

# Shawangunk Review

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The *Shawangunk Review* is the journal of the English Graduate Program at the State University of New York, New Paltz. The *Review* publishes the proceedings of the annual English Graduate Symposium and literary articles by graduate students as well as poetry, fiction, and book reviews by students and faculty. The views expressed in the *Shawangunk Review* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of English at SUNY New Paltz. Please address correspondence to *Shawangunk Review*, Department of English, SUNY New Paltz, New Paltz, NY 12561.

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# I From the Editors

As we go to press, Professor H. R. Stoneback is completing preparation for the Seventeenth Annual English Graduate Symposium, which will be one of the national events celebrating the Robert Penn Warren Centennial. Nine graduate students are scheduled to present papers and three distinguished visiting scholars will conduct a panel discussion. There will be two keynote addresses by leading Warren scholars: the first, entitled “Wild Metaphor and Dark Transcendence in *Brother to Dragons*,” by Professor John Burt of Brandeis University, author of *Robert Penn Warren and American Idealism* and editor of *The Collected Poems of Robert Penn Warren*; and the second, entitled “Shadowing Old Red: The Editor as Gumshoe,” by Professor William Bedford Clark of Texas A&M University, author of *The American Vision of Robert Penn Warren* and editor of the *Selected Letters Vols. I-II*.

At present, the English Graduate Committee is considering proposals from graduate faculty for the 2006 symposium.

Volume XVI of the *Shawangunk Review* features the proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Graduate Symposium, “Alien Genres.” Professors Ernelle Fife and Robert Waugh were the co-directors of last year’s symposium and are the Associate Editors for the symposium section of this issue. On behalf of the English Department and the Graduate Program, we commend them for a job well done.

This is the second volume of the *Review* to include fiction, and we continue to publish a selection of poetry by faculty and graduate students, as well as other readers. We also encourage, as always, submissions concerning any area of literary studies: essays, explications, book reviews, and scholarly notes and queries. Students writing these (41590) are encouraged to consult with their advisors and submit an abstract of approximately 150 words for the “Abstracts of MA Theses” section.

We ask readers to provide information regarding the many distinguished achievements of our current and former graduate students for our “News and Notes” column. For example, we would like to know the details of conference participation, publications, grants, and honors, as well as news regarding progress of our MA graduates in PhD programs and reports about teaching and employment activities.

This year’s volume of the *Review*, like last year’s, is based on the book design created by students in Professor Arthur Hoener’s class in the Printed Book (spring

2004), and we would like once again to thank LuAnn Arena, Brendan Blagbrough, Erica Carlino, Christine Kwasnik, Robert J. Maguire, and Stacey D. Ornitz, with a special thanks to Jason Cring for the cover art. Jason Taylor did the typesetting and layout, and the editors are pleased to welcome him back to the production team.

Please see submission guidelines on page 123. The deadline for all materials for Volume XVII of the *Review* is December 15, 2005.



## II Introduction

### “Alien Genres”: The Sixteenth Annual English Graduate Symposium

*Ernelle Fife & Robert H. Waugh*

This symposium has given us great pleasure because it indicates the degree to which studies in Science Fiction and Fantasy have come of age in the English Department at New Paltz. The course Science Fiction was first offered here early in the 1970s. Through the '70s and '80s an examination of J. R. R. Tolkien's work was offered here as a special topics course, and in the 1990s a course in Modern Fantasy became a part of our regular offering. In 1988 we offered the first Lovecraft Forum, which since then has become an annual event every fall, shortly before Halloween. These offerings have been joined since then by a wide array of courses in Fantasy, Juvenile Fantasy, and Horror, as well as courses concerning works less easy to define; in recent years two courses have been offered at the graduate level dealing with such genres. In addition, the Creative Writing Program now offers various workshops in genre writing. It is a significant mark of the presence of these studies on the New Paltz campus that on the weekend following the symposium we hosted a conference on Alien Genres.

We had seven presenters of papers at this symposium, the first four investigating problems in Children's Literature and Fantasy. Jenn Smits received her BA from New Paltz and began her MA in 2003 as a Teaching Assistant in our composition program and has plans to continue her studies in a PhD program. She developed an interest in C. S. Lewis and a love for Children's Literature in Professor Fife's Lewis course. Her essay, "Children's Literature: The Elusive Genre," is an investigation of the problems we meet in attempting to define the first literary genre which any of us read. Matthew Nickel, also with his BA from New Paltz, is a Teaching Assistant and another product of Professor Fife's tutelage. Matt has spent some time reading and traveling in Europe this year before completing his MA here. His essay, "The Importance of Story, Fantasy, and Myth Retold in Lewis and Tolkien," investigates other aspects of the tendency these genres have to overlap one another, insisting upon the fundamental importance of story. Danielle Bienvenue, whose family has lived in the Hudson Valley for many years and who is another graduate of New Paltz, is also a Teaching Assistant in our program; she will be writing her thesis under the direction of Professor Fife on horror in children's literature and plans to pursue a PhD in the field. Her paper, "Serial Mom-nogamy: *Peter Pan* and the Search for a Mother-Figure," investigates that seminal work with great wit and love. Michael Beilfuss, also a Teaching Assistant here and

a BA graduate of New Paltz, is considering a PhD program in American Literature. His paper, “The Marriage of Elf and Man: Unifying Immortal and Mortal in Tolkien’s Mythology,” looks closely at what is undoubtedly the most famous fantasy work of the second half of the last century.

After a break we returned to three essayists addressing problems in Science Fiction. Tim Gilmore has finished his MA here, after having been a Teaching Assistant. He has recently completed his thesis on the limits of narrative, in which he attempts to synthesize phenomenology, historical materialism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis. His research interests are in theory and the nineteenth-century novel. His essay, “The Darkness Inside: Black Holes Within and Without,” is an intricate study of the movie *Event Horizon* in the light of Lacanian psychology. With a BA from New Paltz, Matt Saikaly is a fourth-semester graduate student and Teaching Assistant. He intends to have his MA by May 2005, when he plans to pursue research work in government or to follow a career in publishing or editing. His essay, “Chaos Theory and Aesthetic Expression in Isaac Asimov’s *Foundation Trilogy*,” addresses the problems of historicity and art in that classic future history. Amy Washburn, who came to us with her BA from Mount St. Mary’s College, is another master’s student and Teaching Assistant; she has research interests in twentieth-century multiethnic women’s literature and in feminist theory. She is currently finishing her second novel, *Fashism* (yes, with an *h*), a political satire about the connections between fashion and fascism. Her essay, “Kissing the Present: Corporations, ‘Debt Slavery,’ and the Incorporation of a Feminist ‘Cyborg Identity’ in Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower*,” looks at one of the seminal works of recent Science Fiction; she has, she tells us, no problem with smashing the canon and the state.

As we survey these essays, we are struck once more with the immediacy of these genres to our present condition. That they are worthy of serious study is evident in these students’ work and also in the work of our visiting scholar, John Clute, the co-author of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* and *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, groundbreaking reference works in the field. He has been for many years a distinguished reviewer, critic, and theorist, as well as the author of two Science Fiction novels that have indicated a few of the ways that the genre might develop in the future. He has received numerous awards within the field—the Hugo, the Locus, and the Nebula—as well as the Pilgrim award from the Science Fiction Research Association and the Distinguished Scholar award from the International Association of Fantasy in the Arts. Through the years he has faced the challenge of these genres with wit and integrity. In the evening he presented a talk entitled “Canaries in the Coal Mine,” a wide-ranging view of the fate of fantastic literature during the last two centuries.

We were able to celebrate the opening of the symposium with Stella Deen, the Chair of the department, making three special announcements: Professor Harry Stoneback, the Director of Graduate Studies, has received the honor of being named Distinguished Teaching Professor; and Pauline Uchmanowicz and Thomas Olsen

have received the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. This year we have demonstrated in many ways the wide variety of the program at New Paltz, its strength in research and teaching, and its willingness to investigate the breadth of an expanded canon.

### III | Keynote Address

#### Canaries in the Coal Mine

*John Clute*

#### I

This evening I think I would like to approach my subject, which is the literature of the fantastic, through a moment of joy which came to me as I was reading *In the Forests of Serre* (1993), one of the brilliant fantasy novels Patricia A. McKillip has been writing for the past thirty years. After leading up to that moment of joy, whose implications for an understanding of the literatures of the fantastic I hope to make clear, I'll try to give some sense of the region and remit of those literatures, which are, I strongly believe, the salient literatures of our new century. And then I will stop.

McKillip's novel is a tale of fantasy, narrated in an impersonal dark serene voice that is both chilling and reassuring, a voice typically heard in stories where the tale itself, as in most fantasy, is central, and is intended to be believed. It is the tone of voice of a servant of the truth. *In the Forests of Serre*, like much fantasy, is told as though the narrative continues until the truth is found. Serre, we learn, is a land riddled by interacting tales and conflicting magics. Nothing, it seems, can be taken for granted. A young woman is sent through the forest into an arranged marriage with a prince heartbroken by the loss of his first wife and child, accompanied by a wizard whose heart is torn. The heart of the land itself breaks, and the hearts of witches and wizards and ogres and queens and princes and firebirds all break. All break, and then mend. And gradually the reader, sitting at the feet of the wise teller of the tale, begins to learn that the only way to understand that tale is to understand that everything told in it turns out, in the end, to be literally the case. Every time a heart breaks, there is a breaking of the world. Every mending is a mending of the world. Like all great fairy tales, like the literatures of the fantastic in general, McKillip's novel is, in the end, literal. In the end, the fantastic is very simple: *what we see is what we get*.

We just have to concentrate upon the world in order to see it.

After the accidents of image are swept away, the substance of great fantasies lies naked before us. Words mean what they say here, as Samuel R. Delany argued years ago, distinguishing between the fantastic and what he called the mundane literatures. In the literatures of the fantastic a cigar is what the story says it is. Sometimes it is only a cigar. But if something which resembles a cigar opens its mouth for us, we have

entered a Portal, not a dream which suggests psychotherapy; if we drown in contaminants, as the Congo nearly drowns Marlowe in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, we have been swallowed by a Cloaca, not by the spent cigars of imperialism. The Congo is the thing itself. It is not primarily an extractable image for darkness—it is the darkness. In the literatures of the fantastic, when we say x is really y, we do not mean X is really like Y. When a heart breaks in Serre, we see the abyss and the severed heart. That, it may be, is also the secret of Charles Dickens.

