe in the possibility of an answer before one can find an answer. One does not, however, believe a specific meaning before one works it out, or one may simply find what one is looking for. Rather, Ricoeur emphasizes a consciously achieved openness, a "postcritical faith":

> The contrary of suspicion, I will say bluntly, is faith. What faith? No longer, to be sure, the first faith of the simple soul, but rather the second faith of one who has engaged in hermeneutics, faith that has undergone criticism, postcritical faith. . . . It is a rational faith, for it interprets; but it is a faith because it seeks, through interpretation of a second naivete. (p. 28)

couple—in "Two had seen two, whichever side you spoke from." Neither the narrator nor the poet seems critical of their response. The narrator himself has played the game of "as-if," seemingly with them, in interpreting the meaning of the deer's actions and the great wave of feeling which follows. Whether the couple are aware of the "as-if" relationship the narrator constructs about their feelings is not clear. Having that consciousness would show them more sophisticated, but it would not necessarily preclude their response. Their interpretation, response, and capacity for belief all reinforce each other. In an interesting contrast to this couple, the couple in "Maple" consciously refuse to interpret or even to accept an interpretation thrust on them, and the implication of that poem is that the couple are poorer for having failed to risk belief in the meaning (*PRF*, pp. 179-85). The couple in "Two Look at Two" are capable of trusting their interpretation, allowing the significance of their response, and thus they, with the narrator, can be said to believe in belief, in the serious play of interpretation.

People experience these "momentary stays against confusion" rather than a constant sense of metaphysical transcendence. As Poirier has noted, these epiphanies and the poetry which perpetuates them do sustain the human being. In a comment especially applicable to "Two Look at Two," Poirier writes:

> Frost is a poet who sets out to prove that nature itself wants us to "pretend" while knowing we are doing so, that it wants us to believe in something without certifying what it should be, and that, in its capacities for self-preservation, it offers a model for how we might preserve our mythologies in poetry. . . . This is a poem about "pretending" whenever nature gives you any sort of license, apocalyptic or redemptive, for doing so. And it is out of such moments of illusion or extremity that images emerge which belong to and are perpetuated by poetry.[16]

We need those "as-if's," that play of interpretation. Moreover, Frost adds, "Left to myself, I have gradually come to see what Emerson was meaning in 'Give all to Love' was, Give all to Meaning. The freedom is ours to insist on meaning" (*SP*, p. 116). Elsewhere, Frost even goes so far as to say, "Give us immedicable woes—woes that nothing can be done for—woes flat and final. And then to play. The play's the thing. All virtue in 'as-if' " (*SP*, p. 67). With the "as-if" here and in the penultimate line of "Two Look at Two," Frost is calling attention to the necessity of play in interpretation.

But why should we take the play seriously? Because interpretation seems to Frost the essential means of knowing and becoming. Particularly through metaphor poetry itself is a paradigm of the serious play of interpretation. We should engage in that serious play of interpretation for

[16]Poirier, pp. 213-14.

ourselves: "I'd rather have trivial [metaphors] of my own to live by than the big ones of other people" (*SP*, p. 42). Moreover, we *must* make them to live by: "The only materialist . . . is the man who gets lost in his material without a gathering metaphor to throw it into shape and order. He is the lost soul" (*SP*, p. 41). Still, even the best of our interpretations cannot be taken as an absolute truth:

> All metaphor breaks down somewhere. That is the beauty of it. It is touch and go with the metaphor, and until you have lived with it long enough you don't know when it is going. You don't know how much you can get out of it and when it will cease to yield. It is a very living thing. (*SP*, p. 41)

Finally, Frost admits he loves the play, "the adventure" of it (*SP*, p. 44):

> Greatest of all attempts to say one thing in terms of another is the philosophical attempt to say matter in terms of spirit, or spirit in terms of matter, to make the final unity. That is the greatest attempt that ever failed. We stop just short there. But it is the height of poetry, the height of all thinking. . . . (*SP*, p. 41)

While play is necessary interpretation, the seriousness is, first, that we must interpret appearances in order to construct meanings as persons, and second, that we become what we believe. Poetry for Frost is also a paradigm for belief as well as for play:

> The person who gets close enough to poetry, he is going to know more about the word belief than anybody else knows, even in religion nowadays. . . . Every time a poem is written, every time a short story is written, it is written not by cunning, but by belief. The beauty, the something, the little charm of the thing to be, is more felt than known. . . . No one who has ever come close to the arts has failed to see the difference between things written that way, with cunning and device, and the kind that are believed into existence, that begin in something more felt than known. . . . (*SP*, pp. 44-45)

Significantly, this belief is "closely related to the God-belief, . . . the relationship we enter into with God to believe the future in—to believe the hereafter in" (*SP*, pp. 45-46). Such belief distinguishes Frost from the "conservative fictionalists," with whom he has been associated—those who view art as ultimately ineffective against a privileged reality of chaos

and horror but who go ahead and indulge themselves in art anyway.[17] Believing the future into being involves one's most serious and creative acts.

In the serious play of interpretation, then, the play stems from the necessarily "as-if" quality to interpretation; the seriousness stems from interpretation itself being indeed a necessity—and from our believing these interpretations into being. "As-if" is where interpretation begins; belief and action are what it evolves into. The serious play of interpretation has a wide range of balances between seriousness and play, commitment and detachment: we are flexible but not without convictions; committed, but with enough detachment that defeat need not be absolute.

Belief and detachment are not simply juxtaposed and balanced; belief for Frost includes one's awareness of the "as-if." With the "as-if" Frost acknowledges that absolutely conclusive evidence is always missing; counter evidence is always present. The world out there will not be ordered completely by our minds, nor permanently, so as to stay clarified; the metaphors break down eventually. The detachment in belief acknowledges that belief develops from an "as-if," however implicit. Without contradicting or canceling the belief, the detachment simply defines the nature of belief more clearly. Indeed, the element of play in interpretations makes one's believing his interpretation even more serious in that he knows what he is risking. Within these limits a person engages in very serious play.

Because Frost knows our commitments are to our interpretations, our metaphors, he keeps a detachment in an awareness he might be wrong. He knows what he is risking, but he risks—sometimes almost everything. We must, he says, be lost to something that gives us a sense of direction.[18] To be "lost" to it suggests a total commitment, something of those "passionate preferences" Frost also affirms (*PRF*, p. 467). Although Frost insists that the serious play of interpretation be grounded in fact and tested by irony, he does know what it means to play seriously, believing, beyond the formal game of poetry, beyond constant posing in detachment. As he wrote to Untermeyer, "Belief is better than anything else, and it is best when rapt, above paying its respects to anybody's doubt whatsoever. At bottom the world isn't a joke."[19] Clearly not a philosophical ironist, Frost believed we live poetically, metaphysically, in that we must interpret, believe, risk, and act. It is in this sense that the poem itself symbolizes the "figure of the will braving alien entanglements" (*SP*, p. 25). From the serious play of interpretation, as in poetry, we gain the vital imaginative capacity for beliefs which give purpose to our human experience.

---

[17]Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 54-55. Belief in Frost has been dealt with extensively by Dorothy Judd Hall.

[18]Quoted by Daniel W. Smythe in *Robert Frost Speaks* (New York: Twayne, 1964), p. 28.

[19]*Selected Letters of Robert Frost*, ed. Lawrance Thompson (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 300.

THE ACCIDENT

Nights, at his kitchen table, he fondled
his dead friend's skinning knife. It hovered
his finger, turned on his throat. The clean steel glowed.
(In Nam you kept your gear so goddamn neat.
When we got back you said buy this rifle.
One opening day I shot you with it.)

Enough times he jerked down his underpants,
stretched out his genitals, so much chicken neck
and goose flesh, waited for God to say O.K.,
give me your pecker if it will cleanse your soul.

But God never spoke. So he tipped back a beer
and listened to the night—creepers and crickets,
and that winter, sleet ticking on the cold pane.

Next deer season he read the newspaper accounts,
relived it with those lethal dolts who fired
too soon—every overeager, sweaty-palmed kid,
every half-crocked flabby accountant.

As if he must put his face in his mittened hands
again. As if ink were blood splattered earth
where he might read some plan, some sense, some solace
beside the bland lines—tragic, sad, unfortunate.
(Once on the creek bank you said you'd like to drown.
That was the way to go, you said.)

It was like holding his palm in a flame. Sometimes
in dreams the bullet took it back—a movie
in reverse slow-motion—smoke swallowed, sucked
into the blue muzzle and he could laugh.

But enough times the cartoon ricochet came back
to splinter his own skull into red slivers.
(That VFW dance, the night you kicked
Joe Hensley's ass. You leaned down to me, grinned
and whispered "You don't fool me, you bastard.")

Fall wouldn't let him forget—the ancient, dry
sorrow of ruffling leaves. Sometimes he heard a moan
on the wind (After I shot, didn't you call out
"I stole that social studies test for you"?)

And the preacher's words wouldn't let him go.
His funeral talk of how they blocked for each other
on the school team and grew up like brothers.
And the barbershop wouldn't let him forget—
the poised scissors, the slowly lowered magazines.

For months he had no words for her, the widow
he had known since high school, words which would not
insult the dead and shame the living.
(The wind was still. Not a sound. Just his new boots
at that crazy angle over that log.)

Then he started the college fund for her twins
and she came, a little tipsy, her eyes telling
more than just booze. In her eyes he saw a deer,
quivering, in her eyes his dead friend's face.

And he curled his fingers into her flesh
as if she were another trigger.

And afterwards he gave her the knife and said
cut them off and she laughed and warmed the blade
between her thighs and then touched it to his lips.

Another crime, he thought. Another sin.
But years passed, and he hung the knife on his
bedroom wall. And when he went to the twins'
graduation as doting "Uncle" Jim,
he had learned, at least for him, one mistake
was never enough to last a lifetime.

MARK DEFOE

SURVIVAL

JOHN EBERTH

1.

Bobby Barnes looked at Edward, Benny, Lester and Big Jim Payne. He didn't look at them for long though. They were partially dismembered—not in the way of pieces being separated—he had seen that—but in the way clothing hides them so an arm or leg twists at an angle you'd just never expect to see.

He didn't look for long. But they were lying on all sides so that really all he could do was look at the sky—at that moment Bobby Barnes called them "heavens." He'd read in books about persons "turning their eyes toward the heavens." But there were no stars like in the sea-adventure books—and as he thought about it the words conjured up visions more like angels and rainbows; but it was cloudy and getting ready to rain.

If it rained hard enough, and it was the monsoon season, it would wash Edward, Benny, Lester and Big Jim Payne right off the hilltop. It was all dirt anyway with no roots to hold it back. Everything would just slide. Except Bobby. He'd just keep holding on to the mortar that was planted between his legs. His hands held it like a vise and his whole body was clamped to his hands so that it seemed he was attached to something solid. But if he relaxed . . . No! He didn't want to fall limp with one arm draped over his shoulder blade so strangely.

Then it began to rain. It dróve against Bobby's upturned face in wave after stinging wave. "Oh . . . Oh that feels good." It cooled him. He thought if a mortar were fired and fired for an hour it would feel almost as hot as he was. But the rain cooled him, washed the dirt down his shirt. "Oh, that's good."

When the rain finally stopped Bobby kept saying how good it felt. He kept his eyes clenched tight, his face uplifted; desperately he concentrated until it became so hard he knew he had to quit and look, see if the rains had worked.

Yes! Big Jim, everybody; they were all gone. He was alone. And alive. Nothing around him to show death, violent death. "And as he turned his eyes from the heavens . . ." — this is what he thought.

But all the bodies were still there, and Bobby knew it—not at first, when he turned his eyes from the heavens—not just then. It was later, several minutes later in which Bobby drifted off into a spiritual world where planes and prisms met and interlocked in a wonderful, purposeful pattern.

"By doing that they *can* be washed away." Bobby tried again. But the harder he tried the more vividly the rain-soaked, muddied, and disfigured bodies presented themselves. There wasn't really a space between them

and Bobby. They were all around him, inside of him, outside, overhead—he was part of them. . . .

"No!" Not if he held tight, made himself rigid, locked onto his centerpole of earth. He clenched his teeth. But for how long? How long could he keep it up—eyes creased shut, his mind whirling in dizzying patterns?

And he concentrated so hard on not concentrating he fainted with exhaustion, slumping back on Big Eddy Payne.

2.

When he woke up he was back home watching the trees rustle against the screens of his bedroom window. Then he was in another place, and still another, until grim reality penetrated him. At first the tension was too much to let him move. Then it propelled him suddenly to his feet and, jerking his head around, eyes blazing, he stumbled over the dead people he knew, down the hill, plunging into a swamp, sinking knee-deep; wrenching his body from side to side caused him to sink still deeper until he discovered by staying perfectly still he wouldn't sink.

The mosquitoes found him quickly. Still, he didn't move. Not even when he saw the body floating toward him. It was the "other side." The Enemy. It was half dressed and face down—white as a fish. It had the funny appearance that if you touched it, it would all fall apart into flakes.

Now he was almost waist deep. The body floated up under his chest and stayed there. The mosquitoes made a thick mat over Bobby's hands and face. He waited until the pain turned into a dull throbbing inside his brain—only then did he carefully raise his arms, guiding his hands toward his face; then, thrashing wildly, he squashed and scattered the bugs in all directions . . . and sank just a little more, feeling the light, feathery weight of the body against him. It smelled. Once he'd hiked up a stream and it smelled just like this. It was after a salmon run. There were bulging black sea gulls everywhere and that rotten smell.

The mosquitoes came back in even thicker mats, navigating the thrashing hands, disrespecting them now.

"Oh my God. Oh my God." He would have kept saying it but the mosquitoes got inside his mouth and he had to spit them out.

The corpse floated in a circle, bumping Bobby; it went slowly around him, teasing.

Finally he just lay forward in the water and drowned the mosquitoes on his face. He held his breath and felt the cool water sting the sores. Then he turned his head and bit off a piece of air and held his breath face down again. He could feel the corpse circling, bumping, teasing. Once he even turned his face against it. . . . Turning and breathing—that was the important thing. Just like a swimmer. He breathed out and felt the bubbles tickle his face. Turned and bit on some air. Breathed out. Every so often he'd duck under completely to drown the mosquitoes on the back of his neck. Circling, teasing. Dead salmon. He didn't think. Didn't dream. Didn't know. He was simply: Turning. Breathing.

3.

Later in the afternoon when Bobby was pulled from the swamp by the Body Recovery Team, he kept it up: turning and breathing. They all thought he was shell shocked. Even after he was finally on his way to the Philippines aboard a "flying hospital," the doctors shook their heads; the nurses whispered, "He doesn't have a scratch on him."

It took many powerful sedatives to stop Bobby from bobbing his head and breathing like a swimmer. And then a couple generals came around and presented him with a medal. Slowly, his eyes began to flicker with a sign of some inner life. The nurses said the medal must be lucky, the source of a mysterious vitality, because he kept holding on to it, or kept it under his pillow, and kept getting better. When he was finally ready to go home, the medal was the first thing he decided to take.

On the plane back to America a priest came up to Bobby and asked if there was something he would like to talk about.

Bobby smiled. "Nothing," he answered softly. Then he thought for a moment, his eyes seeming to catch a glimpse of something inexplicable. He was unmoved by the keen stare of the priest. "Sometimes everything seems meaningless," he decided to say, his lips twitching—his hands reached for something in his pocket and a calmness enveloped him. The priest noticed the change, the quick back-and-forth of it, and glanced at the pocket. Finally he pointed and asked what it was. But Bobby had already drawn it out, the medal, and was turning the gleaming silver around and around in the palm of his hand.

"Isn't that the Medal of Honor?"

Bobby turned the flashing star. "Everything, no matter how terrible," he said philosophically, "has a meaning." His eyes wandered off.

The priest couldn't see the generals saluting as they bestowed the medal, couldn't hear the vociferous applause from the hospital staff which had clustered around his bed. "You seem to have a very good attitude," he somewhat hesitantly concluded and moved on to someone else.

There was something in Bobby's whole life he could not think about. But he could think about the medal.

When he got off the plane in Oakland he saw a flag burning. There were other soldiers and even policemen around but nobody seemed to pay attention. A lot of other people were whooping and screaming and watching the flag burn up.

Bobby's hand reached for the medal. He didn't know he had touched it or reached for it; but when he realized it there was a kind of binding feeling he couldn't explain. The past and present touched, as they should.

He ignored the people burning the flag and went to the process center. Every time he came to a different office he felt like asking who was burning the flag but the indifference in everyone's face made him stop.

And after all, he did have the medal—the thought occurred to him suddenly when he was dreaming about something altogether different.

When he finally reached home his mother and father hugged him and thanked God he was back. They ushered him to a chair, then showed him his redecorated bedroom, and finally took him to the kitchen and showed him what lavish meals they'd planned. They kept talking and it made Bobby feel strange. Wasn't there something he was supposed to say? Or something they should ask him?

Finally his mother did ask it, suddenly stopping in the middle of something else. "Was it awful, Bobby?" But before he could answer she swept him out of the room to look at her new garden.