So all we have to do in order to read *In the Forests of Serre*, and any other great fantasy, is to try to see what we are given, and to pray that what lies broken before our eyes—and so much does lie broken before the eyes of any reader of the fantastic in 2004—can be healed. What we also have to do—because *In the Forests of Serre* is an example of that genre of the fantastic we call fantasy—is to obey the tale. Which means we do not ironize our reading, we do not condescend, we do not doublethink the telling. When we accomplish this simplicity, we may find that story itself supplies all the doubleness we could dream of.

Which brings me to the moment of joy, because it is a moment when the tale is obeyed, both by the characters within the book, and (if I am correct about the reading protocols necessary for the proper comprehension of fantasy) by the reader as well. The wizard who attends the princess to Serre, whose name is Gyre, and who is therefore accompanied by spiraling winds, has been momentarily enchanted by a singing firebird, which is also a woman. He follows her into the house made of bone of the great witch Brume, where he regains his senses just as she threatens to make him into soup:

He said to her, "Let me go. I don't want to fight you."

"Then don't," she suggested unhelpfully, unhooking the steaming cauldron to replace it with another, larger and empty .... "Just get in here for a moment and let me see how you fit."

"I've never climbed into a cauldron," he answered, remembering some tale of the queen's. "Show me how."

She gave him a long opaque look out of her lenses. Then she loosed a burble of exasperation and bundled her skirt around her knees. Her broad feet, splayed like bird claws, seemed almost too big to clear the rim, [but] somehow ... she got both feet into the cauldron.

"There," she said, squatting on the rim. "Now you do it."

"You don't fit all the way in. How could I?"

"I fit."

"You don't fit."

Her tongue smacked off the roof of her mouth; spittle flew. Muttering about wizards from foreign realms who couldn't find their brains with a map, she hunkered herself down into the cauldron, then crowed at him, "I fit!"

Most of us fortunate enough to have read a fairy tale or two know what happens next. The wizard will trap Brume in the cauldron, and make his escape. This indeed happens, and the wizard Gyre makes his escape, whirling like the wind through various metamorphoses in order to do so.

The passage, as a whole, gives pleasure; but I read it aloud for the sake of one single sentence, a sentence which gave me joy, which made my hair feel as though it were standing on end. This is the sentence: “She gave him a long, opaque look out of her lenses.”

That gaze of the witch, face to face with her fate, lies for me at the very heart of fantasy. It would be *precarious* of me to suggest that the whole of the literature of the fantastic, over the two hundred years of its conscious existence, could be unpacked from that one sentence, but I think I will go this far: the gaze of Brume is of a kind only freely found in that literature.

There are two general reasons for arguing this.

In the first place, I think it is clear that Brume recognizes *herself* in a fashion inherent to fantasy; because she recognizes herself as a figure transparent to a tale which is telling her, because she witnesses herself as being dictated, as having become a Dictate of Story. The opacity of her gaze of realization is, I think, a kind of *tact*—both on her part, within the story, and on the part of the teller, or implied narrator; for both, at this instant, seem, to my reader’s eye, to have become magically merged. Her tact is to play the game of story, for to challenge the wizard’s invocation of an old tale at this point would have been to break up her lines to weep. As Yeats goes on to say, in his great late poem “Lapis Lazuli,” sages do not do that. They play the game of art, of story. They confess nothing. “Their ancient, glittering eyes are gay.” Brume’s “long, opaque look” is the look of a sage refusing to break up her lines to modernize—or to post-modernize—herself. This is the tact of fantasy, which I like to define as that set of stories set in worlds which are impossible *but which the story believes*.

So we are free to think of her gaze as pure obedience. We are also free, I think, to understand it as manifesting the kind of literal deadpan transparency to story that marks all world literatures, except perhaps the tradition of the mimetic novel in the Western World, a tradition which retained, here and there, well into the last century, some vestiges of its argumentative prestige. It is a transparency which the novelists of this new century, who must negotiate constant transformations in their subject matter, have taken to like fish finally allowed back into the pond.

Which leads us to the second reason for concentrating on this gaze: Recognition itself. The gaze of the witch Brume is a gaze of Recognition and witness of a sort which I have argued in the past is central to much “full fantasy.” In the model I constructed for *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997) to give some sense of the typical narrative course of full fantasies, a model which was somewhat sophisticated in a piece called “Beyond the Pale” in *Conjunctions* 39 (2002), I suggested a four-part seasonal sequence, which I’ll dump in your laps very quickly. The four parts are

Wrongness/autumn, Thinning/winter, Recognition/spring, and Healing or Return/summer. Of these, Recognition is central. It is the moment at which all kinds of Thinning and amnesia begin to lift from the tale, when the protagonist discovers what story she is in, when the Land itself remembers its true name, and so forth. Brume's moment of Recognition is of this sort, I think.

But let us stretch Recognition a little. Let us call Brume's version Recognition One. And let me suggest here that the whole of the literature of the fantastic is bound to a larger (and vaguer) pattern, which we will call, for the moment, Recognition Two. This form of Recognition depends on the argument that the literatures of the fantastic are uniquely bound to the passage of Time, bound to the huge, and hugely perilous, transformations of the world since 1765 or so, when History as we now live it began. This is the argument—to which I adhere—that the genres of the fantastic take their sometimes ludicrous shape from *exposure* to that changing world; that the anxieties they awaken and (occasionally) allay in their readers are anxieties natural to a species whose habitat—which is this entire world—has become problematical. The melodramatic gaze of the fantastic, into horrors or futurity or otherworlds that are healable, is, in the end, a gaze at the world itself, as it writhes beneath us. This gaze is the gaze of Recognition of the canary in the coal mine when the air changes. What we see, as I said earlier, is what we get.

(It is also the gaze of those who watched on television the fall of the Twin Towers on the eleventh of September 2001. For that is also a gaze of Recognition and witness.)

It is my conviction, in other words, that the literatures of the fantastic—after all the trimmings of language are consumed in the fires of just anxiety—have been telling us the literal truth about the world.

The literatures of the fantastic are not metaphors.

They are the tale itself.

## II

Perhaps, at this point, we should backtrack a little, get a bird's-eye view of what I've been calling the literatures of the fantastic. The meta-tale I've been talking about within the narrow focus of a single fantasy novel from 2003 is made up of a variety of sensitized responses to the hot tin roof of a world caught in the claws of time. That world, as I said, is the Western World since around the middle of the eighteenth century, when we begin to experience history as a process of change (rather than as an arena of exempla). History becomes an engine to which we cling. We begin to envision futures that splinter terrifyingly from the present, and a past which seduces us from reality, a past which turns into a snare which, if not escaped from, drives us mad. This is the time when Frenchmen invented a new calendar for a new world. And it is the time when, crudely, one can first begin to identify in the literatures of Britain,

Germany, and France a range of subversive responses to the Enlightenment principles which had dominated Western thought for a long while.

We need to skate over the centuries pretty quickly here, but it might be an idea to stay a moment at the beginning. The most famous single example of a subversive counter-text from this era is of course Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), a feverish scherzo of a text far more interesting than many of the Gothic novels which borrowed its author's fraught concern with the trap of history, the fascination he felt at the contemplation of the new discovered category of the Ruin, and his sense of the quite extraordinary *precariousness* of the civilized world: family, religion, tradition, hierarchy, authority. No one in the novel—no priest, no sage, no father—who speaks for the established world order can be trusted. Like the Castle of Otranto itself, the world for Walpole has become inherently *collapsible*. The world has begun to spin us off.

With a singularly acute sense of the spin of things, and with a helping hand from Giovanni Piranesi, Walpole centres his Gothic tale in a location which has become paradigmatic: the Bad Place house or abbey or castle whose animate/inanimate exterior unstably mirrors the visible contours of the face of the protagonist and/or antagonist, and whose interior labyrinths model that protagonist's hollow, haunted, not-yet-unveiled inner psyche. But it is a mirroring which *cannot last*: not in the new world. And when Manfred, the anxiety-ridden self-perjuring false Count of Otranto, finally sees that the lineaments of his own psyche are mirrored by the grotesque carapace of the castle, we have fully entered the vertigo of history. For it is here that we find ourselves as readers directly confronting the first great moment of Recognition in the literatures of the fantastic. To see one's own face fissured by a world which mirrors its dissolution is indeed to see the world. Because history makes your face split in two.

*The Castle of Otranto* is the first of the nightmares of Reason. Thousands follow. Narratives which climax on a Recognition of the fissure between what you were and what you have become—between what the world was and the terrible daylight of tomorrow—between the abandoned untermenschen Twin and the Hollow Man Jekyll clinging to the surface of things—have filled the literature of horror ever since.

We need now to become more general.

For convenience, as an encyclopedist, I tend to accept a wide consensus that reduces the categories of the fantastic down to three meta-literatures—horror, which I've just described the birth of; fantasy, which earlier I described a modern instance of; and science fiction—and to subtend categories from this triad. At this considerable level of abstraction, it might be possible to characterize these three main expressions of the fantastic in terms of the "attitude" they take to the world they face and attempt to recognize.

For the overlapping categories which together make up the centipedal super-category which we might as well call horror—and which arguably incorporates the Gothic, German *marchen*, the supernatural tale, the ghost story, the weird tale, the



strange tale, dark fantasy, some slipstream, the New Gothic, the New Weird, and even some of the waif biota that 21<sup>st</sup>-century “interstitialists” hope to gather under their wing—the essential turn of mind and story is to *uncover* the true face of the world. The difficulty and fustian of much horror literature derives, I think, not from literary incompetence, but from some attempt to create a Body English of the tormented confusion of a changing world. For the greatest horror writers—like William Hope Hodgson, or H. P. Lovecraft, or David Lindsay, or Robert Aickman, or Peter Straub—the road to Recognition is extremely thorny; and when they fail to come into the clear cold air of the real, they can descend into perversities of sensation.