Then Bobby's sister came home and ran to kiss him. There was a band around her head he didn't see at first. Or didn't want to see. Later he noticed part of it. Bobby's mother looked as if she were striving for some explanation. Finally she shrugged in exasperation and said, "Bobby we know how you feel. . . ." She hesitated, looking at Bobby's father, who clumsily stepped forward and patted Bobby on the shoulder.

Bobby's hand was already in his pocket clutching his medal.

The television was blaring. Bobby thought the newscaster was a Viet Cong. It was just a critical commentary, but still—it confused him so much he pushed away from his family and went upstairs.

"I have to take a bath," he said.

And when he didn't come down for a long time his father went to check.

Bobby was lying in the water face first, turning his head every so often to take a breath of air. Even when his father touched him he kept it up. The doctor was called but even after he came and talked soothingly, cajolingly, Bobby kept it up, just like back at the swamp: Turning. Breathing.

And he felt all the little stinging mosquitoes fall away.

FOUR: TO WEAVE

Fibers soothe me.
I can scent animal,
hoof-sleep, grass slubs in raw
fleece. I was a girl
in tall pastures, slept in straw
unbaled, out in the barn.
Horse snorts wet and lulled me.
I am so scared
that when you die
with you will slip off dandelions
I used to pick for green
dyebaths, and the aroma of hay
an unkempt mane snarled between
my fingers, often.
My child-brown braids.
On the towel shelf we kept
their silk mattedness in paper
like pressings one would keep,
mementos, ruined in tangles.
Too fine. The task
of saving hair.

2.

You were drugged. Dreams
tousled. Names just fell.
But your hair, your white
hair.
—Fetch a comb, you said.
Is there a comb.
In the drawer the Bible, the drinking straw, the little metal
blank mirror.

Your ancestral milkweed hair.
Combing is my hands
asking Gramma how to be this.
Because I walked
across my brittle August girlhood pasture, to my horse,
scabbed from seed-pricks and thistles.
Gramma is old.
—Why do you break the milkweed, girlie?
—To see the thick stuff push up
out of the slashed throat, to pick the
seedbottomed fluff out
and blow it, swing myself with it on a hot
wind-swing, singing,
    Where shall we fly, milkweed cotton.
    Where shall we land, black seed.

THERESA BACON

D. H. LAWRENCE AND *THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA*

DAN SCHNEIDER

For many years scholars have recognized that Friedrich Nietzsche exerted a strong influence on the thinking of D. H. Lawrence.[1] The repudiation of Christianity and the celebration of Dionysian affirmations of life; the attack on the herd and the praise of the aristocrat or the overman; the rejection of democracy, socialism, and the notions of love, equality, brotherhood, idealism; the calling for a revaluation of all values[2]—a new "naturalism in morality" which would be "dominated by an instinct of life"[3]—these affinities in the dialectics of the two men are so profound that no account of Lawrence's intellectual development would be adequate if the influence of Nietzsche were not given particular attention. Indeed, that influence is, if anything, deeper than we have yet surmised. Careful analysis of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in relation to Lawrence's writings suggests that to the list of shared beliefs offered above, we need to add at least four additional parallels: first, their conceptions of man's quest to arrive at full humanity (conceptions that issue in some close similarities in the imagery of the two men); second, their views of love and marriage in relation to the "power" motive; third, their analyses of the causes of human conduct and of the division within the self—a division manifesting itself particularly in the phenomena of rationalization and reaction; and fourth, their views of the flux and of the healthy acceptance of mutability. To trace the striking correspondences of Lawrence's thinking to Nietzsche's in these four areas is to deepen considerably our awareness of Lawrence's total response to the German philosopher who, like Lawrence, employed his poetic gifts to define a psychology and a philosophy and to announce defiantly "the end of the longest error" and the beginning of noon, "the high point of humanity" (p. 486). That there was a temperamental basis for Lawrence's response is also a fact we must take into full account in any history of Lawrence's maturation: both Nietzsche and Lawrence were puritans who, in reaction to the repressions of Christianity and of nineteenth-century propriety, sought to shed their sickness by incorporating Dionysus into a vision of eternal recurrence.

---

[1]See especially Armin Arnold, *D. H. Lawrence and German Literature* (Montreal: Heinemann, 1963); Mitzi M. Brunsdale, *The German Effect on D. H. Lawrence and His Works 1885-1912* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1978); John B. Humma, "D. H. Lawrence as Friedrich Nietzsche," *Philological Quarterly*, 53 (January 1974), 110-20; and the many references to Nietzsche in Emile Delavenay, *D. H. Lawrence, The Man and His Work: The Formative Years: 1885-1919* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972).

[2]This and all subsequent references to Nietzsche are found in Walter Kaufmann, ed., *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking, 1972).

[3]Kaufmann's phrase, p. 489.

1. The Quest

Much of the imagery of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and of Lawrence's writings is peculiar to any romance with a quest motif: apocalyptic and daemonic imagery arising inevitably in depictions of the quest for the fulfillment of desire and in the confrontation of obstacles to fulfillment. In the following paragraphs I do not mean to suggest therefore that Lawrence plundered *Zarathustra* for its imagery but rather that his apocalyptic vision corresponded so closely to Nietzsche's that the imagery they chose to present the goal of the quest was probably bound to show striking similarities. Let us begin by defining the goal.

What does Zarathustra seek? Man, he says, is "a bridge and not an end," "an *overture* and a *going under*" (p. 127). Like the setting sun, man must "go under"—perish as the all-too-human—and arise to full acceptance of the earth and of "that unique position in the cosmos which the Bible considered his divine birthright" (p. 116). As "bridge," man arches into the future when he may become an individual, who is "still the earth's most recent creation" (p. 171). He aspires to create a new selfhood and new values: "The noble man wants to create something new and a new virtue. The good [i.e., the life-deniers] want the old, and that the old be preserved" (p. 156). The image of the bridge fuses with that of the rainbow as Nietzsche contemplates man's liberation from the state and the mob: "Where the state *ends*—look there, my brothers! Do you not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the overman?" (p. 163). Man, new-born, is to be freed from the tyranny of "the preachers of equality" and delivered from plebeian *ressentiment*: "For *that man be delivered from revenge*, that is for me the bridge to the highest hope and a rainbow after long storms" (p. 211).

The bridge and the rainbow are also linked in Nietzsche's thought with the circle or the ring, images of eternity and of eternal recurrence. Zarathustra, "the advocate of the circle," cannot die because he belongs "to the causes of the eternal recurrence. I come again, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent . . . to teach again the eternal recurrence of all things, to speak again the word of the great noon of earth and man, to proclaim the overman again to men" (pp. 328, 333). In "The Yes and Amen Song" of the soothsayer, Nietzsche declares, "Oh how should I not lust after eternity and after the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence?" (p. 340). As in *Twilight of the Gods*, Nietzsche celebrates the eternal life that the Greek guaranteed himself by means of the Dionysian mysteries: "Eternal life, the eternal return of life; the future promised and hallowed in the past; the triumphant Yes to life beyond all death and change; *true* life as the over-all continuation of life through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality" (p. 561).

The goal, then, is bound up with the images of the rainbow, the setting and rising sun, the bridge, the ring, the serpent and eagle, the sun and the

earth. They are images whose significance readers of D. H. Lawrence will recognize at once. In *The Rainbow* (which Lawrence originally intended to call "The Wedding Ring") Lawrence traces the whole development of mankind, from the primordial Marsh in which Tom Brangwen is immersed in unconsciousness and sensuality, to the liberation from the tribe and the church, to the existential predicament of modern man faced with the responsibility of choice in a world in which all is permitted. The vision of the rainbow hovers over every generation—symbol of the joining of the beginning and the end, the past and the future, the primordial homogenous darkness associated with the female (and with tribal life), and the differentiation into full individuality of the spirit, the "light" associated with the male. Flesh and spirit, earth and heaven, darkness and light, tomb and womb, creation and destruction, all flow together in Lawrence's rainbow. And the vision is inseparable from Lawrence's idea of God, Who is described in "The Crown" as appearing, vanishing, and reappearing "like the rainbow." The rainbow is thus a vision of fulfillment in the Absolute; but it is, simultaneously, a vision of the blending of all the human powers, of flesh and of spirit, that are reborn eternally and eternally seek liberation and full expression. Man, emancipated from the darkness of his origins, may attain at last to full selfhood, to "maximum of being." But in his striving for individuality, he must never cut himself off from the female source, the earth. In Nietzschean language, he must never sin against the earth. As he ventures outward, in a centrifugal motion, into "the unknown" and "the beyond," he must never sever himself from the motionless hub of the wheel, the female origin. On the other hand, he must fight against his temptation to surrender to the *Magna Mater* and to return to the mindlessness of nature. Man's business, as Lawrence defined it in his "Study of Thomas Hardy," is to "produce [his] own real life, no matter what the nations do"; man's goal is to become "utterly himself," to gratify the "inherent passion . . . to produce, to create, to be as God."[4] And "brave men," men with "exquisite courage," will find "a new way to God," will fight for "a new conception of life and God."[5] Man's fulfillment is to be discovered finally in his dedication to the god of the "two ways," the plumed serpent, Quetzalcoatl, in whom Zarathustra's eagle and serpent are perhaps united and newly interpreted.

There are important differences in the conceptions of the quest, to be sure. Lawrence always emphasizes "the God-passion," while Nietzsche, the "godless," stresses the overman. For Lawrence the rainbow joins female and male, past and future, origin and end; Nietzsche's rainbow or

---

[4]Edward McDonald, ed., *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Viking, 1936), pp. 428-29. Hereafter references will be included in the text.

[5]Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore, eds., *Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished, and Other Prose Works by D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Viking, 1968), pp. 627, 629. Hereafter references will be included in the text.

bridge, while it joins the past and the future, is far less complex; it arches into the future of man's full acceptance and expression of his powers. Yet both Lawrence and Nietzsche join in insisting that the goal consists in full endorsement of the earth, full development of human potentialities, and acceptance of man's life in relation to eternity—that eternity which is in love with the productions of time. In both writers, fulfillment occurs in life's eternal recurrence in the destructive flux.

And this brings us to the image of the phoenix. For Nietzsche the idea of dying and rebirth is an essential part of the metaphor of "going under" which Zarathustra announces at the outset. The sun must set: man must die. The sun must rise: man must be reborn as the overman. Because "the worst enemy you can encounter will always be you, yourself," the overman must learn how to die: "You must wish to consume yourself in your own flame: how could you wish to become new unless you had first becomes ashes!" (p. 176). The creator must submit to "suffering" and "much change": "Indeed, there must be much bitter dying in your life, you creators" (p. 199). And when the time comes to die, the overman must not cling rotting to the branches of life; he must learn to die "the death that consummates" (pp. 185-86).

In much the same vein Lawrence insists that the soul must die continually,[6] passing away into the great darkness of the infinite source, then arising with a new being and new life, determined to create "a new heaven and a new earth." Only the living-dead cling to life instead of accepting their death and transfiguration. Only the great herd of egos refuse to acknowledge death in the understanding, and to accept that death and corruption are a part of *them*. Without the knowledge of death—death of the ego, surrender to the great flood of God—new being and new creation are impossible. It would be impossible, for example, to proclaim the arrival of "high noon" and the arrival of Zarathustra.

2. Love, Marriage, and Power

The reference to "high noon" brings me to the recurrent contrast, in both Lawrence and Nietzsche, between night and day. Night, for both men, is associated with the female and with love; day, with the male's creative activity in the building of a new world. In "The Night Song" Zarathustra sings:

> A craving for love is within me; it speaks the language of love.
> Light am I; ah, that I were night! But this is my loneliness that I

[6]The idea is everywhere in Lawrence's writings. See for example the poem "Spring Morning": "We have died, we have slain and been slain, / We are not our old selves any more. / I feel new and eager / To start again." Or see his statement in "The Reality of Peace": "When we understand our extreme being in death, we have surpassed into a new being" (*Phoenix*, p. 676).

> am girt with light. Ah, that I were dark and nocturnal! How I would suck at the breasts of light! . . .
>
> But I live in my own light; I drink back into myself the flames that break out of me. I do not know the happiness of those who receive. . . . (pp. 217-18)

As giver and creator, Zarathustra longs for the night in which his soul might become a fountain. But the light and the darkness, the fire and the water, are opposite principles. Zarathustra is tempted to surrender to the darkness, to suck like an infant the breasts of the great female night. But he cannot; he must strive for the "high noon" of reality. "I am carried away, my soul dances," the Drunkard proclaims in "The drunken song": "Day's work! Day's work! Who shall be lord of the earth?" (p. 432).

It is this sort of oscillation in Nietzsche, between the craving to surrender oneself to the female and the opposite craving—to assert one's proud and separate selfhood as creator and "lord of the earth," that we may surmise Lawrence would have noted with particular attention. Note the rhythms of Zarathustra's life: from the solitude of his cave he ventures out, bringing his "light" to the "underworld," his "fire into the valleys" (p. 122). He seeks "living companions" and reminds himself that "Out of love alone shall my despising and my warning bird fly up, not out of the swamp" (p. 289). But in seeking comrades he must guard against his strong love for others. For he is "trust-overfull" and is ready to love "every monster" (p. 267). "Love is the danger of the loneliest; love of everything if only it is alive. Laughable, verily, are my folly and my modesty in love" (p. 267). Again, he reflects that "consideration and pity have ever been my greatest dangers" (p. 297). Fearful of the mob in whom "everything is betrayed" (p. 297), he returns with joy to his solitude, his silence. But his love prompts him to "go under" again, and he warns himself against his nausea, his negative spirit that may reject the earth and its joys: "Does one have the right to curse, where one does not love?" (p. 405).

Love and the will-to-power are thus mixed in Zarathustra. He is ambivalent, drawn out of love to others, withdrawing in disgust and repudiation from the tyranny of the "outside-myself" (p. 387). "With malice and love" Zarathustra shakes his friends' hands; and if he enjoys their companionship he is "overcome by a slight aversion and by scorn" (pp. 415, 422)—and is glad to slip outside the cave and into the open, with his animals. For "all great love," he reasons, "does not *want* love; it wants more" (p. 405); "higher than love of the neighbor is love of the farthest and the future" (p. 173). Day's work—the building of new values and a new world—must never be compromised for the sake of love.

It is perhaps unnecessary to insist on the similarity of this ambivalent Zarathustra to several of Lawrence's heroes. The fact is that the oscillation between "love" and the "will-to-power" is so central in Lawrence's psychology that in novel after novel the experience of the hero becomes a prolonged to-and-fro of "sympathetic" (or "love") impulses and "volun-

tary" (or "power") impulses. And Lawrence, like Zarathustra, must warn himself repeatedly against too much sympathy. Like Zarathustra, Lawrence's heroes all yearn to surrender to the female night and to have companions, blood-brothers; like Zarathustra they all recoil in revulsion, warning themselves repeatedly against giving themselves away to others, against too much love.

It is hardly surprising then that both men are distrustful of conventional love and marriage, which threaten to destroy the heroic soul in the "greater man." Both men, following Schopenhauer in regarding woman as the instrument of the blind life-force, serving above all a procreative urge, are fearful of being devoured by her and associate her with the tyranny of the mob. The only proper role for woman in marriage, both agree, is that of submission to male authority. Says Zarathustra: "The happiness of man is: I will. The happiness of woman is: he wills. . . . woman must obey and find a depth for her surface" (p. 179). In the same vein Lawrence argues in *Aaron's Rod* that "the woman must submit" not to "any foolish and arbitrary will" but to "the soul in its dark motion of power and pride"—"submit livingly, not subjectedly," discovering her fulfillment in an acceptance of the "mode of power" instead of the "love-mode" which has enslaved men in our time. For conventional love and marriage crush all male creativeness. Zarathustra says:

> Marriage: thus I name the will of two to create the one that is more than those who created it. Reverence for each other, as for those willing with such a will, is what I name marriage. Let this be the meaning and truth of your marriage. But that which the all-too-many, the superfluous, call marriage—alas, what shall I name that? Alas, this poverty of the soul in pair! Alas, this filth of the soul in pair! Alas, this wretched contentment in pair! Marriage they call this. . . .these animals entangled in the heavenly net. (p. 182)

It is exactly the same protest as Lawrence raises against the dreadful *egoisme à deux* of married couples: "The hot narrow intimacy between man and wife was abhorrent. The way they shut their doors, these married people, and shut themselves in to their own exclusive alliance with each other, even in love, disgusted him. It was a whole community of mistrustful couples insulated in private houses or private rooms, always in couples, and no further life, no further immediate, no disinterested relationship admitted: a kaleidoscope of couples, disjoined, separatist, meaningless entities of married couples."[7] As sex turns a man into "a broken half of a couple," "a prisoner," his individuality obliterated in dreadful fusion, so Nietzsche comments on the male's annihilation in marriage:

---

[7] *Women in Love* (New York: Random House Modern Library, 1950), p. 226. Hereafter references will be included in the text.