There were fantasies, mostly written for children, throughout the nineteenth century. But it was not, I think, until the catastrophic experience of World War One that impossible otherworlds became regions of the mind easily inhabitable in the imagination of the mature writer. With the trenches, that all changed. A large number of British writers either experienced World War One directly as soldiers, or were deeply affected by it; they include Stella Benson, Lucy Boston, Gerald Bullett, Lord Dunsany, E. R. Eddison, Robert Graves, Aldous Huxley, David Jones, C. S. Lewis, David Lindsay, Hugh Lofting, John Masefield, A. A. Milne, Hope Mirrlees, Naomi Mitchison, Robert Nichols, J. R. R. Tolkien, E. H. Visiak and E. A. Wyke-Smith. Other writers—like Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, whose finest single novel, *Foe-Farrell* (1918), is told through the prism of the trenches, and George Bernard Shaw, whose *Heartbreak House* (1919) treats the civilization of the West as a literal Bad Place edifice—were singularly affected by the spiritual chasm opened up by the conflict. It was as though the world before and after the war had been, like Manfred’s face, or Jekyll’s body and soul, irremediably split. For the writers who engendered fantasy texts out of fissured lives, the worlds they created are profoundly subversive, sensitized responses to an aftermath reality. For them—and for almost all great fantasy since—the world itself is understood to be *wrong*. It is shameful for us to admit to the twentieth century. It is possible to escape from prison.

The engendering impulse of SF has always seemed more positive, at least as far as the American version of SF is concerned. For much American SF, to recognize the world is to recognize what can be done to make it work. To ride the change, to domesticate the novum, to articulate the daimons of metamorphosis: for American SF, this is Recognition. On the other hand, it is very hard to understand modern dystopias like Evgeny Zamiatin’s *We* (1924) or Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) or Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) without understanding that the tubercular ferocity they all share derives less from certain shared thematic concerns than from the fact that they are texts which bear appalled witness—canary witness—to a world whose changes cannot be tamed. Indeed, the title of this talk might simply have been Canary Fever. Under the surface of all great dystopias, we see the hollow face of a world that changed so fast it lost its past, we see the world of aftermath that the great fantasy writers eschewed.

### III

We come to the century we now inhabit. I will close by paraphrasing something I wrote and published a little while ago, after Nine Eleven.

I suggested then that both horror and fantasy were in the process of becoming immersed in the kind of SF for which anything which seems impossible is a form of virtual reality. Even more than the “stricter” forms of SF we grew accustomed to in the twentieth century, this new polymorphous SF remains a genre designed to allay anxieties about a world we cannot ultimately control. Its visions of making the world work are still grounded in fears, two centuries old by now, that the world became, long ago, an engine we could not drive. But in 2004, these compensating visions are no longer simple sops for our mortal helplessness; they turn the world. SF’s unique capacity to advocate is now an engine capable (for we have become creatures of nearly infinite power) of shaping, in the mind’s eye, the planet itself. SF writers now have the capacity to marry their words to the World in the form of instructions, to transform the planet by giving the planet its marching orders.

So SF contains in itself the portents of terrible change. After Nine Eleven, it seems very terrible to think that the sentences we write—the mission statements we issue—shape the world we write about, that what we write seems to be something like that which terrorists do, for SF novelists and terrorists have always treated the world as a story to be told. In 2004, that story is a story which is not only told but is the case. It is as simple and awful as that. When we look at the world, what we recognize in the mirror—*analog or digital*—are the sentences we have laid upon the world. None of us would ever deliberately create a literal act of terrorism, but *The World Trade Center* is the kind of sentence we write. We lack the wisdom of gods, but now have the strength of gods. We are the Word. The literatures of the fantastic, which once reflected the world, now instruct it. Recognition is Us. So we cannot afford to fall silent, not writers, not makers, not givers, not one of us. Everything depends on what we say, we humans, from now on. We are the Word. We are all going to die if we do not say something good.

## IV Symposium Papers

### Children's Literature: The Elusive Genre

*Jenn Smits*

Peter Hunt and Jack Zipes, two of the leading critics in children's literature studies, vehemently disagree over their subject. Hunt maintains that children's literature exists as a sub-genre and calls for a critical theory specifically designed to discuss books within this sub-genre, while Zipes argues that there is no need for a new theory because children's literature does not exist as separate and distinct from adult literature, and he even devotes an entire chapter of his recent book, *Sticks and Stones*, to this argument. What Zipes and Hunt do agree on, though, is the "amorphous" situation of defining children's literature. But how can we debate its existence when we haven't decided yet what it is? Hence the reason I refer to children's literature as the elusive genre.

What is children's literature? What criteria should we have in order to come to a working definition? Breaking the term *children's literature* into smaller parts for closer examination seems like an appropriate first step. Referencing the *OED* for the definition of *child*, the second and third entries are the two relevant to this discussion: "a young person of either sex below the age of puberty. One who has/or is considered to have the character, manners, or attainments of a child; especially a person of immature experience or judgment." The *OED* defines *literature* as "the body of writings produced in a particular country or period, or in the world in general. Now also in a more restricted sense applied to writing which has claim to consideration on the ground of beauty of form or emotional effect." And we might be able to come up with a few different definitions of both *children* and *literature* in addition to those I have mentioned here. Both words are multi-faceted and complex, and the disparity of critical opinion that exists is compounded because we lack a clear set of rules or definitions of terms that would be appropriate when discussing children's literature, so it does seem fair to say that children's literature is an amorphous category.

In her essay "Essentials: What is Children's Literature? What is Childhood?" Karin Lesnik-Oberstein contends that children's literature is a label which "cannot be separated ... and then reassembled to achieve a greater understanding of what 'children's literature' is. [Rather] the two terms totally qualify each other and transform each other's meaning for the purposes of the field" (16). Torben Weinrich echoes this point, claiming: "when we combine the words children and literature ... we do not merely have the sum of the two elements, we have a new gestalt" (4). It would ap-

pear that both Weinrich and Lesnik-Oberstein have been influenced by Peter Hunt, considering a remark in the foreword for his 1999 book, *Understanding Children's Literature*: "If the word 'literature' presents obvious problems, the word 'children' proves to be equally slippery" (4). Hunt calls for a clarification of terms. If we follow our instincts (or the scientific method), the first thing most of us will do when asked to describe something is to rule out what it is not. So by virtue of its label then, is it fair to say that children's literature is not adult literature? On this, Hunt cautions: "If we judge children's books ... by the same value systems as we use for adult books ... they are bound by definition to emerge as lesser ..." (4). When something is considered lesser, more often than not it becomes secondary, along with the reputations of the authors who pen these books. The discrimination only mounts when you include all of the readers and critics, who by virtue of popularity become inferior to the readers and critics of non-children's literature, especially in the world of academia, where studying children's literature is frequently seen as sophomoric. Adjectives such as *other* and *different* should not be used when determining worth, but they can be employed to allow children's literature access into the realm of the Alien Genres.

If we agree that children's books are written *for* children, is it appropriate for adults to define the category? Who is an adult anyway? The *OED* defines *adult* as "a grown-up, having reached the age of maturity." Ok, fair enough, but what does maturity suggest? The *OED* defines *mature* as a person "complete in natural development or growth." This is an ambiguous definition; I know plenty of adults who, physically, are full grown, but have a long way to go in the maturity department, just as I know some children who are mature for their age, though they are not yet fully grown. So here not only is the idea of childhood amorphous, it would seem that the period of adulthood is equally vague. But here is where the dilemma lies. Typically, the people most interested in defining children's literature are alien readers: literary critics, early childhood educators, librarians, and parents—in a word, adults—which clearly leaves out the most important group of people for this sub-genre, the intended audience of children. As adults, we have a more difficult time reading children's literature, especially those of us trained in the arts of analysis and interpretation, mainly because our sense of imagination is tainted by years of "grown-up" activity. We often have a hard time suspending rationality, even when dealing with a work of fiction. So how can we decide upon a working definition if we, as adults, attempt to create a set of criteria that neglects to incorporate what a child thinks about children's literature?

Many of us are probably familiar with *The Narnia Chronicles*, having read them (or listened to them) as children, and some of us may even be lucky enough to have re-read them in our adulthood, whether for personal reading pleasure, or to a special child in our lives. Those of us who have re-read the *Chronicles* can testify to the fact that these fantasy tales get better and better each time around, and might agree with Lewis that for adults, alien readers, if you will, the experience of reading children's literature is often much more engaging and rewarding than reading a

work of adult fiction. Defending his decision to create stories that modeled the plot structure and archetypal representations of characters both good and evil, human and non-human, Lewis declares: "I wrote fairy tales because the fairy tale seemed the ideal form for what I had to say" ("Fairy Stories" 37). Lewis describes this ideal form as "the form which certain ideas and images in my mind seemed to demand" (*Letters* 307). It can be argued that Lewis uses the fairy tale platform to lay a firm foundation for what Tolkien calls "a secondary world" in his essay "On Fairy Stories" (48). By asking the reader to enter into this "secondary world," the author must employ the elements of fantasy in order to create a "willing suspension of disbelief," whereby the reader will put aside her knowledge of the "real" or "primary world" in order to participate in the action of the fantasy world, which is necessary for the success of the story ("Fairy Stories" 37). Tolkien and Lewis would agree that children benefit by reading fantasy stories, and as long as the story is good, adults will too. Lewis believes that "the Fantastic o[r] Mythical is a Mode available at all ages to some readers ... [and] it can give us experiences we have never had and thus, instead of 'commenting on life,' can add to it" ("Fairy Stories" 38).

Using one of his most popular *Narnia* chronicles, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, as an example, we immediately notice that the tale commences *in medias res*, which adheres to the typical "Once upon a time," a conventional epic element common to many fairy tales. The first paragraph of chapter one, "Lucy Looks into a Wardrobe," describes in great detail the setting and situation of the four main protagonists:

Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy. This story is about something that happened to them when they were sent away from London during the air-raids. They were sent to the house of an old professor who lived in the Heart of the country, ten miles from the nearest railway station and two miles from the nearest post-office. (111)

For the child reader, this is a straightforward passage that introduces the characters who will likely be the most important and quickly summarizes the recent events, resulting in the relocation of the four Pevensie children to the safety of the professor's house. For the alien reader, though, there are multiple layers of meaning. I might recognize the four children as being synonymous with the four elements or the four seasons, seeing in them their archetypal characteristics. I might automatically associate the countryside with the enchanted fairy tale forest where mythical creatures dwell, and my instincts will be rewarded when I meet the faun, the first character Lucy encounters after traversing the boundary between the "primary" and "secondary" world via the magical "Wardrobe." By this time, Lucy has become the first-person narrator of her tale, the focalizer, or the perspective from which the reader views the situation and events of the story. This tactic works well in children's books, because a child can identify best with another child. When the reader is able to understand the

action of the main character, it becomes easy for the reader to enter into the “secondary world” and vicariously experience everything that Lucy does; and when the reader willingly accepts wacky weather and weird characters, it is because the author has successfully created a willing suspension of disbelief.

Children’s literature is most commonly recognized as a work that appeals to children because it is on a level that they can comprehend and identify with. It is written in a language that is on par with a child’s vocabulary, broken down into chapters of uniform length with individual titles and illustrations, and almost always asks the reader to believe in other things that exist outside of reality. We can look at children’s literature in terms of the implied child reader, which seems to be the only element that differentiates children’s literature from adult literature. Lesnik-Oberstein also argues that children’s literature “absolutely depends on supposed relationships with a particular reading audience: children” (15). I support this claim and disagree with Zipes, who maintains that “there is no such thing as children’s literature, or for that matter, children” (40). How can a man who denies the existence of children be taken seriously as a critic in the field of children’s literature?

Perhaps if Jack Zipes took heed of Tolkien’s and Lewis’s advice, he would be able to strip off the critic costume in order to fully participate with any one of the many fairy tales he discusses throughout his works, and enter into a secondary world where he might rekindle some of his own lost innocence. This is at least what I find most rewarding when reading a children’s book. This is not escapism in a negative sense of the word, but rather a connection with the imagination in the spirit of exploration and discovery. If we as adults can agree that we have certain responsibilities towards our children, we can use children’s literature to assist in the cultivation of these young, rapidly maturing minds, by exposing them to the experiences, adventures, and, yes, lessons too of the characters that inhabit the fantasy worlds of Alien Genres.

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## The Importance of Story, Fantasy, and Myth Retold in Lewis and Tolkien

*Matthew Nickel*

C. S. Lewis concludes his book *Experiment on Criticism* by saying: “The man who is contented to be only himself, and therefore less a self, is in prison. My own eyes are not enough for me, I will see through those of others” (140).

Lewis differentiates between good readers and bad readers, defining the good reader as the one who can journey along with the hero of the story. The good reader will make choices and judgment calls, and the good reader will often be wrong in his or her decision, for it is through error that we may learn best. Good readers also understand the important aspect of the story, which in fantasy is likely to be magic. Enchantment or magic depends on the author’s ability to create a secondary world with an “inner consistency of reality” (*Tree and Leaf* 45) that awakens the desire in the reader to be in that created land. Magic acts as a spell on the reader and usually originates from place. Lewis comments on the importance of place when he explains why he disliked certain books: “*The Three Musketeers* makes no appeal to me at all. The total lack of atmosphere repels me. There is no country in the book ... there is no weather” (*Of Other Worlds* 7). Tolkien writes about the same subjects in his essay “On Fairy Stories,” defining fantasy for what it does: “Fairy-stories were plainly not primarily concerned with possibility, but with desirability. If they awakened desire ... they often succeeded” (*Tree and Leaf* 39). The land that was desirable for Tolkien was the land of Faerie, the perilous realm, the places with dragons and forests and foreign people with an archaic language. If there is a place, the reader will be given the chance to journey through that place, and as the reader experiences that place, he or she will grow.

The stories I am interested in are retellings, especially those of Lewis in his *Chronicles of Narnia*. Though Narnia may not have a strong inner consistency of reality as does Middle-earth, because Narnia’s stories are retellings as children’s stories, the reader still has the opportunity to grow from the text. Perhaps it is our fault as adult readers that we assume children will not grasp the lack of consistency in Narnia when, for instance, Father Christmas comes to give out gifts to the children, but Lewis’s goal was not the same as Tolkien’s goal for a secondary world. Lewis wrote the seven Narnia books in seven years, while Tolkien spent his entire life on his secondary world, perfecting and making it true. Middle-earth is a world one can step into, while Lewis tells his stories for a different purpose. The way Lewis goes about retelling stories is in the form of supposals, as he calls it in *Experiment on Criticism*. Lewis creates a world called Narnia that contains universal verities, such as good and evil, honor and love. We are then to ask, suppose Narnia were true, what would happen? Well,



something very similar to what happened on earth happens in Narnia. Aslan, the supposal form of Christ in Narnia, dies on a stone table for the redemption of Narnia. This retelling in a slightly different way brings a newer view to an image we already thought we understood. Don T. Williams, in his paper at Mythcon 34, explained that the “Stone Table of Narnia sneaks up on us and gets under our skins, sending us back to the Cross with eyes newly opened.” Williams’s comment on how bogged down Christians might get as they read Genesis and try to defend it against theories of Natural Evolution reminds me of how in Lewis’s Sci-Fi novel *Perelandra* the Green Lady of Perelandra debates with the Unman and tries to make the best choice for her own un-fallen race; once again Lewis gives us a fresh story and new understanding. We are meant to take the supposals and retellings back to our own world, where we can now see from other perspectives, not merely our own. For instance, after reading *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, we have the perspective of Lucy, an imaginative and innocent little girl, and the perspective of Edmund, a lying, lazy, manipulative traitor, who is given a chance for redemption. It may seem too that when Aslan speaks to Edmund and Lucy in the end of *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* that Aslan is also speaking to us, the readers. Aslan reminds Lucy and Edmund that in their world Aslan has another name: “You must learn to know me by that name,” says Aslan; “This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there” (270).

So, according to Lewis, if we become good readers of good literature in which the author created a new world, we can enter that world and journey through it, opening our eyes, and when we put the book down, we should bring to our living world those things we gained in the created world, so that by knowing things in a fantasy world for a little, we will know those things better in our own world. When reading fantasy and mythological stories, good readers should discard provincial snobbery, especially that snobbery from those critics who cannot recognize that the past is connected to the present; epic literature may seem distant and cut off from us, may perhaps feel like an “absolute past” (Williams), but without the present existence of the epic past, there is no present, no virtue, honor, courage, truth, and goodness. It may seem that the genre of the novel finally tells the truth of things as they exist in what people call “reality,” but we must be wary of using that term “reality.” Tolkien showed us that though fantasy and fairy-tales may not seem to exist in our modern view of reality, they are essentially more real in spirit. This was a problem which Tolkien confronted in “On Fairy Stories” as he examined readers’ reactions to fantasy as escapism. It may seem that the so-called epic past, or “absolute past,” is an escape out of this world of poverty, factories, pollution, death, illness, rape, and murder; it may seem that virtue and good deeds, the strength of Roland’s sword, the glory of Dante’s vision, the companionship between two Hobbits are forms of escapism. But we must listen to Tolkien’s comments on this very subject: “The notion that motor-cars are more ‘alive’ than, say, centaurs or dragons is curious; that they are more ‘real’ than,

say, horses is pathetically absurd. How real, how startlingly alive is a factory chimney compared with an elm-tree; poor obsolete thing, insubstantial dream of an escapist" (*Tree and Leaf* 55).

Overall, we must be careful, as Williams reminds us, that though literature can expand our horizons and deepen our experience, if we are bad readers and we read as "aesthetes rather than humble receivers of the author's intent or as self-conscious pursuers rather than seekers of truth," there may be a horribly corruptive influence and misunderstanding of the benefits of certain stories. We must be careful as we analyze and read fantasy literature. Some authors wish to write about political issues or social issues, but not all authors, and we must understand the ones that do not wish for this and are first and foremost trying to tell a story.

Lewis claims: "literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality" (*Experiment on Criticism* 140). Literature, especially fantasy literature, also gives us the knowledge of ourselves in the present connected to the past. If we begin to believe in the verity of these myths, we may understand Tolkien when he writes: "History often resembles 'myth,' because they are both ultimately of the same stuff" (*Tree and Leaf* 31); this is similar to what Tolkien told Lewis as they discussed a tree:

You call a tree a tree, [Tolkien said], and you think nothing more of the word. But it was not a "tree" until someone gave it that name. You call a star a star, and say it is just a ball of matter moving on a mathematical course. But that is merely how *you* see it. By so naming things and describing them you are only inventing your own terms about them. And just as speech is invention about objects and ideas, so myth is invention about truth. (Carpenter 151)

That "stuff" of which both history and myth are made binds you and me to Ulysses and Aeneas and Parzival, to Jake Barnes, Samwise Gamgee, Aslan, and Digory Kirke; that "stuff" is what makes all of our individual souls a part of humanity, all the individual moments in space a part of the timeless woven fabric of this universe, and if we look at history, all the gods and kings and heroes, among them are the once nameless men with the world waiting.

I would like to conclude my paper with a passage from Tolkien's *The Two Towers* in which two of the once nameless men, or shall I say Hobbits, superficially discuss history and myth; essentially, they discuss the story, *The Lord of the Rings*, and the concept of story:

"I don't like anything here at all," said Frodo, "step or stone, breath or bone. Earth, air and water all seem accursed, but so our path is laid."

"Yes, that's so," said Sam. "And we shouldn't be here at all, if we'd known more about it before we started. But I suppose it's often that way. The brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr. Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them.

I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them, because they were exciting and life was a bit dull, a kind of a sport, as you might say. But that's not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually—their paths were laid that way, as you put it. But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know, because they'd have been forgotten. We hear about those as just went on—and not all to a good end, mind you; at least not to what folk inside a story and not outside it call a good end. You know, coming home, and finding things all right, though not quite the same—like old Mr. Bilbo. But those aren't always the best tales to hear, though they may be the best tales to get landed in! I wonder what sort of tale we've fallen into?"