> Worthy I deemed this man, and ripe for the sense of the earth; but when I saw his wife, the earth seemed to me a house for the senseless. . . .
>
> This one went out like a hero in quest of truths, and eventually he conquered a little dressed-up lie. His marriage he calls it. . . .
>
> This one sought a maid with the virtues of an angel. But all at once he became the maid of a woman; and now he must turn himself into an angel. (p. 182)

The true purpose of marriage, says Nietzsche, is "not merely to reproduce, but to produce something *higher*" (p. 323). As Lawrence stressed that the nuclei of the egg and sperm combine to produce a *new* individual, so Nietzsche places the stress on the creative possibilities of marriage. Both, too, are puritanically horrified by the two beasts who "find each other" in marriage, the "merging, the clutching, the mingling of love" (*Zarathustra*, p. 183: cf. *Women in Love*, p. 227). And both counsel chastity when the soul, recoiling from "the bitch sensuality," is visited by the desire for chastity. Zarathustra asks: "What is chastity? Is chastity not folly? Yet this folly came to us, not we to it. We offered this guest hostel and heart: now it dwells with us—may it stay as long as it will!" (p. 167). So Lawrence's Mellors writes to Connie: "I love this chastity, which is the pause of peace of our fucking. . . . Now is the time to be chaste, it is so good to be chaste, like a river of cool water in my soul. I love the chastity now that it flows between us. It is like fresh water and rain. How can men want wearisomely to philander! What a misery to be like Don Juan . . . impotent and unable to be chaste in the cool between-whiles, as by a river." In such a passage, and in much of Lawrence and Nietzsche, there is a deep acceptance of the rhythms of man's life—of a flux in desire that the wise man must heed.

3. The Divided Self: Rationalization and Reaction

It is clear from our analysis of Lawrence's and Nietzsche's views of love and power that both men saw a deep division within the psyche—a division both had discovered in Dostoevsky's Underground Man or his Raskolnikov, each of whom oscillates between extremes of compassion or love and power or self-assertion. It was also in Dostoevsky, I suspect, that Lawrence and Nietzsche discovered two other important ideas of their psychology: the idea of rationalization—the offering of "good" reasons to disguise one's "real" reasons; and the idea of the reaction from excessive spirituality into pure bestiality.

Nietzsche's analysis of rationalization and reaction in *Zarathustra* issues from his deepest insight: that what man really wants (as opposed to what he *thinks* he wants) is power. There are, in truth, Nietzsche argued, "no mental causes at all"; and motive is "merely a surface phenomenon of consciousness, something alongside the deed that is more likely to cover up

the antecedents of the deeds than to represent them" (p. 495). The true causes of human behavior are either a collocation of events too numerous to be defined or an animal instinct. The mind is merely instrumental; it is in the service of the body's will. Says Zarathustra:

> . . . the awakened and knowing say: body am I entirely, and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body.
>
> The body is a great reason. . . . An instrument of your body is also your little reason, my brother, which you call "spirit"—a little instrument and toy of your great reason. (p. 146)

From this it follows that beneath all talk of "the spiritual," the "higher," all talk of "selflessness" and "loving one's neighbor," beneath all the romantic liberal talk of "equality," "brotherhood," and "the rights of man," or beneath all Platonic gibbering about "the Good," the "ideal," the *ens realissimum*—lies the hairy brute, the predator, the animal seeking domination, omnipotence. As Dostoevsky in *Notes from Underground* had pointed out that what man really wants is an independent will, free from all restraints, free even of the laws of nature, and as Dostoevsky had traced the inevitable plunge from love or self-sacrifice into the abyss of depravity and cruelty, Nietzsche, in diagnosing the psychology of the "higher man," comments: "The more he aspires to the height and light, the more strongly do his roots strive earthward, downward, into the dark, the deep—into evil" (p. 154). The higher men really want "more thrills, more danger, more earthquakes": "You desire, . . . you higher men—you desire the most wicked, most dangerous life, of which *I* am almost afraid: the life of wild animals, woods, caves, steep mountains, and labyrinthian gorges" (p. 414). But if the higher man, like the eagle, gazes into "his *own* abysses" and longs to "pounce on lambs, . . . hating all lamb-souls," hatred and cruelty are no less to be found in the plebeian preachers of equality: "underneath all *romantisme* lies the grunting and greed of Rousseau's instinct for revenge" (p. 514). When they speak of "justice," the preachers of equality (the tarantulas, Zarathustra calls them) want the world to "be filled with the storms of [their] revenge"; they say, "We shall wreak vengeance and abuse on all whose equals we are not" (p. 212). "Aggrieved conceit" and "repressed envy" will "erupt . . . as a flame and as the frenzy of revenge" (p. 212). Thus the human will, seeking always to transform "It was" into "Thus I willed it," is perverted from creativeness to the desire for punishment. Impotent, it desires omnipotence—at any cost.

Here Nietzsche defines what was to become a central insight of Lawrence's fiction. The "higher" people (the word "higher" is recurrent in *Women in Love*) all talk of socialism, of equality, of love. But the talk at Hermione Roddice's Breadalby is like "a rattle of artillery" and beneath the professions of human love and compassionate liberalism (the talk of Bertrand Russell, of John Maynard Keynes) was the lust for cruelty, the lust of

the super-warrior who, like Plato, uses dialectic to gain power. They are all, these higher people, like the "insane" Halliday:

> On the one hand he's had religious mania, and on the other, he is fascinated by obscenity. Either he's a pure servant, washing the feet of Christ, or else he is making obscene drawings of Jesus—action and reaction—and between the two, nothing. He is really insane.
>
> (*Women in Love*, p. 107)

Lawrence saw that he, too, in the role of Richard Somers of *Kangaroo*, wanted to "erupt" like a dormant volcano; that he too desired not love and sympathetic unison with his neighbors but rather to destroy the whole society with its "love and benevolence ideal"—as, during the war, he had wanted to kill millions of Germans. Indeed, the entire society, as he saw it in *Aaron's Rod* and *Kangaroo*, wishes only to react against the love-ideal and to plunge into a bloody revolution—the bloodier, the better. Hollow men and women will do *anything* to smash the existing system, in which they feel themselves to be impotent, purposeless, "nullified." So World War I, Lawrence believed, was simply the inevitable reaction of the mob of egos who, unable to bear the "cabbage" existence of submission to the intolerable system, preferred death to living—a society in which, instinct being crushed and regarded as disease, life was declining, lapsing into the dark river of dissolution.

Yet both Lawrence and Nietzsche also recognized the possible virtue—the life-giving power—of the carrying of reaction to an extreme. Nausea, says Nietzsche, "creates wings and water-divining powers" (p. 317). "The greatest evil is necessary for the overman's best" (p. 400). Zarathustra, summoning his higher men to join him, summons also his "most abysmal thought" and urges the abyss within him to speak, for "I have turned by ultimate depth inside out into the light" (p. 328). He welcomes nausea—because it is only from acceptance of the worst within him that he can become whole. In the same vein Lawrence could say that acceptance of corruption and death in the understanding is the essential precondition of growth and rebirth as a new man. To accept that corruption and death are *within us* is to cleanse the self, to cast out festering *ressentiment* and the spirit of revenge spawned by the Christian and romantic overemphasis on love, selflessness, and self-sacrifice. Paradoxically, the plunge into "sensationalism" and "reduction," into "corruption and death" may unloose the soul, free it from the fixed objectives of the egoistic will, and open it to new possibilities of life, to the desire to build a new heaven and earth. Like Nietzsche, Lawrence recognizes that there can be no separation from the individual psyche and the whole of the universe. The force behind the universe is both creative and corruptive, a will to creation and a will to destruction. Those wills are within man, and man can never learn to live healthily, in harmony with the deeps that are within him,

until he has learned to accept the abyss along with the mountain top, the darkness of the unconsciousness along with the light of the spirit.

It is for this reason that both Lawrence and Nietzsche affirm the necessity of accepting *all* instincts. Says Nietzsche in Zarathustra:

> With knowledge, the body purifies itself; making experiments with knowledge, it elevates itself; in the lover of knowledge all instincts become holy; in the elevated, the soul becomes gay. (p. 189)

For the same reason he can say, "Do whatever you will, but first be such as are *able to will*" (p. 284). It is precisely this view that Lawrence embraces when he announces "I shall accept all my desires and repudiate none" and when he calls for acting on one's "deepest impulse." "It's the hardest thing in the world to do," says Rupert Birkin, to act spontaneously on one's impulses—and it's the only really gentlemanly thing to do—provided you're fit for it" (*Women in Love*, p. 27). It is *the man of character*—the gentleman or the higher man—who alone is capable of acting responsibly on his impulses. In him, as in all men, the mind is merely instrumental, is in the service of an unconscious will. But in him it is in the service of a *higher* will than that of the egoist: the deepest impulse of the higher man is, as we have seen, "the inherent passion . . . to produce, to create, to be as God." That higher will-to-power, manifested in the attack on all life-denying institutions and ideas in the bold attempt to build a new world, is entirely different from the will-to-power of the plebeian acting out of *ressentiment* and the spirit of envy. Higher men, recognizing the dangers of subjugating life to such a base will, accept *all* of their desires because they know that the creative passion is so strong that it can subdue all other passions in them.

This distinction between a base will-to-power and a higher will-to-power is obviously important in both writers; for both must distinguish carefully between the terrible *bullying* of the mob, the "superfluous" herd of self-seeking egos who "want power and first the lever of power, much money" (*Zarathustra*, p. 162), and the noble creative and purposive desire of a Zarathustra or a Don Ramon. In Nietzsche, as in Lawrence, the definition of the virtues of the higher man is always coupled with an attack upon the proponents of the base will-to-power. In Nietzsche, it is abhorrent that the mob seek to become masters: "What is womanish, what derives from the servile, and especially the mob hodgepodge: *that* would now become master of all human destiny. O nausea!" (p. 399). So in *Aaron's Rod* Lawrence repudiates with disgust and rage the bullying "female" society that demands subservience to "the life-centrality of woman" and allegiance to its dead and putrid ideals of love and self-sacrifice. The "deep power urge" (as opposed to the shallow power urge of the herd) refuses to accept passively the *status quo*, and fights unstintingly to destroy old values and to create a new world.

There was, nevertheless, Lawrence believed, an important difference between this "deep power urge" as he conceived it and Nietzsche's higher will-to-power. In *Aaron's Rod* Rawdon Lilly defines the essential difference:

> We've got to accept the power motive, accept it in deep responsibility. . . . It is a great life motive. . . . Power—the power-urge. The will-to-power—but not in Nietzsche's sense. Not intellectual power. Not mental power. Not conscious will-power. Not even wisdom. But dark, living, fructifying power. . . . The urge to power does not seek happiness any more than for any other state. It urges from within, darkly, for the displacing of the old leaves, the inception of the new.[8]

Here Lawrence attacks Nietzsche's conception of the will-to-power because, as Lilly argues, Nietzsche's will-to-power "was the conscious and benevolent will, in fact, the love-will." It is a remark that reveals the depth of Lawrence's understanding of Nietzsche. For Lawrence the deep power urge "is not conscious of its aims, and it is certainly not consciously benevolent or love-directed" (*Aaron's Rod,* p. 346). It is an urge to act in unison with the great Source, the creative mystery. For Nietzsche, this deep power urge is hardly distinguishable from a will to make all things conscious, a will "that everything be changed into what is thinkable for man" (p. 198). When Nietzsche writes, "I love him who lives to know, and who wants to know so that the overman may live some day" (p. 127), we may well imagine Lawrence's rejoinder: "The supreme lesson of human consciousness is to learn how *not* to know. That is, how not to interfere . . . how to live dynamically, from the great Source, and not statically, like machines driven by ideas and principles from the head, or automatically, from one fixed desire."[9] The difference between Lawrence's deep power urge and Nietzsche's higher will-to-power is thus profound—if we accept this (to me persuasive) Lawrentian contention that Nietzsche overemphasized consciousness.

Yet the similarity of their conceptions of the higher will-to-power remains impressive. For Nietzsche, like Lawrence, clearly recognizes the limitations of the will of his higher men. In his analysis of the "ascetic of the spirit," Nietzsche examines carefully a man with an "heroic will" who, feeling contempt and nausea, has "subdued monsters . . . solved riddles." But this man, however "sublime," is condemned because he is *all will*—a "tense" soul whose "knowledge has not yet learned to smile and to be without jealousy" (p. 230). Such a man, Zarathustra says, must learn to relax:

---

[8] *Aaron's Rod* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1976), pp. 345-46. Hereafter references will be included in the text.

[9] *Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 98.

> No violent will can attain the beautiful by exertion. . . . To stand with relaxed muscles and unharnessed will: that is most difficult for all of you who are sublime.
>
> When power becomes gracious and descends into the visible—such descent I call beauty.
>
> And there is nobody from whom I want beauty as much as from you who are powerful: let your kindness be your final self-conquest.
>
> Of all evil I deem you capable: therefore I want the good from you. (p. 230)

The "soul's secret," Zarathustra concludes, is that "only when the hero has abandoned her, she is approached in a dream by the overhero" (p. 231). In short, the relinquishing of the fixed will of the soul is a necessary condition for true elevation: "The ether itself shall elevate him, the will-less one" (p. 230). Such a man does not merely "subdue monsters"; he can "redeem his own monsters and riddles, changing them into heavenly children" (p. 230); the darkness within him can be converted into light. Thus Nietzsche would appear to be suggesting, as Lawrence too suggested, that only by relaxing the will can one become filled with the deep promptings to become the overman—instead of the mere despiser. One must wait for the influx of generous, life-affirming impulses. The analogy to this, in Lawrentian language, is that one must surrender oneself to the great current of life—must wait and listen for the deepest promptings, and allow the dark gods to enter the clearing of the known self.[10]

4. The Flux and Laughter

It may be, then, that Lawrence's disagreement with Nietzsche is not quite so profound as Lawrence thinks it is. In any case, both finally join in their belief that health is possible only when man learns to accept change and to laugh at himself. As we have seen, both men condemn those with "fixed will" who "want the old, and that the old be preserved." Heraclitus, whom Nietzsche regards with "the highest respect" (*Twilight*, p. 480), was also for Lawrence a great teacher: "In Time and Eternity," Lawrence writes in "The Crown" (*Phoenix II*, p. 413), "all is flux." Hence, like Nietzsche, Lawrence distrusts all systems: there is "no eternal system, there is no rock of eternal truth." God, like the rainbow, appears and vanishes and reappears—"always different." Man must recognize that evil is "the desire for constancy, for fixity in the temporal world" (p. 414). Man must learn to accept the "transmutations" of his "integral spirit" (*Women in Love*, p. 219). And he must learn to laugh at himself. The deepest self in man, the integral self that Lawrence called the Holy Ghost, prompts us

[10] *Studies in Classic American Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 117. Hereafter references will be included in the text.

> not to be too egoistic and wilful in our conscious self, but to change as the spirit inside bids us change, and leave off when it bids us leave off, and laugh when we must laugh, particularly at ourselves, for in deadly earnestness there is always something a bit ridiculous. The Holy Ghost bids us never be too deadly in our earnestness, always to laugh in time, at ourselves and everything. Particularly at our sublimities. Everything has its hour of ridicule—everything.
>
> (*Studies in Classic American Literature*, p. 79)

It is through laughter and the dance, not the spirit of gravity, not the dour sublimities of "those who are sublime," but laughter (pp. 422-23) that Nietzsche's higher men drive out nausea, convalesce, and move toward true health. So Lawrence (surely one of the most *earnest* writers who ever lived) cautions himself against the bitterness that threatens to drive him into wholesale reaction and the desire for revenge against the dead society.

Both of these earnest puritans needed to remind themselves to laugh. Both, in their striving to be "hard" against the flaccid, passive acceptance by their sentimental contemporaries of intolerable evils, were always in danger of being overcome by nausea, in danger of becoming mere despisers. Both, in their intense emphasis upon the *responsibility* that man assumes when he declares "All is permitted," were in danger of cutting themselves off from society and friends, launching prolonged diatribes against the human race that would condemn the condemners to solitary isolation from their kind. Both, in their intense strivings to overcome puritanical repressions and to liberate themselves from the tyranny of a life-denying idealism, were in danger of becoming more puritanical than the Puritans—more strict with themselves, more demanding, more intolerant of personal weaknesses. Both, as psychologists, recognized clearly that their prolonged commitment to their work, their missions, could cause them irreparable physical or psychic harm. One must learn to relax the will; one must learn to accept the flux of desire as part of the great flux of the earth. Only in a complete naturalism, a naturalism that would accept all desires as holy, could they find health and wholeness—the health that is possible only when one can forgive oneself or laugh at oneself if one has failed to become a higher man.

THE RAT'S SCALP

JAMES W. LILLIE

Now that I had Key pinned under my knees behind the desk, I wasn't sure what to do with him. If I let him up, he might empty his drawers and closet and camp out in Horsey's room. If I sat on him until he calmed down, I might miss two days of classes.

The fight had started over nothing. Returning early from Thanksgiving vacation—Key went home only for Christmas—I had caught Key stripping a mat of blond and grey hair from his brush. He was balding, but didn't think I would notice if I never saw the brush.

My mother thought like that. When I got home Wednesday, she told me my mouse had escaped. She had strapped its water bottle to a kitchen chair and had scattered sugar cubes under the table. I played along but I knew the mouse was dead. I sat on my brother Derek for fifteen minutes before he admitted overfeeding the mouse until it had burst. My mother dropped the charade when she discovered, the day before I returned to school, that something really had been eating the sugar, and that there really were mice in the house. Of course there weren't any. I had eaten the sugar myself.

I couldn't resist teasing Key. I grabbed the brush and paraded around the room, holding the brush out of reach. I should have noticed his face darken before it was too late. Now I had him pinned under my knees behind the desk, and I wasn't sure what to do with him.

As I watched his right eye swell and blacken, I wondered if the Centennial Committee could find someone else who knew how to bake. Key would not recover in time. No great loss, I supposed. It was a bust. The cake looked nothing like the school.

Holding my breath, I shuffled aside and stuffed a large patch of his hair—pulled out during the scuffle—into my pocket. Key's throat tightened around a word and then spit it out. He was staring at himself in the mirror—in horror—the way my father once stared at his white corduroy couch the day he found a charred log hidden behind a cushion. The couch had been hoisted forty-two stories by a crane from the top of the building because the piece would not fit in the freight elevator. My father beat the dog until my mother interceded. I was not so lucky. Key left without a word; I would be full-grown the next time he spoke to me.

An hour later, quick, cushioned steps sounded behind me.

"Where the hell ya been?"

"Whaddya mean? Oh, hi Richards. Thought you were Key. Um, if it's about your *Playboy*, I gave it to Chen."

"Key is locked in the tower." Richards modulated his voice dramatically; he was taking voice lessons. "You've got to go see Horsey." With that, he darted out of the room.

I was sure I was the last person either Key or Horsey wanted to see. He and Key had both entered the school as eighth graders when their parents separated: their mothers had moved to Woodstock; their fathers had stayed on Wall Street. Horsey and Key were inseparable—until I arrived the following year.

Heavy leather boots dragged someone in the room behind me.

"Hi, Gouge." He seemed reluctant to speak. His shoes were pulling him toward the door. "Look, if it's about the five . . ."

"Key is locked in the tower. You've got . . ."

"To go see Horsey. Yes, I know. I'll be there in a second."

Gouge nodded and then wheeled his stomach out the door.

I dismissed this warning as I had the first and sat down to write a letter to the Centennial Committee explaining why Key and I could not fulfill our promise to bake a cake-replica of the school, when a third, slower, more determined step sounded twice behind me and stopped. Without moving a hair, I shot over my shoulder, "Don't tell me. Key is locked in the tower. Right?" The tower. No wonder our cake looked wrong. We had forgotten the tower.

"How's that?"

I had done it this time. Mr. Broadbent filled the doorway.

"I was just saying that Key likes to wear . . . a hat. He's balding, sir."

Broadbent wasn't listening; his mind was on another matter. "Have you seen anyone strange around the school? Someone you've never seen before?" I wished Broadbent spent less time in my room. "Five, six years older than you?" He pursed his lips, leaned over me and dug his thumb into my shoulder until he was satisfied I knew nothing.

When Broadbent left, I went to find Key. I didn't think Broadbent had understood what I had said, but I was taking no chances. Key was mad enough as it was.

Horsey didn't hear me come in. His long white fingers dug into his ears—someone was making quite a racket, inside his closet, as if they were trying to break down the door. His eyes squinted at the daily crossword. An admiring eighth-grader had delivered Horsey's *New York Times*, and Horsey had pulled it apart and had fashioned it into a nest.

"You seen Key?" I yelled above the pounding. Horsey drew his pencil from between his lips and aimed the point toward the closet.

"Well, why don't you let him out for Chrissakes?" Horsey paid no attention. I would soon put an end to this nonsense, I thought, and I strode over to the closet, but there was no doorknob—not even a hole for one. I pulled off a bar set across the door, but the door would still not open.

The corner of a hardbound book caught me at the base of my spine. Horsey was a nuisance. I picked up the book to return it, but as I did, I noticed the title, set in gilded Gothic type: "Order of the Tower."

At Horsey's request, I read the second paragraph of the third page:

> Any person entering the Tower without having first delivered to the Guard an authentic Rat's Scalp shall remain in the Tower until a representative of said person, acceptable to the Guard, produces such a Scalp. There can be no exceptions.

"I guess you'll have to do, Lillie."

He might as well have asked me to bring him three golden hairs from the devil's head. The "Rat" was the school's nickname for Robert A. Moss. Five years before, when Moss sat opposite the headmaster, Warren DeWolfe, at lunch, Dr. DeWolfe threw down his fork, pulled twice at his lambchop sideburns and then yelled across the table at the new Latin teacher, "Stop it Moss, for Chrissakes. You look like a rat unsure of its next meal." Moss's head bobbed up and his eyes darted from boy to boy at the table. He quickly swallowed the food stored in his cheeks. "Lift up your head when you eat, man. Sit up. Slow down." Not getting the results he wanted, DeWolfe pushed back his chair, strode across to Moss in two easy steps, and yanked back Moss's head to illustrate proper manners. Moss's hairpiece came off in DeWolfe's hand. DeWolfe stared in horror, lost his appetite and left the room.

The word spread quickly. That afternoon, Jim Sides declared that anyone wishing to join the "Order of the Tower" was to come up with a picture of the Rat's Scalp.

Two years later, Dr. DeWolfe, perhaps having never fully recovered from that day, retired and was replaced by Mr. Moss. Moss revenged himself quickly against the Order of the Tower. He expelled Sides after accusing him of raping one of his twin daughters—no one seemed to agree which one. The club crumbled.

Horsey had no idea who he was up against. I considered jumping on his head, but then that strategy wasn't working for me that day. Besides, there was no obvious way to open the door, and if Horsey kept Key locked up long enough, Key might get so angry at Horsey he would speak to me again. With that in mind, I went back to my room and planned how Key and I could add the tower to the cake—the bronze ibis, perched on top of the tower, would be tricky.

"Not a problem."

I quickly checked under the beds and in the closets.

"Key?"

"You want to snap a picture of the Rat's Scalp?"

I edged toward the corner. Above my head, a shoe suddenly burst through the ceiling, a soiled black pointed half boot. A few seconds later, another shoe crashed through the tile, this time a brown one.

"How many of you are there?" The two feet disappeared, a pale white hand lifted two corner tiles and a fat body slid through the hole, bounced off the bookshelf, and fell in front of me. There was a derelict living in my ceiling.

"I don't believe we've met."

The boy pulled his vest down over his belly and pushed his long gray

hair out of his eyes. His teeth were stained yellow from cigarettes.

"I thought you would need some help to get the Rat's Scalp. If you do not act fast, Broadbent will find Key in the tower. That would be disastrous. It would mean the end of the Order." He spoke with difficulty and squinted under the dim fluorescent light.

"It must be fun to live in the ceiling." I guessed there was a crawl space above the second floor ceiling, behind the third floor interior wall. It had never occurred to me to look. This boy was a gigantic hamster: a fat flexible body without bones which could squeeze through any hole larger than its head.

"Take this box," he said. "You will find everything you need to take the picture. I have risked much to get to you; Broadbent has seen me." He listened carefully to each tread in the corridor, tensing and then relaxing when he recognized the footfall.

"Open it." I slowly pulled off the lid, peeked inside, making sure no snakes or toads would jump out at me, and then ripped off the top. I found a bottle of Phisoderm, a Polaroid camera, and a piece of chocolate cake.

"Well, I can't tell you how much I appreciate this." He ignored my sarcasm and motioned for me to join him on the floor where he quickly unraveled his plan. To illustrate, he pulled nine sugar cubes out of his vest pocket and piled them three stories high in the shape of a "C" at the head of a lake, represented by a glass lens. I backed away from him to avoid his urgency, but it was too late. I was convinced my only chance to save my friendship with Key was to get the Rat's Scalp.

I dashed out the door, my arms sticking out of Key's black bathrobe, my red hair concealed inside a school towel.

"Where the hell do ya think you're goin?" A large paw wrapped around my neck. "Broadbent's looking for ya." It was Andy; Bobo we called him. Ever since wrestling season had started, Bobo had been on a diet. He had to lose weight to make his class. That made Bobo mad. The coach kept a close eye out for Bobo at dinner and rationed Bobo's food personally.

I remembered the cake, fumbled in the box with my free hand and held up the cake where Bobo could see it. His grip on my arm relaxed. I spun around, handed him the cake, smiled, then ran up the stairs to "D" corridor.

Eliot seemed nervous when I told him what I wanted. He picked at his acne. But without a word, he took my box, spread the Phisoderm on my shoes and hoisted me out the window. When my feet were almost out the window, he muttered, "Some day I'll catch hell for this."

The slate was cold and slippery. The only lights were those trained on the tower from below; there was no moon. I clung to the top of the dormer window, not daring to move. It was a long way down.

"Come on, Lillie. The lights. Someone will see you." The window slammed shut behind me. My eyes adjusted slowly to the darkness. This was madness.

I tried my feet on the gambrel roof and found I had traction. Once at the peak, I followed the ridge away from the tower to the end, crept down to the last dormer window, the Rat's study. The light was on. I set the focus for five feet, the distance to the desk.

I dropped the camera in front of the window and clicked. Seconds later, a few lines began to develop, the outline of a body. From the light of the study I could see Mr. Moss's body appear. Everything—except his head. The desk was too far to one side. I took a chance, changed the focus to two feet, tapped on the window, held my breath for thirty seconds, just to be sure, dropped the camera into position, and snapped. I didn't wait for a result; I ran. That is, I slipped back to Eliot's window. The Phisoderm had worn off.

I rapped sharply on the pane three times, but there was no answer. I rapped again. I was sure I had tried the wrong window. Suddenly, it cracked open and then swung out. I held my breath and swung inside, expecting Broadbent to be waiting for me: it was Eliot.

"Let's see." I looked at him blankly. "The picture. Let me see." I had forgotten all about it. I pulled it out of my pocket. A perfect hit. A beautiful color shot of Robert A. Moss without hair.

I thanked Eliot, gave him a word of advice, and then ran through the boys dressed in coats and ties for chapel, back to Horsey's room adjoining the tower.

Horsey and Key were sitting on the bed. When he saw me Horsey burst out laughing.

"Nice outfit," Key retied his shoes.

I decided to attack; I told them Moss's daughters had seen me and invited me to come back after chapel. Horsey stopped laughing. Glancing at Key, who was still busy with his shoes, Horsey told me not to forget the picture. He fished under the tower door with a coathanger, pulled out a latch string and opened the door. I should have known; Key could have gotten out anytime.

In turn, Horsey and Key suspected nothing. When I went inside to pin up the photograph, Horsey slammed the door and slid the bar across. I shook the door and yelled until they left. I added the snapshot to the gallery of older black and white and color photographs and then danced up the steel ladder, past the first cement platform, littered with thousands of cigarette butts, past the second level, sparkling clean, furnished with bed and chairs, to the third level, empty, the highest point of the school. I didn't have long to wait.

A dark shape passed across a window and scurried up over the ridge out of sight. Minutes later, lights flashed on in the area where Mr. Moss lived. One black shape was hauled in one of the windows, but another slipped back over the ridge. It didn't feel as good as I thought it would. My stomach knotted and my vision blurred. School would be tough without Key. But then one of them was free. It might be Key.

The shape darted back and forth across the roof until it reached Eliot's window. The tower lights were yanked loose and their beams swept across the roof. There was no time to lose. Why didn't Eliot open? I had forgotten Eliot had begged me to help him. He wanted no one else to use his window to get on the roof. I had told Eliot to lock out the next person who climbed out his window.

The lights found the shape at Eliot's window; it scurried off toward the tower, towards me. The lights tracked him all the way. He didn't seem to care. He was bringing them to me.

"I hope you're satisfied." I nearly jumped out the window.

"Damn. I wish you'd stop sneaking up on me. Who are you anyway?" It was the hamster. He clutched a long flat metal object under his arm.

"Sides. Jim Sides."

Outside, the lights circled, converged, passed. The shape reached the tower, hopped in the window and clambered up the ladder.

"Horsey!"

"Lillie!" We chased each other around the deck.

"Knock it off you two. There is still a way out. If you are lucky Key will not talk. You still have a chance." Lights surrounded the tower. "Of course, the Order is finished." Horsey and I collapsed in the corner. "The things we used to do. We knew every nook in the school. We darted out of ceilings and cellars, then disappeared as fast as we came. One night, Ducky, the wrestling coach, decided he would catch us. He was tired of DeWolfe's "weakness" and "stupidity." He would catch us himself. He got all decked out in sneakers and sweats, and he waited for us to come out." I didn't want to interrupt the boy, but he had found his voice and had started to run on like my father after a few brandies—and we were being surrounded. The masters would be at our door any second. "We surrounded him. We took turns racing him around the kitchen, staying just out of reach. The lights were out, and he tripped and fell over everything we rolled in his path. He must have thought the entire kitchen was alive."

Lights poured in every window of the tower. "After half an hour he collapsed on the floor, exhausted. We gave him a big hand and disappeared." I could hear people in Horsey's room, trying to open the door. They didn't yell or shout. They were methodical and relaxed. "But the Rat framed me and scared off the rest."

"I've lived in this tower for the last five years." Someone below found the latch string and opened the door. Sides reacted quickly, told us what to do, hopped down the ladder, and squeezed out the window. The lights followed him.

Horsey and I slipped out as the masters reached the first platform. We climbed in the infirmary window, tripping over the nightwatchman's Newfoundland, which growled, rolled over, and went back to sleep.

* * *

There was an investigation: Key's parents were notified separately of his expulsion. Horsey and I each got eight demerits for missing chapel, and a serious warning. Key refused to talk.

The tower was sealed off; the bronze ibis—the long flat metal object Sides took from the tower—was replaced with a weathercock.

The following Saturday, while everyone celebrated, I was walking off my demerits, one half mile apiece. About two o'clock, an old Volkswagen bus scurried by. Ten minutes later, a black Cadillac rolled by. Key's mother and father had come to pick him up. They found him in the kitchen, desperately finishing off the ivy on the cake.

No one caught Sides, and although someone said Sides was in the tower the day it was sealed, I expect him to stick his shoe through my ceiling sometime when I'm alone. I leave cereal and cigarettes for him, and sometimes I think he's come to take some, but then it's probably just Horsey, who was forced to move in with me when Key left. Key is irreplaceable.

AFTER THE WEDDING

Yesterday, in one rice-strewn lunge
we rushed to the edge of the sea.
To be naked before each other
in the salt air we removed our clothes.
Rice fell from our underwear.

It's the season of hurricanes
and the beach is littered with the soft
rot of tender bodies
who could not keep their shells.

My wife is sleeping—
I'm desperate to remember these times—
but what I love must sleep its sleep.
The torn screen rattles
at the strength of this wind

and beyond the stars run
like the guts of sandbags
on a town gone limp against a storm.
A wild milk universe
the first sky watchers saw.

(If we were birds, say,
and ate those clouds of rice,
they would swell in our bellies
and kill us. Let's not

be birds however much
we love the waving hands of friends,
however much we fly away
from what we come from.)

The surf tells me to listen
constantly. A single cricket
chirps somewhere among the furniture
in this temporary home. You know
how they squat like tiny cellos
in the body of their songs.

QUITMAN MARSHALL

REVIEWS

INVADE MECUM: COLERIDGE, AUSTIN, AND THE TONES OF DECONSTRUCTION

LUTHER TYLER

Jerome Christensen. *Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981, 276 pp. $18.50.

Shoshana Felman. *Le scandale du corps parlant: Don Juan avec Austin, ou la séduction en deux langues.* Paris: Seuil, 1980, 224 pp. $17.50.

In the Spring 1982 issue of *The South Carolina Review* I let slip a more or less disinterested wish for a book on Coleridge written in any one of the current critical styles generally classed as "post-structuralist." In the last five or so years, several critical essays in that vein made strong efforts at explaining certain Coleridgean difficulties without explaining them away; whether or not such a balance is possible, the work so far suggested that even the very worst result would be instructively depressing. Happily, the first book to come along is Jerome Christensen's brilliant and enjoyable *Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language*, a Derridean reading of Coleridge's middle-period masterpieces, the *Biographia Literaria* and *The Friend*.

The term "Derridean" (like "masterpiece") raises several important questions which Christensen addresses with winning frankness. Although a "diffident theorist," concerned "to be read rather than pegged," Christensen readily acknowledges Derrida's influence, but he rightly presents his book as something other than a Derridean job "on" Coleridge. He finds an "affinity" between Coleridge and Derrida, which suggests that for Christensen Coleridge's text is "already" deconstructed, already aware of its own play between blindness and insight. Because most of the deconstructive readings (of any writer) one sees in the journals feature some version of this self-justifying affinity argument—in this case, that Coleridge knew what Derrida and de Man know—I will spend most of my time on it, but one's final judgment of its validity seems to me largely irrelevant to judging Christensen's altogether prepossessing book.