"I wonder," said Frodo. "But I don't know. And that's the way of a real tale. Take any one that you're fond of. You may know, or guess, what kind of tale it is, happy-ending or sad-ending, but the people in it don't know. And you don't want them to."

"No, sir, of course not. Beren now, he never thought he was going to get that Silmaril from the Iron Crown in Thangorodrim, and yet he did, and that was a worse place and a blacker danger than ours. But that's a long tale, of course, and goes on past the happiness and into grief and beyond it—and the Silmaril went on and came to Eärendil. And why, sir, I never thought of that before! We've got—you've got some of the light of it in that star-glass that the Lady gave you! Why, to think of it, we're in the same tale still! It's going on. Don't the great tales never end?" (407-08)

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Serial Mom-nogamy:  
*Peter Pan* and the Search for a Mother-Figure

Danielle R. Bienvenue

In 1934 C. G. Jung published *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, in which he explained his theory that all people in all cultures share a collective unconscious, a psychic reservoir peopled with universal figures and situations called “archetypes.” Jung posits that these archetypes appear with relatively the same characteristics all over the world, and that we are born with these images already in our individual unconscious minds, or personal unconscious. Thirty years earlier, J. M. Barrie had written the Christmas play that would become the children’s novel modern audiences know as *Peter Pan*,<sup>1</sup> the story of three children from Edwardian England traveling into the dream-world all children share. Had Jung set out to write an allegorical novel describing his theory of archetypes, he could not have done a better job, for present in *Peter Pan* are illustrations of the collective unconscious and several of Jung’s major archetypes: the trickster, represented by Peter Pan, the anima, represented by Tinker Bell, and perhaps most important, the mother, aspects of which are present in several characters.

Jung writes in *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* that it is through the shadow that we enter the unconscious (316-17); fittingly, Peter’s shadow leads him to meet the Darling children and bring them to the Neverland, the physical representation of children’s imagination (Barrie 13). The Neverland Barrie describes is analogous to what Jung calls the “collective unconscious,” an inborn psychic reservoir that rests beneath the conscious mind and personal unconscious, and houses “contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals ... [called] archetypes, primordial types, that is with universal images that have existed since the remotest times” (*Archetypes* 299-301). Dreams are most commonly the access point to these contents of the collective unconscious, and dreaming children are near to Peter in the Neverland (Barrie 180). Barrie’s Neverland “is always more or less an island” (Barrie 13), that is, surrounded by water, which Jung calls, “the commonest symbol of the unconscious” (*Archetypes* 314). The Neverland, like the collective unconscious, is peopled with figures that, while not archetypes in the strictest Jungian sense, are archetypal: pirates and “redskins,” not as they truly are, but as children imagine them to be.

Wendy is one of the few characters in the novel who is not an archetypal representation, but rather a fully articulated character, a visitor to the Neverland from the “mainland,” Barrie’s word for the waking mind (112). Although she is a three-dimensional character, not to be reduced—or elevated—to the level of archetype, she is part of the overarching theme and perhaps most important archetype of the novel:

the mother. In *Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype*, Jung says that a mother's love "is one of the most moving and unforgettable memories of our lives, the mysterious root of all growth and change" (356). *Peter Pan* has much to say on the subject of mothers, and provides two examples of positive mother figures. Mrs. Darling, the true mother of the Darling children, is a loving, conscientious, and jubilant mother. Before Wendy and her brother are born, Mrs. Darling wants children so much that she is distracted from her other household duties (Barrie 8). Once the children are born, Mrs. Darling strives "to have everything just so," and engages a nurse for the children: Nana (10). Mrs. Darling also makes sure to "[tidy] up her children's minds," in order to box up "the naughtiness and evil passions" and "spread out [the] prettier thoughts, ready for [them] to put on" (12-13). Better still, Mrs. Darling plays with her children; when they have dances together, in which the servant girl, still a child herself, is invited to take part, Mrs. Darling is the "gayest of all" (12). Most importantly, Mrs. Darling's mother-love is unconditional and unprejudicial. The whole half-year the children are gone, Mrs. Darling leaves the nursery window open so that if they return, they know they are welcome to fly back in (220); when they do return with six lost boys in tow, Mrs. Darling adopts them all (226-27). Mrs. Darling possesses mother-love, Jung's "enormous burden of meaning, responsibility, duty, heaven and hell," which is somehow also the greatest of joys (*Mother Archetype* 356).

Another mother-figure comes in a less traditional package: Nana, the best nursemaid the Darlings can afford, is a Newfoundland dog (10). The Darlings recognize Nana as "a treasure of a nurse," though the other nurses at Wendy's school "[affect] to ignore her as of an inferior social status" (11). Nana is responsive to the children's minutest needs, has knowledge of folk remedies (11), chases Peter out of the nursery when he first appears, and knows the sensible thing to do with his shadow: "put it where he can get it easily without disturbing the children" (21). She also has an uncanny ability to sense when the children are in imminent danger, although her warnings go unheeded until it is too late (33, 49-51). While Mrs. Darling possesses mother-love, she lacks the practicality that Nana provides, so that while either of them alone would be a good mother, together they are the ideal.

While the "mainland," particularly England, is a place where mothers abound, the Neverland is a place without mothers. The lost boys reminisce about their mothers whenever Peter is away; they all miss their mothers and wish to have them back (80). When Wendy comes to be their mother, they build a house for her using the best things from their home under the ground (94), and when Wendy prepares to go home, they threaten to keep her as their prisoner rather than lose their mother (154-55). Although they enjoy the adventures of the Neverland, the lost boys yearn for a mother, and their primary goal within the novel is to live as the sons of a mother.

The lost boys are not the only motherless children on the island. The pirates' first plot against the lost boys relies on their not having a mother; Hook plans to leave a poisoned cake out where the boys can see it, knowing that "They will gobble

it up, because, having no mother, they will not know how dangerous 'tis to eat rich damp cake" (84-85). When the other pirates learn, with dismay, that the lost boys have found a mother and their plot will not work, Smee is at first wholly ignorant of what a mother is (122). When Hook explains to him what it means to have a mother, Smee immediately understands the importance of having one and at once spots his opportunity: "'Captain,' sa[ys] Smee, 'could we not kidnap the boys' mother and make her our mother?'" (122-23). When he ties Wendy to the mast to watch the lost boys walk the plank, Smee whispers, "I'll save you if you promise to be my mother" (191). He is willing to sacrifice the camaraderie of the pirate life to have a mother. Hook, too, is affected by the presence of a mother on the ship. As he prepares to make the lost boys walk the plank, Hook becomes aware that "the intensity of his communings [has] soiled his ruff, and suddenly he kn[ows] that she [is] gazing at it. With a hasty gesture, he trie[s] to hide it, but he [is] too late" (191). When Wendy looks at him with contempt, Hook "nearly faint[s]" (191).

Even to the villains of the piece, a mother is vitally important. She is so important, in fact, that in the absence of a more suitable mother, Smee unwittingly serves as the mother of the pirate ship. He does the pirates' sewing and Hook finds the sound of the sewing machine "agreeable" (183). Smee is also able to "[touch] the fount of Hook's tears and ma[ke] it flow" (183). Smee is the lovable figure on board the pirate ship whom the pirates need. Even the lost boys love Smee, and Smee is affectionate toward them, as well. Although he "sa[ys] horrid things to them," he "hit[s] them with the palm of his hand, because he c[an] not hit them with his fist" (187). Smee is blissfully unaware of his effect on the children, but he is the unwitting pirate mother nonetheless.

The other surrogate mother in the Neverland, Wendy, is perhaps less successful than Smee because she is so acutely aware of her role. From the moment she meets Peter, Wendy assumes the role of adult and puts Peter in the role of child. She first addresses him as "Boy" (37), and then as "my little man," despite the fact that "he [is] as tall as herself" (39). In their conversation, Wendy plays the grown-up trying to draw Peter out like a shy child and simultaneously using language that belittles him. She first introduces herself as "Wendy Moira Angela Darling," and when Peter gives his name, "Peter Pan," she replies, "Is that all?" (37). Immediately, Peter feels himself to be Wendy's inferior, "fe[eling] for the first time that it [is] a shortish name" (38). Wendy asks Peter other questions he cannot satisfactorily answer about his address and age (38-41). Wendy thinks it is tragic that Peter has no mother (38), and it seems that she is the one who first hatches the plan of being Peter's mother. When he is about to fly home, having learned the ending of the story he came to hear, Wendy stops him: "Don't go, Peter,' she entreat[s], 'I know such lots of stories'" (47). The narrator comments, "These were her precise words, so there can be no denying that it was she who first tempted him" (47). Although Peter ultimately lures the children away to Neverland (53-54), it is Wendy who plants the seed.

Wendy's maternal qualities seem less to be the profound love and responsibility Jung describes and more an enforcement of what she perceives to be the rules of motherhood. When she arrives in Neverland, Wendy "love[s] to give [the boys] medicine" (157), to make them rest for a half-hour after they eat before allowing them to go swimming (116), and to do the mending, while periodically exclaiming, "Oh dear, I am sure I sometimes think spinsters are to be envied" (107). Her steadfastness in adhering to her "rule about half an hour after the midday meal" nearly gets the lost boys killed in their sleep by pirates, as she chooses not to wake the boys early from their rest when she hears the pirates' approach (117). Michael, too, suffers under Wendy's maternal instincts; she "must have somebody in a cradle" (143), so Michael, as the smallest of the lost boys, is made to play the role of baby and sleep in a basket hung from the ceiling (105-06). Indeed, Wendy seems not to be a mother-figure, but rather to have what Jung calls a mother-complex, which "leads to a hypertrophy of the feminine side" (*Mother Archetype* 351). This mother-complex can help illuminate Wendy's rather confused idea of Peter's role in the home under the ground. While at first, Wendy is meant to be Peter's mother, he somehow becomes for her the lost boys' father, a role that makes him intensely uncomfortable (145). Wendy's interest in Peter is confusing; she mothers him like the other lost boys (157), but at the same time seems to have romantic feelings for him that he is unable to understand (145). Shortly after Wendy and Peter fully realize the confusion of their situation, they realize that Wendy, John, and Michael must go home to their real mother (153-54). As a child, Wendy is not capable of making the sacrifices and mature decisions that are part of a mother's role; ultimately, she must return to Mrs. Darling and grow up before she can be a real, adequate mother to her own daughter, Jane (234).