Besides the introduction, which includes a continually useful prospectus, there are two chapters on David Hartley's influence on Coleridge, two (one short, one long) on the *Biographia*, and one (long) on *The Friend*. The first chapter, "Observations on Hartley," is the only one which should have been shorter. Although Christensen gives *Observations on Man* its most serious and intelligent reading ever (barring Coleridge's), his discovery of the inevitable breaches, additions, and inconsistencies is similar enough to traditional treatments (Basil Willey's) to justify merging it with the second chapter, "Hartley's Influence on Coleridge." There Christensen urges that Coleridge's arguments (in 1801-1803) against associationism are no more successful than Hartley's had been for it. The fabled "overthrow" of associationism is indeed a fable, a myth. Christensen overthrows the overthrow with a variety of ingenious arguments and gestures, whose general strategy is to disclose only "interruption" wherever Coleridge tries to establish a "privileged, ordering 'I,'" the certain moral will which associationism left "out of the reckoning" (p. 94).

Chapter 3, "The Marginal Method in the *Biographia Literaria*,' follows into the *Biographia* this exemplary failure to confute Hartley, a failure or avoidance which has a formal equivalent in the *Biographia's* displacement of text by marginalia, of philosophy by rhetoric, of logic by metaphor. The danger as well as dependability of Coleridge's preferred modes of writing is that they are equivocal, reversible, detachable, and omnipersuasive. Christensen demonstrates this again and again, most memorably by tracking a metaphor from *Biographia* VII back to Coleridge's very different use of it twenty-two years before. Weaving together kindred phrases from Derrida ("White Mythology") and Coleridge, Christensen summarizes the incessant crisis of the *Biographia Literaria*:

> Although Coleridge wishes to write the philosophy of the proprietor who capably and lawfully executes his will within his rightful domain, as unbidden guest, lacking the franchise of a home, his working prose imitates . . . the contingency it attacks.
> (p. 110)

Chapter 4, "The Literary Life of a Man of Letters," follows the workings of Coleridge's marginal or interruptive method into areas of the *Biographia* which, like the anti-Hartley sections, aim to establish and exhibit the integrity of self—of will, mind, spirit, imagination. Christensen believes that our reading of the *Biographia* is hindered by an unexamined and protective "grand chiasmus," namely, "that the text is unified because it is the product of an integral consciousness and that consciousness is unified because it produces integral texts" (p. 121). Chapter 4 undoes this chiasmus in many ways, three of which I found especially notable: by unravelling Coleridge's account of his first recognition of Wordsworth's genius; by revealing the larger anxieties and inconsistencies in Coleridge's criticism of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction; and by giving the famous interruption of *Biographia* XIII an audaciously spare reading which is as sympathetic to Coleridge's desires as it is insistent about their frustration. In pointing out all that we repress in reading the *Biographia*, this chapter subverts and supersedes virtually everything else on that book, but by illuminating, not obliterating, the critical tradition.

I want to focus on Christensen's final chapter, which treats *The Friend*, the improbable one-man intellectual newspaper that Coleridge put out in 1809-1810, and revised and republished in bound form in 1818. It is here that Christensen makes his strongest case for the "affinity" between Coleridge and Jacques Derrida. Christensen sees *The Friend* as "the test of language itself as a vehicle of anything but itself, as being capable of communicating true principle or, at the very least, the truth of principle" (p. 187), but even though that remark has particular aptness for *The Friend*, Derrideans say such things about any manner of text. Christensen is stalking more precise affinities, and his use of Derridean terms and themes like *le reste* [*remainder* or *reserve*], *différance*, and especially the philosophic exile of the sophist, is uncannily unforced in a way that summary cannot suggest. Furthermore, as Christensen notes, *The Friend* explicitly raises another of Derrida's themes (from "LIMITED INC"), one which is also part of the controversy over the use of Derrida by literary criticism, namely the very question of the differences between French and English traditions of writing and thought.

Yet even though I cannot help being intrigued by these signs of kinship, I am also intrigued by what it takes to make Coleridge into a deconstructionist rather than into a fat target for deconstruction. When Christensen shows that Coleridge's language systematically unsettles (a favored word) its own distinctions, his application of Derrida to Coleridge follows Paul de Man's adjustment of Derrida's reading of Rousseau. That is to say, Coleridge's language "knows" and, to use a de Manian phrase, "tells us obliquely" (*Blindness and Insight*, p. 137) that all its distinctions, such as that between philosophy and sophistic rhetoric, are themselves rhetoric, figure, fiction. Like de Man's Rousseau, like Derrida himself, Christensen's Coleridge uses a vocabulary of presence (or origin, or consciousness, or principle, etc.) to "explode the claims of this vocabulary, carrying it to the logical dead end to which it is bound to lead" (*BI*, p. 122); like Rousseau and Derrida, Coleridge uses this vocabulary "[not] declaratively but rhetorically" (*BI*, p. 138).

I use de Man's language to suggest generalizations (the likes of which we often see) derivable from Christensen's dazzlingly phrased local readings (the likes of which we don't). My point is that even though Coleridge's "intention" might be the opposite of self-deconstructive, the fact that his language "baffles his best intention" (Christensen, p. 16) is sufficient to claim him for the camp of "knowing" deconstructionists.

Of course, it is an irony—to which deconstructive readers are not blind—that this specialized sense of exemptive "knowing" (the language "of" Coleridge knows what "Coleridge" does not) is allowed to operate in a field where knowledge, ownership of language, intention, and consciousness are perpetually under question. But lest anyone suspect Christensen of shanghaiing Coleridge into a completely alien camp, there are passages that show Coleridge knowing what Derrida knows, no matter how traditionally "declarative" (*BI*, p. 137) and consciousness-bound one's notion of knowing. For instance, in a letter to Gillman: "The Alphabet of Physics no less than of Metaphysics, of Physiology no less than of Psychology is an Alphabet of Relations, in which N is N only because M is M and O, O" (*Collected*

Letters IV, p. 688). Or in *A Lay Sermon*, where he discusses our "foundationless well-doing," "upheld . . . even as a house of cards, the architecture of our infancy, in which each is supported by all" (*LS*, p. 127). Or in a notebook passage which, except for a phrase or two, might have come from Nietzsche:

> What a swarm of Thoughts & Feelings, endlessly minute fragments & as it were representations of all preceding & embryos of all future Thought lie compact in any one moment—So in a single drop of water the microscope discovers, what motions, what tumult, what wars, what pursuits, what stratagems, what a circle-dance of Death & Life, Death hunting Life & Life renewed and invigorated by Death—the whole world seems here, in a many-meaning cypher—What if our existence was but that moment!—What an unintelligible affrightful Riddle, what a chaos of dark limbs & trunk, tailless, headless, nothing begun and nothing ended, would it not be! And yet scarcely more than that other moment of 50 or 60 years, were that our all! each part throughout infinite diminution adapted to some other, and yet the whole means to nothing—ends every where, and yet an end no where— (*Notebooks*, III, 4057)

Coleridge "intended" this finely articulated vision no less than he intended to tame it into subjunctives and conditionals. These passages and others—such as the remarks on "conjectural marks" in *The Friend* (well-read by Christensen)—are "knowing" enough to satisfy a reader unwilling to accept Christensen's more oblique proofs.

But even if Coleridge knows and shows that his defense of truth against rhetoric is only rhetorical, and that his "whole Being" is "little more than a far stretched series of Et ceteras" (*Notebooks*, III, p. 4250), still, to Derrido him this way involves an interesting repression of distinctions. The "knowledge" of Coleridge and Derrida may be the same, but something is different, something for which logo- and lococentric terms like *tone* and *attitude* first offer themselves, at least to a reader trained in the tradition of I. A. Richards. In its New Critical heyday, *tone* was referred to frequently, and often enough with uncritical and insular certainty. But its general neglect today by post-structuralist writing seems just as needful of analysis.

That is because something like tone is a powerful but largely disguised category of judgment in Derrida, de Man, and others. A notable instance can be found near the end of Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (Eng. trans., 1970), where Derrida contrasts two "interpretations of interpretation," equal in knowledge but irreconcilable in tone: one is "saddened, *negative*, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic," "turned towards the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin"; while "its other side" is the "Nietzschean *affirmation* . . . the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation" (*Writing and Difference*, p. 292). Derrida's own tone in his rebuttal of John Searle, in "LIMITED INC" (1977), is a subtle one of sustained (ninety pages) mock mock-irritation at Searle's tones of assurance, serenity, and tranquillity. "The tone counts," says Derrida in *Of Grammatology* (Eng. trans., 1976 [34]), criticizing the tone of the "moralist or preacher" with which Saussure denounces the contamination of language by writing. Actually, Derrida says "L'accent compte," but here, as often, Gayatri Spivak translates *l'accent* as *tone*, perhaps indicating that the category of tone has something like natural magnetism in English. *L'accent* is itself one of those logocentric values that Derrida puts into question in *De la grammatologie*, yet, as he would no doubt appreciate, deconstruction keeps its own list of proper and improper tones and "accents."

For instance, Paul de Man found it desirable to justify Rousseau's "elegiac tone" as "a purely dramatic device" (*BI*, p. 133), thereby pushing Rousseau into honorable proximity to Nietzsche in the deconstructive canon. Deconstruction's implicit ranking of tones rests in this general hierarchical opposition, in which the proper attitude towards deconstructive knowledge is *jouissance* ("*LTD*," p. 212) and Nietzschean affirmation, rather than the range of guiltily moralistic or nostalgic tones. But if Coleridge's knowledge can be said to equal Derrida's, and if deconstructive knowledge, such as it is, can be distinguished from a tone or attitude towards it, then Coleridge's tones in the middle and late prose elude the dichotomy. Coleridge is affirmative, to be sure, but not of a world of signs without fault, truth, or origin, although his writing "knows" that world.

The difference between the predominant tones of Coleridge and those of Derrida can be gotten at by concentrating on the different kinds of interest they take in the different "moments" in the argument of deconstruction. Derrida is vigilant and resourceful against

what he recognizes as an inevitable domestication of his practice and his terms (*différance, grapheme, trace, iterability, deconstruction*). As Spivak implies (*Of Grammatology*, p. lxxi), Derrida keeps his vocabulary lower case and on the move, lest any one term settle into privilege and stability. Indeed, his anxious and self-consciously futile defense against naturalization, domestication ("*LTD*," p. 181), retrieval (Spivak's term, p. xxxii), comprisal [*comprendre*] (*OG*, p. 246), idealization, identification, reappropriation, synthesis [*idéaliser, s'identifier, se reapproprier, se reassembler*] ("*LTD*," p. 210) is equal in rigor to those of Bunyan and Nietzsche. In her account of Derrida's Yale Lectures of 1975, Spivak describes and criticizes two prominent ways in which deconstruction is retrieved by the system it calls into question. The first is to attempt to master the text by showing it what it does not know, and the second is to feel the "open-ended indefiniteness of textuality" as a "mystical and theological" pleasure of the abyss, a "terrifying and exhilarating vertigo" which offers "a way out of the closure of knowledge." Derrida's knowledge that some such retrieval is inevitable motivates what Spivak calls his "polemic of the need for the perpetual renewal of the . . . deconstructive undertaking," as well as his perpetually renewed profession that (in his words) "the movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way* because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure . . ." (*OG*, p. 24). Deconstruction must exploit the target against itself ("*LTD*," p. 192), becuase deconstruction is necessarily "within" the target.

So, in general, Derrida's thought is composed of *two* mutually devouring and regenerating notions—first, that the Western values and structures of presence, truth, consciousness, etc., are perpetually constituted and deconstructed by the negatives they exclude; and second, that deconstruction cannot escape from within the structures which are its target. Still, no matter how rigorously he opposes the second notion to the first—and that rigor is dear to him—the first is his favorite and the second is faced with regret. One does not read Derridean exhortations to renew the recuperative undertaking: it is the destructive movement or moment in deconstruction which requires effort and which receives honor.

However, while Coleridge's knowledge is the same, his interest, or emphasis, is very nearly the reverse. He is intrigued by the inevitable persistence, sedimentation, recuperation, etc., of the notion, values, and structures which his prose calls into question. Where Derrida sees but an island, Coleridge sees an island! Shoshana Felman, an important critic influenced by Derrida, writes about how language "slips" [*glisser*] out of the domain of meaning and knowledge (*Le scandale du corps parlant* [1980], pp. 169-70). But Coleridge tends to prize slips in the other direction, as when he says of a materialist that "there is not a language on earth, in which he could argue, for ten minutes, in support of his scheme, without sliding into words and phrases that imply the contrary" (*Aids to Reflection* [1893 ed.], p. 194). Flux is always sliding into stabilities:

> The most errant Sceptic doubts not for doubting sake; but if he be honest, for the sake of arriving at some standing spot—[Greek quote, "Give me somewhere to stand"] if a mere heartless Sophist, for the sake of reputation and in order to be talked of as a superior Mind—and even this implies the belief of a fixed Scale in the general understanding, or how is comparison possible? . . . He takes for granted the universal and necessary truth of the principles of Logic. . . . [W]e see in all men, more or less, a desire of knowing that what they appear to themselves to know, has a correspondence in Reality. (*Notebooks*, III, 3592)

Derrida does know *this* kind of slippage ("We can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip [*se glisser*] into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest" [Writing and Difference, p. 280]), but he prefers instead to notice, for instance, the ways in which Rousseau's attempted affirmation of values is "caught [*pris*] in the graphic of supplementarity." "All meaning and therefore all discourse is caught there, particularly and by a singular turn, the discourse of the metaphysics within which Rousseau's concepts move" (*OG*, p. 246). Coleridge uses the same terms ("all discourse") to declare that he is more interested in the persistence and usefulness, if only for an epoch, of instincts, beliefs, presuppositions, etc., than he is in their inability to withstand the most rigorous analysis. For instance, he describes the belief, "however disfigured [it] may become," that the productive power of nature is teleological:

> . . . Like heat in the thawing of ice, it may appear only in its effects. So universally has this conviction leavened the very substance of all discourse, that there is no language on earth in which a man can abjure it as a prejudice, without employing terms and conjunctions that suppose its reality, with a feeling very different from that which accompanies a figurative or metaphorical use of words. (*The Friend*, I, 497-98)

In a note (p. 116), Christensen contrasts the "congealed" rhetoric of *Aids to Reflection* (1825) with the unsettling middle-period style of *The Friend*, but Coleridge was always at least as interested in clotting as he was in solubility, a concept which can, after all, mean solution (the end) as well as dissolution (a new beginning).

What kind of distinction are we getting at? I do not want to claim any great precision. "Tone" is a beginning, but attitude, mood, style, and nuance (see *OG*, p. xlv) make nearly equal sense as names for the phenomenon of "taking" the "same" "knowledge" in radically different ways. I do mean something vaguer than any one tone, something more like a cluster of tones. Should we give in to the trivial, and appeal to some typically English spirit, genius, or character? As Christensen reminds us, Coleridge certainly does so in *The Friend*, and as Christensen also reminds us, an implicit and often resentful belief in such differences has been characteristic of much Anglo-American critical-theory debate in the seventies. For his part, Derrida says that "logocentrism is an ethnocentric metaphysics," but he means it "in an original and non-'relativist' sense," referring to "the West" and not to any particular country or culture within the West (*OG*, p. 79). Indeed, when John Searle complained that in Derrida's article on the Oxford philosopher J. L. Austin the "confrontation between two prominent philosophical traditions. . . . never quite takes place" (" Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida," 206), Derrida dryly agrees, because, he says, the confrontation is "between *the* tradition and its other . . . ("*LTD*," p. 211). Those "Anglo-Saxon and fundamentally moralistic" presuppositions of Austin's (and Searle's) to which Derrida objects are "also the most tenacious presuppositions of the continental metaphysical tradition," underlying "the hermeneutics of Ricoeur and the archaeology of Foucalt" ("*LTD*," 172, 173).

So even though Derrida, as a great worrier about untranslatability, acknowledges all manner of differences between French and English language and cultural stereotypes—see, for instance, his parody of Searle on page 176 of "LIMITED INC"—his huge notion of ethnocentrism, of "*the* tradition," overrides the importance of national, not to mention personal, distinctions of tone or attitude. There is "*the* tradition" and there is an "other" (which is at once both inside and outside "*the* tradition"). This contrast may be parallel to that between ignorance and knowledge of one's enclosure within textuality, or perhaps to that between two tones of knowledge, nostalgic (Rousseauistic) or affirmative (Nietzschean). In any case the tones of knowledge that I attribute to Coleridge are not acknowledged.

A look at the recent French and French-influenced treatment of J. L. Austin can help us towards an understanding of what is distorted in assimilating Coleridge to Derrida. My analogy between Coleridge and Austin assumes that George Steiner is wrong to say that Coleridge's species, the *Sprachphilosoph* or "metaphysician of metaphor and translation," is "antithetical to what Anglo-American usage identifies as 'linguistic philosophers' " (Introduction to Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* [Eng. trans., 1977], p. 20). There are of course enormous differences between Coleridge and Austin, including some crucial differences of tone, but even these occupy a common range.

The relevant texts in this boomlet of debate are Austin's *How To Do Things with Words* (1955; pub. 1962) and "A Plea for Excuses" (1956), as well as his remarks at the Royaumont Colloquium of 1958 (pub. 1962, in French); Derrida's essay on Austin, "Signature Event Context" (1971; Eng. trans., 1977); John Searle's brusque defense of Austin, "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida" (1977); Derrida's long and snidely precise rebuttal "LIMITED INC: a b c" (1977); Shoshana Felman's wacky and sly rescue of Austin from Searle and from, yet for, Derrida, *Le scandale du corps parlant: Don Juan avec Austin, ou la séduction en deux langues* (1980); Jonathan Culler's patient reassertion of Derrida's arguments, "Convention and Meaning: Derrida and Austin" (1981); and Stanley Fish's plain-style assimilation of Austin to Derrida, "With the Compliments of the Author: Reflections on Austin and Derrida" (1982).

Austin began *How To Do Things with Words* by questioning the philosophical assumption that the business of statements is to describe some state of affairs or to state some fact, "which it must do either truly or falsely." Austin identifies a minority class, performatives,

whose business is not description but performance—promises, bets, christenings, etc. Unlike constatives, they cannot *be* right or wrong, they can only *go* right or wrong, or as he puts it, felicitously or infelicitously. The felicity or infelicity of a performative is not judged by measuring the statement against the fact or state it describes, but by judging it within the total situation or context of its utterance—for instance, by judging whether the man who says "I christen thee . . ." has the authority, the babe (or boat) at hand, and so on.

As the book goes on, Austin's painstaking efforts at identifying performatives gradually and surprisingly lead to the swallowing of the constative class by the performative: "Once we realize that what we have to study is *not* the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act" (p. 138); as Stanley Fish puts it, "the supposedly normative class of constatives is shown to be a member of the supposedly exceptional class of performatives" (p. 712).

Of course, the swallowing (as Coleridge says, "my illustrations swallow my thesis") of logic by rhetoric, so to speak, is the kind of thing that Christensen finds in *The Friend* and it wins one of Derrida's highest terms of praise:

> Austin was obliged to free the analysis of the performative from the authority of the truth value, from the true/false opposition, at least in its classical form, and to substitute for it at times the value of force. . . . (In this line of thought, which is nothing less than Nietzschean, this in particular strikes me as beckoning towards [*faire signe vers*] Nietzsche himself, who often acknowledged a certain affinity for a vein of English thought. ("SEC," 187

Nietzsche is the standard towards which Austin earns the right to beckon, but the implication of the "at times" and the double attenuative ("a certain affinity for a vein") is that such English gestures from "*the* tradition" towards "its other" are extremely rare. Certainly, among its other tasks, "Signature Event Context" means to push Austin's enterprise further, with greater rigor; Austin has demystified the notion of the statement only to mystify more tenaciously, as anchorage of meaning, the notion of its *context*, "the total situation in which the utterance was issued—the total speech act" (p. 52).

It is the idea of "total," read to mean exhaustively limitable or perhaps even formulable, that apparently sets Derrida off into a cluster of arguments against the idea of a constraining context. He reads Austin's idea of context to include, "classically, consciousness, the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject in the totality of his speech act," "totally present and immediately transparent to itself and to others: ("SEC," 187, 192). But, Derrida says, because an utterance must be "iterable," that is, repeatable and comprehensible outside of its "original" context of "organizing presences," then "no context can entirely enclose it" ("SEC," 182). The "total context" can never be limited, or "saturated." The notion of "ordinary" language or usage is thus undermined, since the very condition of an utterance's ability to mean is its iterability in all manner of so-called extraordinary, nonserious contexts (of which fiction is a relatively ordinary instance). "This does not mean," says Derrida, "that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring [ancrage]" ("SEC," 185-86.) So for Derrida, meaning is determined by context, but it is impossible, as Jonathan Culler suggests, ever to limit context "so as to control or rigorously determine the true meaning" (p. 28).

Fish and Felman each exempt Austin from Derrida's critique in the same way that de Man exempts Rousseau. They use stylistic analysis to suggest that Austin's text, characterized by "radical provisionality," knows and proclaims its own fictionality, and therefore that Austin and Derrida are (like Coleridge and Derrida, or Rousseau and Derrida), essentially the same. Felman is most insistent on Austin's membership in the great deconstructive choir, as she compares him also to Lacan, Marx, and—sure sign—Nietzsche. Felman's book, like Christensen's is extremely smart, and like Christensen's, it actually displays in its affirmation of play the joy and gaiety which Derrida demands but rarely provides. Beginning with an inspired comparison between Austin's demotion of the constative and (Moliere's) Don Juan's breaking of promises, Felman argues that Austin's disciples (including Searle) and Derrida have alike rigidified his text because of a systematic failure to *read* him, both in his subversive logic (the extension of the performative category to include everything, even his own theory) and, especially, his tone, his style: his all-subverting humor. It is the humor as much as the logic

or illogic of Austin's examples which swallows his thesis. Felman's wonderful close readings of *How To Do Things with Words* and the essays imply that history and Derrida have a tin ear—a witty charge against the arch-deconstructor of logocentrism.

Of course, by acting as Derrida's ears, Felman (and Fish, to a degree) brings Austin effectively out of "*the* tradition" and into "its other"; as usual, Derrida can't lose for winning. However, what is more intriguing than this Derridoing of Austin is the curious mellowing that Derrida's own tones undergo while he criticizes Austin. In "Signature Event Context" he comes in like a lion ("the disruption . . . of the authority of the code as a finite system of rules; . . . the radical destruction of any context as the protocol of code" [p. 180]) but he ends by lying down with, or as, the lamb:

> By no means do I draw the conclusion that there is no relative specificity of effects of consciousness, or of effects of speech . . . , that there is no performative effect, no effect of ordinary language, no effect of presence or of discursive event (speech act). It is simply that those effects do not exclude what is generally opposed to them . . . ; on the contrary, they presuppose it, in an asymmetrical way, as the general space of their possibility. (p. 193)

Is that what the radical destruction amounts to? "LIMITED INC" has several such statements, to the conciliatory effect that the real goal of "Signature Event Context" had been to "re-elaborate" (p. 219), not destroy, the "value of context." Derrida is certainly not changing his logic here, but he is sounding a tone—stopping at a nuance or emphasis—which is rare for him, given his apparent preference for the other movement in his argument. He is giving temperamental if temporary homage to a part of his knowledge—namely, the truth that "the desire to restrict play is . . . irresistible" (*OG*, p. 59)—whose logical necessity usually wins only his logical tribute.

The power of Austin somehow to force or draw these tones seems also at work in Culler's article. Although Culler defends Derrida against Felman's mischievous elevation of Austin, he nevertheless concludes by reinstituting Austin's project in tones as demure and reconciliatory as Derrida's had been in acknowledging that all he really wanted was a re-elaborated typology of utterances. This is Culler's true voice; despite his fidelity to Derrida's most leonine logic, he always seems unconvinced by extremes, however logical he might judge them to be: ". . . it is necessary and appropriate to continue to interpret texts, classify speech acts, and generally elucidate as far as possible the conditions of signification" (Culler, p. 28). It is interesting to find Felman and Fish equating Austin and Derrida by reference to "radical provisionality" at the same time that Derrida and Culler imply the equation by suffering Austin to elicit their implicit moderation.

Each way of equation has a rightness to it. Austin's humor has its subversive functions, but it is unitive and reassuring at the same time; laughter is the sign of the "slip" or "fall" out of sense, but it is also the sign of a recognition of a slip or fall. Such a fall is, as Austin says, "to fall upon something truly important" (Royaumont Colloquium, pub. as *La philosophie analytique* [1962], p. 350).

Here is where we return to the analogy between Coleridge and Austin. They belong together, but not only because excellent readers like Christensen and Felman can find the text of each to be as radically aporetic and provisional as Derrida desires. There *is* that, but that is just what, even by Derrida's logic, makes their homage to "context," tradition, and ordinary language something greatly different from naiveté or forgetfulness or ever-relapsing nostalgia:

> . . . language (as the embodied and articulated spirit of the race, as the growth and emanation of a people, and not the work of any individual wit or will) is often inadequate, sometimes deficient, but never false or delusive. We have only to master the true origin and original import of any native and abiding word, to find in it, if not the solution of the facts expressed by it, yet a finger-mark pointing to the road on which the solution is to be sought. (Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 258)

> . . . our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connexions they have found worth making in the lifetimes of many generations: these surely are likely to be more numerous, more sound, since they have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest, and more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters than any that you or I am likely to think up in our arm chairs of an afternoon—the most favoured alternative method.
> (Austin, "A Plea for Excuses," 182)

The expressions and turns of a language "all have, therefore . . . a right to our attention, or at the very least . . . to my respect" (Royaumont, p. 351).

For both writers this respect is inextricable from radical uneasiness over "[the] traps language sets us" ("Plea," 181-82); in the passage from *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge, mad coiner, agrees with Austin's remark that "ordinary language is *not* the last word: in principle it can everywhere be supplemented and improved upon and superseded. Only remember, it is the first word" ("Plea," 185). But both Coleridge and Austin are intrigued that a disagreement or an aporia is illuminating, a "portent to be followed up" and "pounced upon," "a specimen to be prized" ("Plea," 184). By an inexorable recuperative process—perversely redeeming perversion—an aporia directs "our attention to the multiplicity and richness of our experiences" (Roy, p. 333). "Real life" (*How To Do . . .*, p. 145) seems the only ordinary turn of phrase that Austin never feels compelled to question overtly, precisely because "real life" is that open, never "completely" described ("Plea," 184) set of "contexts," that untotalizable "totality of the situation in which we find ourselves led to make use of words" (Royaumont, p. 334), against which language is shown to be full of aporiae, "inadequacies and arbitrariness" ("Plea," 182). In his response to Searle, even Derrida appeals to the notion of "real life": "as though literature, theater, deceit, infidelity, hypocrisy, infelicity, parasitism, and the simulation of real life were not part of real life!" ("LTD," p. 232).

Unlike Derrida, Austin and Coleridge revere the curious process by which deconstruction cannot but perpetually subside into what Austin gingerly calls "linguistic phenomenology": they not only acknowledge but embrace as a necessity the metaphysical "substratum" that Derrida discloses in Searle's argument ("LTD", p. 193). Austin *knows* that his own deconstructive technique can, to adapt Derrida's phrase, "no more break with a transcendental phenomenology than be reduced to it" (*OG*, p. 62), but my point is about Austin's (and Coleridge's) attitudes towards this knowledge, attitudes which, *along with the knowledge*, come from or through the very native tradition or context which forms part of the object of the knowledge.

By Austin's time twentieth-century English analytic philosophy had endured and deemed itself to have outgrown, a powerful set of antimetaphysical pretensions in Russell, the early Wittgenstein, and others. In a remarkable set of articles, Wittgenstein's student John Wisdom wrote a history of how the tradition—influenced by Wittgenstein's development—awoke to the inevitable inherence of English neo-idealism (represented by McTaggart and Green) despite, through, and in the vehement reaction against it. The Oxford myth downplays Wittgenstein's influence on Austin, but it is known he read Wisdom. Wisdom's tones are rather mild and wry as he records (and confesses) the continuities between the analytic movement and the late-Victorian philosophical elders it had scorned in its youth. Coleridge, always beset by filial anxieties, is shrill as he looks back past the antimetaphysical atomism of his own youth; but the tone he is trying for is one of appreciation for a native tradition whose strongest claim to respect is that it is, after all, severely self-critical. He proclaims his continuity—not complicity, which has the Derridean tone—with "that momentous period [the Commonwealth], during which all the possible forms of truth and error (the latter being themselves for the greater part caricatures of truth) bubbled up on the surface of the public mind, as in the ferment of a chaos. It would be difficult to conceive a notion or a fancy . . . which had not been anticipated by the Men of that age . . ." (*The Friend*, I, 410). This interpretation of English factional contentiousness as a national notional self-sufficiency reveals Coleridge's own anxiety about authority, as well as the national anxiety about fanaticism which (as Geoffrey Hartman puts it) presses English institutions towards a *via media*. But to reduce Coleridge's attitudes to national or personal anxiety is to disguise the fact that within deconstruction's logic, if not its ethos, these attitudes are every bit as legitimate as those of Derrida. Besides, Coleridge's shrillness is no more distant from the calmer tone he desires than Derrida's melancholy, noted by critics as diverse as Hartman and Marvin Mudrick, is from the prescribed Nietzschean *jouissance*.

In discussing *The Friend's* metaphors for a delimitable, stable context, metaphors like the "National Debt," the garden, the rock, the island, all of which are fundamentally (Coleridge hopes) England, Christensen resourcefully discloses their sinuous self-unsettling. Yet these metaphors resettle themselves as well. Coleridge's text does "know" how "foundationless" (*Lay Sermon*, p. 127) in the strictest sense, is the insular context to which it appeals and upon which it depends; it does know the circularity of arguing for the stability of a context while assuming a stable context. Yet "within these magic circles, rise up the awful spirits,

whose words are oracles for mankind, whose love embraces all countries, and whose voice sounds through all ages!" (*The Friend*, I, 293). It does know that an island, like a context, is ultimately provisional, open, contingent, or in Derrida's terms, without any "absolute anchoring" ("SEC," p. 186). Yet Coleridge did not assert or expect that kind of "absolute" in earthly experience or discourse anyway. Provisional is absolute enough. Coleridge's emphasis is on inhabiting the inevitably erroneous terms of the tradition not in order to undermine them, but instead to get whatever provisional use might be had from them.

In 1958, two years before his death, Austin and several Oxford colleagues went to France for a colloquium whose purpose was to establish a dialogue between English analytic philosophy and various Continental strains. After Austin delivered his paper "Performative/Constative," the French Kierkegaardian Jean Wahl asked him a question which suggests, at several levels, that the English tradition suffers from a self-deluding insular assurance about the absolute nature of its technique, premises, evidence, and so on: "Is philosophy an island or a promontory? I mean simply that I often have the impression that one moves about on a narrow strip of linguistic territory, that one strives not to go outside of it, but that one knows all the same that there are things outside" (Royaumont, p. 291). Austin's response has a complicaton of tones and gestures which leave him, on balance, close to Coleridge's characteristic deconstructive mood. At first it seems as though Austin lurches and latches onto the perfect image to confirm Wahl's implied charge: "Is philosophy an island, or a promontory? If I were looking for an image of this kind, I believe I'd say it resembles instead the surface of the sun." In "White Mythology" Derrida suggests that we tend to represent the sun to ourselves as the origin, the unique, the irreplaceable, the non-metaphorical (p. 44), and Austin's use of the image can be read as consummate ethnocentrism. But the phrase that follows, one of the very few given in the original English—"A pretty fair mess"—qualifies that reading, without cancelling it altogether. "A pretty fair mess" suggests that the image of the sun was only chosen to convey a radical volatility of ground, just as "A Plea for Excuses" recommends elementary fret, such as "whether flames are things or events" (p. 179). But if "A pretty fair mess" deflates the previous sentence, the next sentence tries to mix and balance the two gestures: "You manage [*se débrouiller*] as best you can with the means you have at hand." In other words, one must treat one's absolutely ungrounded island as if it were the sun, the source, almost but not quite erasing the "as if." As Derrida puts it, "We must begin *wherever we are*," "in a text where we already believe ourselves to be" (*OG*, p. 162). Like Coleridge in *The Friend*, Austin in his Royaumont remarks (pp. 334, 355) is drawn to the image of a garden because it can signify a context, or set of contexts, which is neither wholly culture nor wholly nature, and which is provisionally workable and meaningful, however contingent and open to deconstruction it may be in the most rigorous and "absolute" sense.

In suggesting a difference of tone or nuance between Derrida and these two English writers whose knowledge his followers—kinder to the English than Matthew Arnold had been—have persuasively associated with his, I am led to a point of translation. The only published (1962) transcript of the Royaumont discussions is in French, the English remarks having been translated by Marc-André Béra; I know of no transcript of Austin's original words. The published transcript has Austin describing his technique with a form of the French word "*bricoler*": "En bricolant, de droite et de gauche, avec ses instruments, comme le faisait Faraday, on a plus de chance de tomber sur quelque chose de vraiment important qu'en se disant un beau jour: 'Attaquons-nous à quelque grand problème: demandons-nous, par exemple, de quoi est fait notre univers?' " (Royaumont, p. 350). *Bricolage* seems to have come into intellectual prominence with the publication of Lévi-Strauss's *La Pensée Sauvage* in 1962, the year in which the Royaumont transcript appeared. Since 1966, with the critique of Lévi-Strauss in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," *bricolage* has been inextricable from the history of Derrida, for whom "every discourse is *bricoleur*" (*WD*, p. 285).