In *Peter Pan*, J. M. Barrie depicts an Edwardian culture so preoccupied with growing up that everyone must either grow up too quickly or not at all. The terror associated with growing up leads the lost boys to refuse to grow up, and their refusal forces Smee and Wendy to take on unnatural roles to strike a balance. They are mother-figures, but not true mothers. Barrie portrays the child's need for both the archetypal mother and the time to be a child.

## Notes

1. Barrie wrote several versions of the Peter Pan story, beginning with the 1904 Christmas play, which was followed by the 1911 novel entitled *Peter and Wendy*. This essay is concerned with the novel-version of the story published under the title *Peter Pan*.

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## The Marriage of Elf and Man: Unifying Immortal and Mortal in Tolkien's Mythology

*Michael Beilfuss*

On the surface, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* seems to be about Frodo's quest to destroy the ring of power. However, if we were to delve deeper into Tolkien's Middle-earth, we would see that there are other larger themes being worked out, namely the end of what Tolkien called the "Third Age," the beginning of the dominion of men, and the third and final marriage of immortal Elves and mortal Men.

Although *The Silmarillion* never saw print during Tolkien's lifetime, it is an indispensable book for those who wish to understand the depth and breadth of Tolkien's mythology. In it are narrated the other two marriages of Elves and Men, and another interesting union between a Maia (an angel who helped in the creation of the world) and an Elf. Within, and surrounding, the stories of those marriages are narrated some of the greatest deeds committed in Tolkien's Middle-earth. Elves and Men each have their own distinct weaknesses and faults, but when they unite through love, the best and purest attributes of the two races are combined and handed down to the next generation. In the final marriage of Elf and Man, Arwen makes the supreme sacrifice, giving up her immortality in the name of love, and thus she reintroduces Elven blood into the line of mortal kings.

In a letter to his editor, Tolkien explained that in his mythology "a recurrent theme is the idea that in Men (as they now are) there is a strand of 'blood' and inheritance, derived from the Elves, and that the art and poetry of men is largely dependent on it, or modified by it" (*Silmarillion* xvi). The marriage of Aragorn and Arwen at the end of *The Lord of the Rings* was not an event contrived by Tolkien for a convenient happy ending; it marks the pinnacle moment in Tolkien's mythology when a new world order begins. In the movie trilogy Peter Jackson does a good job of highlighting the importance of the relationship between Aragorn and Arwen.

But Tolkien's *The Hobbit* came long before he had any thought of the couple. The instant success of the book left readers, and Tolkien's publishers, clamoring for more tales about Hobbits. In response Tolkien mailed his publisher a bundle of his writings, a mythology that he had been working on since his childhood. Included in the bundle was the material that now makes up *The Silmarillion*. As Deborah and Ivan Rogers note in their book on Tolkien, "Myths tell of many things: The cosmos; the world, its elements, its creatures; mankind; gods; beginning; ending" (29). *The Silmarillion* covers all those things. However, at the center of the book is the story of three jewels, the Silmarils, the jewels that caused all manner of war, death, destruction, and fratricide, but also motivated acts of heroism and courage—often committed by the characters involved in the Elf-Man unions. However, Tolkien seems to have an-

anticipated his publisher's rejection of *The Silmarillion*, writing at the time: "I did want to know whether any of the stuff had any exterior or non-personal value" (Carpenter 59). Tolkien was relieved that someone was, in fact, interested in the mythology he had been creating since he was a young boy, and in which he had so much invested. Now Tolkien had encouragement to revisit Middle-earth, and the creatures known as Hobbits. He began writing without knowing what was going to happen. He discovered along the way how Hobbits fit into the great affairs of Elves and Men.

When Tolkien finally completed the *Lord of the Rings*, he felt that *The Silmarillion* should be published "in conjunction or in connection" with the *Lord of the Rings*, "as one long saga of the Jewels and the Rings" (*Silmarillion* x). Tolkien's biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, contends that "*The Lord of the Rings* was not so much a sequel to *The Hobbit* as a sequel to *The Silmarillion*" (65). In a letter to his editor Tolkien explained what role the *Silmarillion* played in his mythology, writing that:

The chief of the stories of *The Silmarillion* ... is the story of *Beren and Lúthien the Elfmaiden*. Here we meet ... the first example of the motive (to become dominant in Hobbits) that the great policies of world history, 'the wheels of the world,' are often turned not by the Lords and Governors, even gods, but by the seemingly unknown and weak. (*Silmarillion* xvii)

Examples of these "seemingly unknown and weak" include the couples of the "outlaw" Men and Elfmaidens, discussed in this essay. The story of the final coupling of Elf and Man begins when the twenty-year-old Aragorn first meets Arwen. After the death of his father, Aragorn's mother brought him to Elrond, who "took the place of his father and came to love him as a son of his own" (*Rings* 1032). Elrond also acted as tutor, teaching him the lore of the land, warfare, and healing. After Aragorn proved himself in battle, side by side with Elrond's sons (who were approximately 3,000 years older than he was), Elrond gave him the shards of a sword that signified that he was heir of the throne of Gondor. But Elrond withheld the Sceptre until Aragorn could prove that he was worthy of the kingship of men. The day after receiving the tokens of kingship, Aragorn meets Arwen. Here we might ask what exactly can a 2,700-year-old elf maiden see in a twenty-year-old man? Well at first, she sees nothing. But that is not so for Aragorn, who falls immediately and deeply in love with her. In the appendix of *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien describes the encounter between Aragorn and Arwen. Upon seeing a vision of an "Elfmaiden walking on a greensward," Aragorn cries out, "Tinúviel, Tinúviel" (*Rings* 1033), the Elven word for "nightingale," and the same words the outlaw man Beren had cried thousands of years before when he first met the Elfmaiden Lúthien (*Silmarillion* 165).

The two episodes clearly resemble each other, with setting, time, and description nearly identical. But the similarities of their first encounters are not the only connections Aragorn and Arwen have with Beren and Lúthien. To see the other connection we have to turn to the genealogy.

Arwen's father, Elrond, and his brother Elros, Aragorn's forefather, were descendants of Beren and Lúthien. Lúthien, in turn, was the child of another interesting union in Tolkien's mythology. She was the daughter of Elwë, an elf, and Melian, one of the Maiar, angelic beings that assisted in the creation of Middle-earth. Gandalf, Sauron, and the Balrogs are Maiar that came to Middle-earth later. Melian, on the other hand, was one of the earliest of Maiar, older even than the earth itself. After the creation of Middle-earth she came and dwelled in its forests. Her first meeting with the elf Elwë echoes the meeting of Beren and Lúthien and of Aragorn and Arwen. Elwë first sees Melian while walking through the same forest where Beren and Lúthien later meet. Elwë hears the song of the nightingale, the song that Melian taught them. Remember, nightingale translates to "Tinúviel" in Elven speech. When Elwë finds her singing in the forest, he becomes "enchanted" (*Silmarillion* 55). They take each other's hands and immediately fall deeply in love. With this union, something of a divinity is passed on to their daughter, Lúthien, and hence on to the successive generations of Middle-earth, including both Aragorn and Arwen. But a sort of template of true, everlasting, and deep love is also created.

Elwë and Melian establish a kingdom in the forest of Neldoreth. Melian sets a cloud around the forest that prevents any outsiders from discovering it. In the mean time, Beren, after the death of his father, wanders around Middle-earth much as Aragorn does millennia later. Eventually Beren "passed through the mazes that Melian wove about the kingdom" and there he met Lúthien; Tolkien explains that "as she looked upon him, doom fell upon her, and she loved him ... being immortal she shared in his mortality, and being free received his chain" (*Silmarillion* 163-64). However, her father Elwë, the potential father-in-law from hell, sends Beren on an impossible quest to retrieve a Silmaril that is locked in the iron crown of Morgoth, Sauron's predecessor (164-68).

After much travail, with the assistance of Lúthien, Beren succeeds in his quest and marries Lúthien, but then is mortally wounded. Lúthien becomes so distraught that she dies of grief. Finally she is given a choice: she can return to her people and live life as an Elf, "forgetting all griefs that her life had known" (163), or she and Beren could return to Middle-earth, and live their lives as mortals. Lúthien chooses to return to Middle-earth to live with Beren (185-87). The couple has a son, Dior, who inherits Elwë's kingdom and the Silmaril, which eventually becomes the morning and evening star, a sign of hope for Elves and Men on Middle-earth.

Dior's grandsons, Elrond and his brother Elros, are also given the choice to be counted as Elves or Men. Elrond chooses to remain an Elf, while Elros becomes a Man. Tolkien writes, "From these brethren alone come among Men the blood of the Firstborn [the Elves], and a strain of the spirits divine that were before Arda [the Earth]" (254). Elrond lives over 6,000 years and establishes a colony in Rivendell. Elros, on the other hand, begins a long line of great mortal kings. While the bloodline continues unbroken, from father to son, the strength of men dwindles, and loses some

of the majesty of the Elves in its blood. The kingdoms of men falter and fade until the marriage of Aragorn and Arwen.

When Elrond discovers that Aragorn is in love with his daughter, he assumes the role of reluctant father-in-law. The time of Elves is ending. If Arwen married Aragorn, she would have to leave her people, and live her life as a mortal. Aragorn must live up to his heritage and prove his worth in order for Elrond to approve of the marriage. He tells Aragorn, “that by my loss the kingship of Men may be restored. Therefore, though I love you, I say to you: Arwen . . . shall not diminish her life’s grace for less cause. She shall not be the bride of any man less than the King” (*Rings* 1036). Aragorn does become king and Arwen chooses to share the same fate as the man she loves. This final marriage of Elf and Man reunites a bloodline that was divided between Elrond and Elros, and serves to reintroduce something of the majesty of the Elves into the rulers of Men. Arwen, the last Elf in Middle-earth, fulfills a tradition of unions, which began some 7,000 years before with her and Aragorn’s forefathers and mothers.