Bricoler (along with *bricoleur* and *bricolage*) has, according to Lévi-Strauss's translator, no precise equivalent in English, neither in its "old sense" of extraneous movement (a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving to avoid an obstacle) nor in its modern pre-Lévi-Straussian sense of the *bricoleur* as "someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared with those of a craftsman" (*The Savage Mind*, pp. 16-17). Nor is there an English equivalent for Lévi-Strauss's extension of it to characterize the discourse of myth, which "expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited" by "the particular history of each piece" (*Savage Mind*, pp. 17,

19). Still less is there an English equivalent for Derrida's extension of it to characterize *all* discourse, which necessarily borrows its concepts from "the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined" (*WD*, p. 285).

The translator Bera wrote a study of Whitehead and translated J.G. Crowther's series of popular books on science and scientists (perhaps it was Béra and not Austin who supplied the comparison to Faraday); it seems unlikely that he was acquainted with Lévi-Strauss's appropriation of *bricolage*. No matter: the translation of who knows what Austinian term as *bricolant* is a peculiar adumbration of the Derridean readings of Austin. Whatever Austin's homely locution might have been (*tinkering* or *pottering*, or even, if the metaphor of the road is still at work, *zigzagging* or *tacking*), it is just as limited and illuminated by the splendid economy of *bricolant* as Austin's text is by being assimilated into the Derridean enterprise. There is nothing wrong in that. It happens just as surely the other way: Spivak's translation of Derrida's word *l'accent as tone*—which in its Ricardian history has no precise equivalent in French—reveals the inevitable continuation of that category in a discourse that longs to reduce it to merely "empirical variations" ("SEC," p. 183). This encounter between France and England should illuminate, on the one hand, the latent deconstructive "knowledge" in the texts of Coleridge and Austin, and on the other, the recuperation which perpetually overtakes the most radical deconstructive vigilance. The popular complaint of the last ten years is that English criticism is being colonized by the French, whose highest praise seems to be equation with Derrida. No danger of that, of course, not with the Anglo-American capacity—smooth and automatic—to refit Derrida for academic business as usual. A more interesting response to the French, though, would be neither defensive nor unconscious, but instead, a deliberate, unabashed Coleridgizing or Austinizing disclosure—in what tones?—of the inevitable reconstructive moments in deconstruction. In World War II the intelligence briefing book Austin prepared for the Normandy invasion was waggishly entitled *Invade Mecum*. Without pushing the analogy too far—as Coleridge says, with just the mix of tones under discussion, "No simile runs on all four legs"—that title could set the tone of an Anglo-American counteroffensive.

But if things run true to form, the English tradition is incapable of mounting an invasion, which demands a self-consciousness different from "knowledge." The English tend to know what they know without knowing that they know it. Coleridge did not aggressively value the inclusiveness of the English tradition until after he had read Kant and the Germans, and John Wisdom's wisdom about his tradition came through or with Wittgenstein, "that strange philosophical import" (Hartman). But even though Coleridge did more than anyone to establish in English what he called (in *Biographia Literaria* XV) "practical criticism," he also ridiculed the "abuse of Theory in general" and the "absurd opposition of Theory to Practice." "For the meanest of men has his Theory: and to think at all is to theorize" (*The Friend*, I, 189). This statement is an analogue, in the realm of theory, to expansive democratizing gestures like Coleridge's "do not let us introduce an act of Uniformity against Poets," or, even closer, Keats's "Let us have the old Poets, and Robin Hood." If Coleridge is right, that "to think at all is to theorize," then the English tradition is widely and deeply theoretical, not at all the tightly Locked island of empiricism suggested by its self-consciously philosophical philosophers. By defining theory so that it extends beyond the border of self-consciousness, Coleridge, the most self-consciously theoretical writer of all, proclaims England's theoretical inclusiveness; and in the process, he proclaims, anxiously, that English philosophical tone is a matter of something other than naiveté.

Wellesley College

Burton Pike. *The Image of the City in Modern Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, 168 pp. $14.50.

This book is much better than its title, which unhappily suggests the routine exercise of a Ph.D. thesis. Stimulating and rich with suggestion, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* is an inquiry into the literary incarnations of an urban myth the author finds central to Western civilization. Burton Pike draws on an impressive understanding of Freud's psychology, Lewis Mumford's urban sociology, and—though he does not explicitly acknowledge this—Gaston Bachelard's poetics of space and time to explore the image of the city in

representative nineteenth- and twentieth-century American, British, French, German, and Russian works. The book is a meditation upon the fate of the Western world's cities, the mythic messages carried by that fate, and the processes by which these messages are transmitted and transformed from the actual city on the map to the "word-city" of the literary imagination. A meditation, yes, but also a remarkably lucid argument, a rare combination for which the reader is most grateful.

The principal motive, motif, and product of the urban myth is ambivalence, "the inability of strong negative and positive impulses toward a totemic object to resolve themselves." The city as totem is an expression of a "cultural and personal anxiety" rooted in the very origins of Western cities and developed with increasing intensity through all of urban history, reaching a crescendo in the industrial city of the nineteeth century and the postindustrial megalopolis of the twentieth.

Pike writes, "The city has always been man's single most impressive and visible achievement. It is a human artifact which has become an object in the world of nature." The city is both a human imitation of divine creation and, as the imposition of man's will on nature, an "act of interference in the divine order." So, from its beginning, the city has reflected a "deep-seated anxiety about man's relation to his created world," an attitude oscillating between pride and guilt, an ambivalence at the core of our culture.

This primal ambivalence gives rise to historical variations. The city represented in modern literature is a paradox verging on oxymoron, signifying both community and isolation as well as the uneasy interpenetration of a static past and a fluid present: buildings and monuments are "frozen forms of energy fixed at different times in the past and around which the busy kinetic energy of the present swirls." Finally, the stable city of the early nineteenth century becomes the city in flux of the late nineteenth and twentieth, so that, paradoxically, the *space* of the modern city, transformed through a kind of literary Einsteinian relativity equation, emerges as an image of *time*, of impermanence and evanescence.

Although Pike modestly claims to have written nothing more than a series of thematically related essays, his chapters are really an outline psycho-socio-literary history of the disintegration of the city. There is a complex and fascinating counterpoint suggested in this outline, which the author tantalizingly adumbrates but does not fully investigate. For the city is at once cause, result, and symbol of cultural belief systems, even as the expression of the city in literature—what Pike calls the "word-city"—results from and symbolizes those same systems. To the degree that our perception of culture actually creates our culture, this word-city (as a symbol of perception) partially creates the systems of belief it expresses.

After setting out in his first chapter, then, the terms of urban ambivalence, Pike shows in succeeding chapters how the literary presentation of the city changed from that of a static object fixed in space to that of "a fragmented and subjective kaleidoscope, constantly shifting in time." Accompanying this shift is the paradox of the urban community as a "locus of the alienated individual and the undifferentiated masses": the community as non-community. In his final, and perhaps most suggestive chapter, Pike argues that, in the most recent literature, the spatial nature of the city comes into "profound conflict with time as the dominating convention of thought in our present society." Here the contrapuntal relation between the geographical city and the word-city is most complex. For as the word-city renders the geographical, spatial city into a metaphor of time, the geographical city of recent years has also been rendering *itself* a metaphor of time, even without the intervention of literary expression. The spatial permanence of monuments has given way to the temporal evanescence of anonymous skyscrapers, which are put up rather than built and dismantled rather than destroyed. The enclosed urban space of an earlier culture has become in the present a shapeless sprawl defined best by commuting time. The space of Manhattan Island yields to the time of Los Angeles.

The Image of the City in Modern Literature is not without weaknesses. Pike unaccountably misreads Henry James's *The American Scene* as a depiction, like Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, of the "slow rhythms" of urban change contrasted with the rapid rate of the protagonist's inner transformations. What James actually articulates, of course, is his sense of betrayal and bewilderment over the careless speed with which New York's growth has obliterated the memories bound up with the Washington Square of his youth. The city has moved faster—certainly not slower—than he.

Another puzzle is this inconsistency: in his preface Pike declares that he is investigating "cultural conventions" rather than "universal archetypes," but then persists in using the word "archetype" loosely throughout the rest of the book. And there are a few places where the

discussion of the linguistic conventions that shape perception belabors the obvious nearly to the point of sophistry.

But such weaknesses at last detract little from the overall strength of this compact book, strength derived not so much from originality as from the vigorous synthesis of several sources and disciplines. We have encountered many of Pike's psychological, sociological, literary, and semiotic insights elsewhere, but never so clearly set out in one place and brought to bear on a single topic. This subject of the city in literature admits either of voluminous discussion intended as definitive or, as here, treatment in a monograph intended to be speculative. *The Image of the City*, opening rather than closing the case it makes, stands as a prolegomenon, successful because it sparks the kind of thinking that should generate many future volumes.

ALAN AXELROD
Winterthur Museum

William Thesing. *The London Muse: Victorian Poetic Responses to the City*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982, 205 pp. $20.00.

Although there have been other studies that show the relationship between the urban scene and literary response to it, *The London Muse* is unique in that the author is not concerned with the artistic reaction to some generic city, but, as the title indicates, with one particular city during a specific span of time—the years between 1830 and 1900, roughly the reign of Queen Victoria.

Cities almost from their very beginning have elicited artistic and intellectual judgments which are ambivalent and questioning; some are hostile, others laudatory. But in general writers have not treated cities kindly. Clearly defined prejudices against the city appear in the Bible. The examples of Sodom and Gomorrah and Babylon all too luridly recall the vices and pitfalls of urban life. The bias against cities is also a theme in classical literature. In the satires of Horace and Juvenal, the Roman virtues are shown to have reached their nadir in the capital. The good life is no longer even possible in the city, and the virtuous citizen must vacate the town to find refuge from urban folly in a rural retreat. The Bible and the classical literary heritage are not, however, exclusively antagonistic in their treatment of the city. Indeed, the early Christians conceived of heaven itself as a city, as St. Augustine and the early church fathers most assuredly did. Even some of the classical Greek and Roman authors could extol the ideals of city life and were moved to exclaim the physical presence of great cities. The Latin poet Virgil regarded the organic life of the town as the chief instrument of civilization, and it was in the making of cities that he saw the distinctive and specific work of Rome in the world. In his second *Georgics* there is his famous *encomium urbis* urging admiration of the noble cities inside their "immemorial walls" which transcend nature in their grandeur.

Thus, from antiquity onward, the literary reaction to the city has been marked in one of two ways: writers have either praised the urban scene or censured it for reasons aesthetic, economic, political, psychological, moral, and religious. In *The London Muse* Thesing has carefully recorded the responses of some twenty-two major and minor Victorian poets whose works offer views of the potential or perils of the city. Somewhat surprisingly he starts his study with William Blake, a poet more often linked to the Romantic period, but one whose longevity did put him at the threshold of Victoria's reign. The survey, on the other hand, concludes with T. S. Eliot who is chronologically, at least, outside the Victorian age. The original intention of Thesing's thesis, he tells us, is an examination of a score of poets from Blake to Eliot who tried to make use of the city of London as a symbol or setting for poetry; he concludes that the dearth of poetry of the first rank about the city between Blake's *Jerusalem* and Eliot's *The Waste Land* is caused by Victorian assumptions about the function of the poet and the choice of subjects appropriate to poetry. Despite the fact that no Victorian poet could break free of the prescribed norms and write about the city with the visionary perspective of Blake or the nugatory conception of the city that Eliot projects, Thesing discovers in his analysis of the poets who are the focus of the book—Wordsworth, Tennyson,

Arnold, Clough, Hopkins, Morris, and Thomson—what Raymond Williams calls "structures of feeling," the manner each had of responding to the social and historical facts of the city. For example, Tennyson and Wordsworth depicted the actual facts of contemporary London in poems like *The Prelude, In Memoriam*, and *Maud*. In all three of these works, city streets and crowds engender despair and cause great solitude, the *magna solitudo in magna civitas* that Virgil warned of centuries earlier. Occasionally, however, even Wordsworth and Tennyson could envision an urban ideal, but it is when the city is asleep and dormant in the early dawn as in "Westminster Bridge" or when set in remote history as Camelot in *The Idylls of the King*.

Thesing's reading of the urban poetry of the early nineteenth century reveals a creative tension between "celebration and alienation, between the ideal and the actual." Thus Blake's vision of the city scene may be said to form the basic paradigm by which the poets treated in *The London Muse* are studied. This bifurcation is revealed most clearly in the contrasting treatment of the city found in Blake's short lyrics like "London" and "Holy Thursday" and the epic *Jerusalem*. Blake's doctrine of contraries, it seems, can be applied to his urban vision. The fallen condition of mankind is symbolized by the city in *The Songs of Experience*, as the state of "organized innocence" or redemption is indicated by a celestial city—a Jerusalem that will be created when mankind is freed from the yoke of rational oppression and builds the new holy city by an act of the imagination.

In a subsequent chapter Thesing takes up the responses of poets like Clough, Alexander Smith, the "Spasmodic" poet, and Matthew Arnold more or less chronologically. After the Romantics passed from the scene, there was a call to treat the city more realistically. This new way of writing about the city meant that poets had to turn from traditional poetic subjects drawn from the myths of the classical world and pastoralism of the romantic age toward urban materials. That so many poets of the mid-nineteenth century were willing to deal with the challenge is itself surprising, but what is most unexpected was Matthew Arnold's attitude toward city life, which Thesing reveals in a very interesting discussion of Arnold's verse and critical views. There is a lengthy analysis of "Lines Written in Kensington Gardens" that uncovers the fact that Arnold's poetic presentation of the park does not correspond to the literal details of the actual park. For one thing Kensington Gardens was usually crowded with people and bisected by roads open to traffic; thus it is not likely Arnold would find a "lone, open glade" in which to recline and retreat from the "impious roar" of the London streets. Nevertheless, the world of the park is enough to give Arnold a sense of escape and a comforting feeling of seclusion. The *rus in urbs* situation of the park provides the poet a place to compose himself; and, having attained a calm by communion with nature, he hopes thereby to transfer it and "to feel, amid the city's jar" the peace he has sensed in nature. Thesing's point is that Arnold sees the city rather than the country as "the place of man's possibilities, the place where . . . the sensitive individual seeks psychological survival and harmonious integration . . ." (p. 74). Most readers of Arnold's poetry recall him as a pastoral poet who celebrated the retired country landscapes of Oxford or the isolated retreats of the monks of the Grande Chartreuse. We are obliged to Thesing for reminding us that Arnold did have a primary concern with the place of cities in the history of civilization and that he held out hope for the possibilities that urban life had for mankind. Since Arnold was pessimistic about so much of modern life, his optimism about the city as a proper place for poets to live in and write about is a fact that deserves consideration.

One other discussion of Victorian poetic responses to the city which Thesing makes should be noted, and this is the chapter entitled "The Urban Volcano" in which G. M. Hopkins, Coventry Patmore, William Morris, and James Thomson are discussed. These poets wrote during the sometimes tense decades between 1870-1890. During this period the numerous strains on the social and political fabric were most telling in the great cities where poverty and destitution posed the threat of urban unrest and civil strife. Thesing recounts events like London's Hyde Park Riot and Bloody Sunday at Trafalgar Square. The alarm created by these disturbances of the masses very much influenced the contemporary poets' ideas; for some, the plight of the lower orders of society was a cause for fear and panic. The two Catholic poets—Hopkins and Patmore—were the most uneasy. The stress of social problems which Hopkins saw first hand while serving as a priest in the slum neighborhoods of Liverpool and London caused him to question his faith in divine justice, at least as it applied to God's natural order for society. Thus he shied away from poetry of social comment because he could not explain the chaotic conditions of the city as a manifestation of God's benevolent will. On the other hand, Coventry Patmore was aroused to anger rather than disbelief. In a poem entitled "A London Fête" he reveals his disgust with the crowds who have come to

witness a public hanging, a spectacle which, rather than deterring crime, only engenders a desire in the mob to go out and commit crime itself.

Perhaps no Victorian poet expresses more distrust of the city than James Thomson does in "The City of Dreadful Night," which is an exploration of the nadir of the human soul using London as a setting and symbol for the misery and despair of *L'homme sans dieu*. Thesing sees Thomson as a figure apart from the other poets who wrote of the city in that his fears are psychological and philosophical. In his despair Thomson could envision no relief from the oppressive conditions of the city, which stood for life.

It might be expected that the Pre-Raphaelites would have been represented more fully in Thesing's book, yet, oddly enough, the Brotherhood produced very little art of the city, either in poetry or painting. Despite their announced program in *The Germ*, which stated that the P.R.B. were committed to contemporary subjects—"the poetry of things about us; our railroads, factories, mines roaring cities . . . ," only two pictures using city settings were painted: Ford Madox Brown's "Work" and Rossetti's "Found." There is almost no Pre-Raphaelite poetry that is concerned with the city of London *per se*, and what little there is in Rossetti's "Jenny" is not a fresh treatment of urban material.