Tolkien has said that when he was first writing *The Lord of the Rings*, he was puzzled when he stumbled upon the dark mysterious man named Aragorn. But as he continued to write the story, he must have discovered the capstone to his life’s work. Finally, we must turn to biographical information to see how personal Tolkien’s work was. Rogers and Rogers explain that after World War I Tolkien and his wife would go for walks in the country. His wife Edith “sang and danced in a glade of hemlock flowers . . . Tolkien’s feelings of having been lost and then finding the loveliest thing on earth crystallized round this image” (20). We see this image occur three times in Tolkien’s Middle-earth, involving some of the most important characters he wrote about. Rogers writes that in Tolkien’s “own life [he] was familiar with the stern deferment of a marriage; not only he and Edith, but his own parents, had had to defer their wedding by the order of a father” (89). And lastly consider this: Rogers and Rogers report that on Tolkien and his wife’s gravestones, the words *Beren* and *Lúthien* are engraved. Although Tolkien doubted that *The Silmarillion* could work as a sequel to *The Hobbit*, he sent it to his editor to see “whether any of the stuff had any exterior or non-personal value.” Encouraged by his editor and a reviewer, he began writing the *The Lord of the Rings*, which is as much about the “Return of the King” and the final marriage of Elf and Man, as it is about Frodo and the destruction of the Ring of Power. The stories of Melian and Elwë, Beren and Lúthien, and Aragorn and Arwen are not just tales of the marriages of spirits and Elves, of immortals and mortals; they are stories that must have been very dear to Tolkien’s heart, for they are stories of love and the courage and sacrifice that love can inspire.

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The Darkness Inside:  
Black Holes Within and Without

*Tim Gilmore*

There are a lot of dreadful things in the world, but none is more dreadful than man.

—*Antigone*

The film *Event Horizon* is essentially a haunted house story set in space. Its stellar setting functions immediately to de-realize viewers and place them in an unknown, alien territory that aids in the construction of the uncanny effect so important to horror. Horror effectively turns the everyday into the disturbingly unreal and thus terrifying. As an instantiation of the sci-fi/horror genre of film, and in particular that of the haunted house, *Event Horizon* invokes all the standard tropes, such as strange voices just barely heard; blood running in egregious quantities from the walls to inundate the characters, thus rendering them horrible in appearance; loud banging noises; an unknown source seeking to break down doors; the character who becomes the prime target of possession by the malignant force; etc. But *Event Horizon* is much more than another standard horror flick capitalizing upon the ambiguous virtues of scientific rationality and progress. It is, indeed, an acute exploration of the horrible and an excellent introduction to the mysteries of the subject's relation to the Lacanian Real. As the hermetic maxim states, "As above, so below," and if we look closely at the film, we will be able to determine in what manner this maxim applies and to what degree it brings the darkness of the subject into greater illumination.

For those unfamiliar with the film in question, the plot may be summed up quickly. In the not too distant future, a rescue ship is sent out to the orbit of Neptune in order to investigate the source of a distress signal. The source of this signal, though, is the ship whose name gives us the film's title. As the name suggests, this ship is an experimental vessel containing a radical form of propulsion that opens a controlled black hole into which the ship enters and is transported immense distances in very little time. The problem is that when this vessel attempted to use its drive it disappeared without a trace, until now. So the rescue crew, accompanied by the scientist who created it, finds and boards the ship and discovers no life forms, only a strange, diffuse bio-reading that permeates the entire ship. Immediately, the fun begins. Strange things begin to happen. Dr. Weir, the creator, is slowly possessed and the crew are all subjected to a variety of abuses. Their rescue ship is destroyed by the crazed Dr. Weir, and ultimately the three survivors are discovered after the Captain sacrifices himself to blow up the connecting compartment between the living quarters and the engineering section of the ship, so as to prevent them all from being sucked into the

dimension to which the ship has penetrated via the gravity drive and which is the source of all the problems.

But just what is this dimension that the gravity drive opens a gateway to by way of the black hole? The answer to this question is given by Dr. Weir at the end of the film, after he has become possessed by the ship: "I created the Event Horizon to reach the stars, but she's gone much, much farther than that. She tore a hole in our universe, a gateway to another dimension, a dimension of pure chaos, pure evil." Well, that can't be good. As rational human beings, the majority of us tend to have a natural aversion to the chaotic; some people go so far in seeking to cover over the contingent that they suffer from a variety of psychic disorders. But is it possible that all of us, as subjects, have our subjectivity founded upon a certain evasion, an attempt to cope with a fundamental lack that makes itself known regardless of how stable our reality may seem?

Lacan asserts that reality itself is infused with the effects of our desire and the fantasy space in which it is staged. This fantasy staging of desire is not the fulfillment of desire, but rather the manner in which desire is constructed and made real for the subject. As Slavoj Žižek says, "it is precisely the role of fantasy to give the coordinates of the subject's desire, to specify its object, to locate the position the subject assumes in it" (6). What is constituted through the staging of desire is a complex dynamic that circulates around the avoidance of the goal of desire. The true goal of desire is, in fact, the avoidance of its fulfillment and thus its perpetuation as desire. The circuit of desire, then, circles what Lacan designated as the *objet a*. The *objet a* is the object-cause of desire; it is both object and cause of desire, but it is a cause only retroactively constructed by desire. It is the black hole at the center of desire, the nothing that begets something. The entire circuit of desire, with its process of constructing aims and placing demands, is an elaborate structure of evasion that acts to cover over the traumatic kernel at the heart of the subject, the fundamental absence that acts to produce the circuit of desire that gives substance to the subject's reality through distorting it. What we take to be reality is an effect of the distortion of desire within objective reality, maintaining, according to Žižek, "a fragile equilibrium that can be destroyed at any moment if, in a quite contingent and unpredictable way, trauma erupts" (17).

Now, what could be more traumatic than the complete tearing away of space and time as one enters into the in-between place opened by a black hole? When the crew deciphers the ship's log, they discover just what effect such an event has upon the subject. What they see are images of a most gruesome nature showing the unfortunate crew members literally tearing themselves and each other apart in activities that would make the most ardent adherent of S&M cringe. They have been reduced to berserk psychotics. I would like to explain, based upon what has been said about the structure of desire, just why this is so.

In Lacan's later work, he began to develop a topological model of the subject around the Borromean knot (three interlocking circles) in order to conceptualize the

manner in which the three registers of the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real relate to one another and generate various permutations of the symptom, a new symptomatology. The symptom can be superficially understood as the tactic by which the subject addresses the inner void of the *objet a* and covers it over. It is an encoding of the unconscious unknown to the subject, yet crucial to its functioning. In the topology of the Borromean knot, Lacan was able to diagnose the patient's illness through reference to the point in the knot where the symptom filled the gap through which the inner void made itself known. The symptom, then, is the particular form in which the fantasy of the subject manifests as a response to the demands placed upon desire in order to avoid the real of desire: the *objet a*. Lacan's Borromean speculations led him to conceive of the knot not as a model of the subject so much as an approach to the real, to the *objet a* inscribed in the knot's middle section. Therefore, contained within this force field of the subject is the potentially destructive and chaotic libidinal force of the drives, what may be understood another way as Schopenhauer's pure will in nature, the Thing-in-itself. If the knot holding the subject together were to be severed, say by defying the laws of physics and penetrating directly into the real through the space-time that structures our perception of the universe, the libidinal force of the drives would be unleashed in all their chaotic power, and the subject, divested of the socializing forces invested in the semiotic, would simply act out in a pure, unchecked *jouissance* that would lead to its destruction. We see this in the highly eroticized destructive activity depicted on the ship's log, where, for example, one crew member sexually brutalizes another while flaying his back.

Rather than simply a negative element, as some would suggest, fantasy, as a product and producer of desire, represents the productive, positive force of the *objet a* made real in order to maintain the stability of the subject. One can only bear too much of the real for so long, as Rilke suggested when he said that "every angel is terrible." Thus, the threshold between the objective and phantasmatic elements of reality "is precisely what prevents us from sliding into psychosis," because, as Žižek reminds us, "The emergence of language opens up a hole in reality, and this hole shifts the axis of our gaze. Language redoubles 'reality' into itself and the void of the Thing that can be filled out only by an anamorphic gaze from aside" (13). We must tend our barrier well, then, and respect the limits imposed upon us that give us shape, for "far from being a sign of 'madness,' the barrier separating the real from reality is therefore the very condition of a minimum of 'normalcy': 'madness' (psychosis) sets in when this barrier is torn down, when the real overflows reality ... or when it is itself included in reality" (Žižek 20).

When the crew member Justin stands before the open gateway, faced with the black hole, his fascination and curiosity lead him to cross the threshold. It is interesting to note that the gravity drive that produces the contained black hole is composed of a center core bounded by three rings generating three magnetic fields, an image that should remind one of the trinity and the mystery indicated at its heart. When



they no longer circle one another and come into alignment, the black hole is opened. It is before this gateway that Justin stands just after boarding the Event Horizon. What he is faced with, idiotically puts his finger in, and ultimately gets sucked into, is a dark formless goop that pulsates and ripples at his touch. As Žižek asks in relation to another instance of the same phenomenon in Heinlein's story "The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag," "what is it if not the Lacanian real, the pulsing of the pre-symbolic substance in its abhorrent vitality?" (14-15). Given the structural homology between the gravity drive and the libidinal drive, it is possible to suggest that what Justin is sucked into is the inner void of the real writ large.