Upon reaching the end of this study which presents us with so much diverse material about the city of London and the variety of poetic responses to it, what can be said in conclusion about Thesing's accomplishment? I think a great deal can be claimed for this book. First, it is very obviously carefully researched and documented. The conceptions of the city held by the writers who are the subjects of the study are presented cogently and analyzed, interpreted and evaluated, so that we are aware of the significance of each poet's response. Thesing has done more to make us better understand the Victorian literary involvement with the city of London than any study heretofore. The subject is a timely one, for we live in an age in which the city represents one of the major unsolved dilemmas of modern life. What one is struck by, finally, is the remarkable similarity between the expressed concerns and attitudes of the Victorians and our own understanding of the values and vices of city life.

HALLMAN B. BRYANT
Clemson University

Geoffrey G. Field. *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981, 565 pp. $25.00.

Comte Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain are surely the most eminent exponents of the doctrine propounding the cultural and biological superiority of the Germanic peoples. In view of Gobineau's and Chamberlain's importance as precursors of Nazi racial ideology, it is surprising how long it has taken for full-length studies of either man to be published in the United States or the British Commonwealth. Michael Biddis's book on Gobineau entitled *The Father of Racial Ideology* was issued only as recently as 1970, and now we finally have a volume of similar nature on the life and work of Chamberlain by Geoffrey G. Field. The spiritual odyssey of the man who is the subject of Field's *Evangelist of Race* is indeed a strange one. Chamberlain was the son of an English admiral and a highly cultivated Scottish woman. Born in Southsea in 1855, coincidentally the same year in which the final volume of Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* was published, he eventually became a central figure in the coterie of Wagnerites at Bayreuth as well as a wartime propagandist for German victory in World War I. His services as a publicist for Richard Wagner's music dramas were duly rewarded when he divorced his first wife in 1906 and subsequently married the composer's youngest daughter, Eva. His efforts as a racial evangelist likewise received the fullest measure of recognition when Adolf Hitler, a long-time admirer of Chamberlain, attended his funeral in 1927 as the official representative for the National Socialists.

Considering the fact that Chamberlain was the offspring of British parents, it is highly appropriate that his biographer should himself be English-born. Holding degrees from both Oxford and Columbia Universities, Field is currently an associate professor of history at the

State University of New York at Purchase. Anyone who peruses Field's *Evangelist of Race* cannot help but be awed by the encyclopedic nature of the scholarly research involved in its writing. The text itself, including the epilogue and appendix, is 467 pages in length and is supplemented by 50 pages of notes. There is also a bibliography of 23 pages as well as an index of 20 pages. Recognizing the futility of attempting to cite all the sources used in the preparation of his book, Field presents a selected bibliography which is divided into two main parts: (1) a chronological register of books and articles by Chamberlain together with a separate alphabetical listing of works that have Chamberlain as the subject; (2) an annotated bibliography broken down into three categories that are respectively entitled "Racism," "Anti-Semitism in Germany before 1933," and "Wagner and Bayreuth." Since the greater part of the entire bibliography pertains to items published in the German language, Field has by virtue of these labors rendered an inestimable service to anyone engaged in research on the development of anti-Semitism in modern Germany. The broad scope of this research, moreover, manifests itself throughout the book in terms of the copious detail with which the cultural and political milieu of Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany is faithfully delineated.

Chamberlain's total absorption with German culture came about gradually and of its own accord. Owing to his mother's death a little more than a year after his birth, he was placed in the care of an aunt and a grandmother from the paternal side of the family. These women resided in Versailles, and Chamberlain's early education took place largely in France. As a result of his father's concern over the propriety of having a son who spoke better French than English, the boy did however undergo some schooling in England during the years 1866-1869. Shortly thereafter he moved back to France and only returned to England for occasional visits with his relatives during the remainder of his life. It is now readily apparent that he grew up as an essentially rootless individual who didn't feel himself to be either English or French. His admiration for Germany was awakened largely as a response to its stunning victory over France in the Franco-Prussian War. His commitment to the cause of German nationalism was further intensified once he discovered the seductive beauties of Wagner's music dramas a few years later. This passion for Wagner was a strong bond between him and his first wife, a German woman named Anna Horst whom he met in France and married in 1878. He had hoped to pursue a professional career in the field of botany. However, because of difficulties in completing his dissertation at the University of Geneva, he decided to defer this goal indefinitely. Fortunately for him, his relatives in England were able to provide him with sufficient financial support to enable him to devote himself to writing music criticism aimed at promoting a proper appreciation of Wagner's operas.

The transition from the magic of music to the poison of racism was quite an easy step for a perfect Wagnerite like Chamberlain. It was, in fact, the composer's widow, Cosima, who first induced him to undertake a study of Gobineau's treatise on racial inequality around 1893. Gobineau, it should be noted, never attached much importance to the Jewish question. Cosima's protégé, consequently, derived his anti-Semitic philosophy from Wagner's essay entitled "Jewry in Music" and other German sources. Chamberlain seems to have been psychologically predisposed to accept the principles of anti-Semitism, and Field offers us a succinct explanation for his subject's readiness to adopt this twisted doctrine by writing: "For Chamberlain the very concept of love was impossible without its antithesis, hate; the strength of his love for the Germanic race was, as he admitted, enhanced and nourished by hate for the Jews. 'Were I one time to stop hating, I would be impoverished in love' " (pp. 242-43).

Although Chamberlain's literary output is enormous, Field focuses his attention on three major works: *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1899) and two subsequent publications entitled *Immanuel Kant* (1905) and *Goethe* (1912). The *Foundations*, a highly erudite work that is 1200 pages in length, describes the course of European history in terms of six legacies: (1) Hellenic art and philosophy, (2) Roman law and organization, (3) the doctrine of Christ, (4) the racial chaos of the Dark Ages, (5) the pernicious power of the Jews, and (6) the redemptive cultural mission of the Teutonic peoples. The book was an immediate popular success upon publication and became a subject of debate among all classes of German society. Kaiser Wilhelm himself was one of its most enthusiastic readers and soon placed himself under the author's personal tutelage. Chamberlain also acquired a number of prominent admirers outside Germany when an English translation was published in 1910. Winston Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt, and the distinguished American historian Carl Becker each spoke glowingly of the work. But the greatest irony of all is the fact that the *Foundations* is actually dedicated to a Jew—Julius Wiesner, a professor of botany at the University of Vienna under whom Chamberlain had studied during the years 1889-1892.

In his analysis of the *Foundations*, Field underscores the basic contradiction in the author's argument: Chamberlain at times seems to deny that race is a physical condition at all and implies that "Aryan" and "Semite" are disembodied states of mind. In reading the *Foundations*, I have personally been struck by the incongruity of Chamberlain's use of Luther and Beethoven as exemplars of the Teutonic mentality despite their obviously un-Nordic physiognomy. It is on the basis of this spiritual criterion that Chamberlain promoted the view that Jesus Christ could not have been a Jew, for his teachings, it was claimed, embody the Nordic quality of "inwardness" (i.e. *Innerlichkeit*) to such a pre-eminent degree as to preclude Jewish ancestry. According to the late Walter Kaufmann of Princeton University, the person who originated the idea of Christ as an Aryan was Friedrich Nietzsche's brother-in-law, Bernhard Förster (see Ch. 3, Pt. 1 of Kaufmann's *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*). It was important for Chamberlain to be able to dissociate Jesus from Judaism, for he was as passionately committed to Christianity as he was to the idea of Nordic superiority. His life-long devotion to Christianity appears to have had its roots in the religious instruction he received from the Anglican clerics at Cheltenham College over the years 1867-1869. During the Nazi era in Germany a number of Protestant ministers attempted to foster a purely Germanic form of Christianity, but these efforts came to naught owing to Hitler's lack of support. He too believed that Jesus was of Aryan stock, but he was astute enough to recognize the fundamental incompatibility of the Christian and Nazi ethical systems.

Most of Field's commentary about the relationship between Wagnerites of Chamberlain's persuasion and the Nazi movement is confined to the final chapter entitled "Bayreuth and Nazism" and to a ten-page "Epilogue." While acknowledging that the author of the *Foundations* never advocated violence toward the Jews, Field makes it clear from the outset that "inevitably the career of Chamberlain does lead us toward the horrifying reality of the Nuremberg Laws and Auschwitz" (p. 13). By insisting that Jesus was not a Jew, he surely made it easier for those Germans who still had an allegiance to Christianity to accept the anti-Semitic policies of the Third Reich. Chamberlain's racial doctrines were widely disseminated within Germany during the 1920s through the skillfully packaged writings of the anthropologist Hans F. K. Günther and thus helped to prepare the way for Hitler's success with the German electorate. The culmination of Chamberlain's influence, however, is to be found in the pages of Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* (1930), a work which provided the racial rationale for Hitler's attempt to extend the eastern frontiers of the German Reich up to the Ural Mountains.

It may appear to be an act of ingratitude toward the author of *Evangelist of Race* to conclude this review on a note of criticism. Nonetheless, the question as to which audience Field is addressing constantly recurred throughout my reading of his book and needs to be raised. I am convinced that few English-speaking readers are sufficiently versed in German history, philosophy, and literature to be able to cope with Field's overly erudite analyses of many topics. Furthermore, not only does Field generally fail to translate the titles of German books and articles mentioned in his text, but he also intersperses untranslated German words and phrases throughout his own English sentences. This is unfortunate since Field is a fine stylist in his own right and these problems could easily have been avoided. Field's *Evangelist of Race* is certain to be translated into German, and when it is published in Germany, it will find its proper audience. In the meantime, there is still a need for a biography of Houston Stewart Chamberlain that is addressed to an educated readership in English-speaking countries. Whoever writes it will owe an incalculable debt to Field's own magisterial treatise.

VICTOR ANTHONY RUDOWSKI
Clemson University

Norman S. Grabo. *The Coincidental Art of Charles Brockden Brown*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981, 209 pp. $19.00.

Bernard Rosenthal, ed. *Critical Essays on Charles Brockden Brown*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1981, 246 pp. $25.00.

The new CEAA-CSE Bicentennial Edition of Brown's writings, several volumes of which have now appeared, has increased his visibility; and while technical reviews of the

edition have been mixed, a uniform presentation of Brown's entire work—not just his fiction—will do much to improve our understanding of his significance. (Until someone can give a compelling interpretation of Brown's reasons for sending Thomas Jefferson a copy of *Wieland*, critical understanding of him will be impaired.) An accurate and complete biography of Brown may never be possible, but there ought now to be much better information as a result of CEAA-CSE. In the meantime Brown's fiction itself, read and reread but hardly yet elucidated, solicits our attention.

Norman Grabo's fine book asks, in fact, that we pay attention close and careful enough that the indubitable strangeness of Brown at the simple levels of plot, character, and motive will emerge; close enough to notice, for example, not only that *Wieland* is about religious fanaticism or sexual hysteria or the inadequacy of sense perception, but that it is also about "the growing consciousness of the desire for power, the desire to be God," a desire that is "powerful, deadly, and strangely erotic" and can be married to "some kind of rationality," as indeed it must, only through "great trauma." Grabo's readings avoid forcing the story through an elaborate theoretical or psychological mill; in fact, the text itself, *read* carefully by Grabo, is shown to render such imposed strategies insufficient. Each chapter of Grabo's study, which treats Brown's major fictions in chronological order, includes a detailed summary whose express purpose is to remind us that the peculiarities of Brown's plots are absolutely constitutive of his fiction.

Even Brown's obtrusive "coincidences" Grabo shows to be the author's distinguishing creative feature. Far from implying haphazardness or superficiality, coincidence eventually comprises a "sense of design" that depends on "resemblance, duplication, confused identities, ambiguity, ambivalence, and irony, all of which derive from that doubleness at the heart of coincidence."

Grabo's final chapter elaborates a theory of this design, working with several recent studies of doubling and with Angus Fletcher's arguments about allegory. The only reason one ought not read this chapter first, so clearly does it account for many vexing problems in Brown, is that to do so would minimize the continual power of Grabo's close readings themselves to produce excitements and disturbances no one theory can adequately explain.

Grabo's study is easily the best comprehensive reading of Brown's fiction available and is likely to remain so for some time. It should be supplemented by the dozen or so important essays or chapters from longer works on American literature that place Brown more exactly in his cultural and political context; unfortunately, these occasional pieces are not yet conveniently collected. Instead, for reasons somewhat elusive, we now have Roswenthal's collection of an eclectic handful of contemporary estimates of Brown (e.g. Hazlitt, Whittier, Margaret Fuller) and nine original essays. Some of these essays are very good indeed, but the collection as a whole can hardly be said to represent the most able thinking that has been done about Brown. And posed against the early nineteenth-century views, the new essays heighten the impression—warranted, no doubt—that no one has noticed Brown for a century and a half. There are especially strong essays by Cathy N. Davidson on Alcuin, Nina Baym on *Wieland*, Emory Elliot on *Arthur Mervyn*, Paul Witherington on *Edgar Huntly*, and Sydney J. Krause on *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot;* and the exploratory essay on Brown's political writings by Charles E. Bennett represents a direction that is certain to be one of the most instructive in the future. However, this volume is not of great practical value to anyone but the specialist, to whom all the essays and the detailed biography will be welcome.

Until the Brown canon is more firmly established and more complete biographical information substantiated, all readings will be somewhat tentative and Brown's striking place in the history of American letters somewhat obscure. Until then—and probably well beyond—we should be reading Brown by the light of Norman Grabo's provocative and exemplary study.

ERIC J. SUNDQUIST
University of California, Berkeley

CONTRIBUTORS

THERESA BACON practices writing and painting, teaches children's art, and conducts a women's writing workshop in Berkeley, California.

BO BALL has published fiction in *The Prairie Schooner, Chicago Review, Carolina Quarterly*, and *Southern Humanities Review*. His work has appeared in *Pushcart*.

RONALD BAUGHMAN is Assistant Professor and Communications Coordinator in the University of South Carolina's College of Applied Professional Sciences. His most recent publications have focused on modern American poetry and he is working on a book on James Dickey.

MARJORIE E. COOK is Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Miami University. She has published widely on Robert Frost and is Advisory Editor for the *Frost Newsletter*.

JON DAUNT teaches at the Davis campus of the University of California. His work has appeared in *Shenandoah*, the *Cincinnati Poetry Review*, and the *Mississippi Valley Review*.

MARK DEFOE lives in Buckhannon, West Virginia, teaches at West Virginia Wesleyan College, and edits the *Laurel Review*. His work is scheduled to appear in the *Paris Review, Kenyon Review*, and *Denver Quarterly*.

STEPHEN DIXON's fourth story collection, *Movies*, will be published by North Point Press in October 1983. Three of the stories in that volume, "Layaways," "Not Charles," and "The Shirt" first appeared in *SCR*. He teaches writing in the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University and has recently received an award for fiction writing from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

OTIS DOUGLAS teaches fiction writing and composition at Longwood College. In the summer he is a charter captain and sailing instructor.

JOHN EBERTH, a Vietnam veteran, has stories forthcoming in *California Quarterly, Crosscurrents, Forms, Pacific Poetry and Fiction*, and *Earthwise*.

GEORGE GARRETT is the distinguished author of numerous novels and volumes of short stories. He has been the recipient of the *Sewanee Review* Fellowship in Poetry, the Academy of Arts and Letters *Prix de Rome*, a Ford Foundation grant, and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. "A Letter That Will Never Be Written" is an excerpt from his next novel, *Elizabeth & James*.

HARRIET GAY contributes short stories, articles, and poetry to various magazines and is active in civic affairs.

LAURENCE LIEBERMAN is a Professor of English at the University of Illinois and poetry editor of the University of Illinois Press. He is the author of three collections of poetry, *God's Measurements, The Osprey Suicides*, and *The Unblinding* and has contributed to many prestigious publications, including *The New Yorker, The American Poetry Review*, and *The Nation*.

JAMES W. LILLIE resides in Belmont, Massachusetts.

QUITMAN MARSHALL, a native of South Carolina, is an ad copywriter for a New York publishing company. He has published poetry in the *Mid Atlantic Review*, *Poetry NOW*, and *Poetry Review*.

J. W. RIVERS's first collection of poetry, *Proud and on My Feet*, was recently published by the University of Georgia Press. The poems published in this issue are from a sequence called "The Lady in Once-White Shoes," part of a collection now in preparation.

SUSAN SCHAEFFER lives in Brooklyn.

DAN SCHNEIDER is a Professor of English at the University of Tennessee and the author of two critical studies, *Symbolism: The Manichean Vision* and *The Crystal Cage: Adventures of the Imagination in the Fiction of Henry James*. He is currently at work on a book entitled *D. H. Lawrence: The Psychologist as Artist*.

KARL WATSON is a senior at Old Dominion University. His poems have appeared in the *Tidewater Review*, *New Virginia Review*, and *Poet Lore*.