At several points in the film, we are given important shots of the gravity drive's penumbra reflected in the pupil of one of the crew. What this image implies is the analogy I have been suggesting between the black hole and the inner darkness of the subject, what I have been calling the *objet a*. This reflection of the one in the other evokes the Lacanian split between the eye and the gaze. The eye of the subject looks out upon the world, which in turn gazes back at the subject. As Lacan puts it, "I see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides" (72). This gaze is aptly caught reflected in the eye's dark center because, according to Lacan, "the gaze I encounter ... is, not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other" (84). The gaze is the externalization, or externally recognized mark, of the place of the big Other, or the unconscious. Considering that the desire of which we have been speaking is fundamentally the desire of the Other, that one's desire is always a product of one's position in the symbolic and its unconscious investment, we may begin to understand why the ship is able to play with its crew. Having been through the ordeal of penetrating space-time with its crew, the ship, as Stark says, brought something back with it, namely, an ability to make real that which it finds in the unconscious mind. It literally embodies the desire of the Other and becomes, to borrow a phrase from Lacan, "a sort of desire *on the part of* the Other, at the end of which is the *showing*" (115). What the ship shows Peters, whose eye had only moments before reflected the gravity drive, is the ill son whom she has had guilty feelings about throughout the film. As Lacan asks, "How could this *showing* satisfy something, if there is not some appetite of the eye on the part of the person looking?" (115). Her appetite for this showing leads to her death and leads me to ask whether we all might have a sort of twisted appetite for the perverse and terrible, which would explain people's enjoyment of horror movies.

This showing of unconscious elements best left repressed is important to the effect of the movie and its exploration of the real. If we accept that the real and its potential horrors are of what is in us but more than us, then we may understand more clearly the analogy between the black hole within and that without. Faced with his own repressed guilt complex, Captain Miller is provoked to say, "This ship knows my fears, my secrets. It gets inside your head and it shows you." When the eye and gaze coincide, what we get is a transgression of the normal limits of perception and

understanding, a flirtation with the event horizon, with the limits of what may be signified, and forces that threaten our very being. Poor, unfortunate Justin is the one crew member who has the dubious pleasure of crossing that limit, and the results are interesting.

When Justin is pulled back through the gateway, he is in a coma. When he finally comes out of the coma, he is found standing like a zombie in the sealed airlock. In response to their entreaties for him to come out of the airlock, he replies, “If you knew what I’ve seen, you wouldn’t try and stop me.” He then goes on to tell them that “It shows you things, horrible things.” “What does?” asks Peters. “The dark inside me from the other place,” Justin replies. Having crossed over, Justin has been confronted with the darkness inside of him, an experience that all human activity seeks to avoid, yet remains terribly fascinated by, and as a result he opens the outside door of the airlock. His attempt to tear himself apart through decompression mirrors the fact that his soul has already been torn apart in that other place of which he speaks. His entrance into the place of the Other entails the conflation of the eye and gaze, meaning that he has seen through the gaze with his own eye. He has looked upon the world with the gaze of the real, a gaze that does not need eyes to see. As Dr. Weir says, after having torn out his own eyes and begun the process of sending the ship back to the dimension of chaos, “Where we’re going we won’t need eyes to see.”

The true horror of the film resides in its assertion that what is truly dreadful is what is most intimately hidden in our hearts and minds. The last century alone has given us enough to know just how capable human beings are of making a hell out of heaven. We are like the people in *Hellraiser*, whose insatiable curiosity for the forbidden and perverse leads us to play with the gateway to hell, and still be surprised when the demons we unleash tell us they will tear our souls apart. This imp of the perverse, as Poe so cleverly saw it, acts as an intimate alien within us, leading us to do that which we know we should not. Fortunately, we have horror films, so, as we peek between our fingers at the screen, we may satisfy at second hand the murderer we all contain inside. The unavoidable truth of this assertion is found when looking into our eye in the mirror or staring into the eye of the other, into their traumatic alterity. What we see staring out at us from the center of such beautiful color is the dark inside of us, into whose depths Hegel too saw, prompting him to write:

Man is this night, this pure nothing that contains everything in its simplicity, a realm endlessly rich in representations and images.... In phantasmagoric representations he is surrounded by night; suddenly a bloody head juts forth here, there another white figure, and just as suddenly they disappear. One glimpses this night when one looks into the eyes of another human—into a night, which becomes frightening; here each of us is suspended confronting the night of the world. (qtd. in Agamben 41-42)

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# Chaos Theory and Aesthetic Expression in Isaac Asimov's *Foundation Trilogy*

Matt Saikaly

Some problems are just too complicated for rational, logical solutions. They admit insights, not answers.

—Jerome B. Wiesner, President Emeritus, MIT

Whether human beings choose to accept it or not, we all inhabit complex, dynamical systems. The largest, most significant events can have little impact upon our lives, and conversely, the smallest, most trivial events can have major significance within our own personal universe. To call something “complex” means that not everything in life adheres to a predetermined form. There will always be the metaphorical monkey wrench thrown into our everyday lives, and no matter how much human beings plan or predict, there will always be an unaccounted variable that thwarts those plans and predictions. Scientists and mathematicians call this concept “chaos theory,” and it is a common occurrence in Isaac Asimov’s *Foundation Trilogy*. Asimov, through his mathematician character, Hari Seldon, develops the science called psychohistory, which attempts through the usage of formulas and equations to predict the actions and behaviors of not one person but of quadrillions of people to preserve the future of humanity. As for chaos theory itself, Donald Palumbo refers to it as “the study of orderly patterns in turbulent, dynamical, or erratic systems” (2).

In the *Foundation Trilogy*, psychohistory is the main manifestation of chaos theory, although Asimov published the series during the 1940s and 1950s, at least twenty to thirty years before chaos theory became a worthwhile field of study. The *Foundation Trilogy* takes place approximately 22,000 years into the future, and the novels narrate a period of 378 years (Palumbo 13). Mathematician Hari Seldon develops the science of psychohistory, a discipline that posits, in approximate terms, the future of humanity. Psychohistory is only able to deal with large numbers of people. According to James Gunn, psychohistory is a combination of history, sociology, and psychology that attempts to predict human behavior in broad terms (38).

A careful reader would see chaos theory prevalent in the beginning of the series, starting with *Prelude to Foundation*. Published in 1988, over thirty years after the original series, *Prelude* is the “overture” to the *Trilogy*, after Asimov received a “combination of pressures from readers and publishers that eventually became overwhelming” (*Prelude* ix) to continue the series. A good example of chaos theory in action is at the beginning of *Prelude*. While talking with the Emperor of the Galactic Empire, Seldon says:

In many systems, the situation is such that under some conditions chaotic events take place. This means that, given a particular starting point, it is impossible to predict outcomes. What I have done, however, is to show that, in studying human society, it is possible to choose a starting point and to make appropriate assumptions that will suppress the chaos. That will make it possible to predict the future not in full detail, of course, but in broad sweeps; not with certainty, but with calculable probabilities. (10)

Seldon even admits psychohistory is fallible. Although Seldon does his best to explain to the Emperor that he can simplify human and natural systems to a group of formulas and equations, even he knows these will not be exact, hence the inevitability of the existence of chaos. He acknowledges that systems, whether man-made or natural, cannot come under the complete control of humanity. Seldon does not have any control over the initial conditions, which is why he can make only general statements about humanity rather than precise, exact calculations. Idealism does not go to Seldon's head; in other words, he does not draw conclusions without evidence. Seldon is a rationalist; he relies on logic and order in viewing the workings of the universe, and he retains his rationalism while speaking with the Emperor. He sees practical use for his work, in that the preservation of humanity is an example of his methodical, meticulous nature. The placing of the two Foundations is his changing of the initial conditions that will minimize the chaos. Seldon's rationalism is apparent, in that he exposes the imperfections of psychohistory resulting from the imperfections of human beings. His attempts to preserve humanity's future through the usage of psychohistory is nothing short of extraordinary, and his understanding of the inevitability of human error and chaos indeed makes him heroic.

As for the *Foundation Trilogy* itself, there are numerous references to chaos theory within the novels. A good example of chaos theory in the first book is Seldon explaining himself at a trial before the Commission of Public Safety: "This courtroom may explode in the next few hours, or it may not. If it did, the future would undoubtedly be changed in some minor respects" (25). Again, Seldon makes the connection with the sensitive dependence upon initial conditions. The slightest change would alter the atmosphere of the courtroom and would have an impact on the long-term behavior of that system. What would happen in the courtroom also can have significant changes on other events on Trantor as well as the rest of the Empire. Seldon's comments also attempt to explain that he cannot predict a specific outcome but make only broad, general calculations. Seldon goes further in the trial:

The coming destruction of Trantor is not an event in itself, isolated in the scheme of human development. It will be the climax to an intricate drama which was begun centuries ago and which is accelerating in pace continuously. I refer, gentlemen, to the developing decline and fall of the Galactic Empire. (26)

The deterioration and decay of the Empire is brought about by the sensitive dependence on initial conditions. As those conditions changed, so did Trantor, and its change was a change for the worse. Trantor and the rest of the Empire are slowly decaying into a chaotic state where anarchy will reign. The fall of the Empire stems from, according to Seldon, “a rising bureaucracy, a receding initiative, a freezing of caste, a damning of curiosity—a hundred other factors. It has been going on, as I have said for centuries, and it is too majestic and massive a movement to stop” (27). Chaos is inevitable to Seldon, and the only thing he can do is minimize it, hence the 1,000 years of anarchy instead of the predicted 30,000. The complexity of the Empire in terms of its organization and structure grows with the increasing population, and thus the chaos will grow as well.

In *Foundation and Empire* another manifestation of chaos theory exists, mainly through the character of the Mule. The Mule is a mutant with immense physical and mental powers, who uses his powers to alter the behavior of others and to demoralize everyone who encounters him. His aim is to gain total control over the Foundation and to find the clandestine location of the Second Foundation. Disguised as a clown named Magnifico Giganticus, he weaves his way through Foundation affairs. In Palumbo’s words, the Mule is the “narrative counterpoint” that disrupts the Seldon Plan and is “a perturbation which destabilizes the system” (34-35). The Mule’s sole motive is conquest, and there is no better way to do it than to disrupt the minds of those who hold positions of power. He is the epitome of disorder in an environment that is attempting to bring itself back to order. There will always be some hindering factor, and the Mule’s existence shows the imperfections of psychohistory. The characters of Bayta and Toran Darell attempt to discover the true nature of the Mule, and then confront him in the second novel. After being asked to leave at gunpoint, the Mule, who claims to be a Foundation citizen, responds:

I think not. If you know anything about Foundation methods, and despite your imposture you might, you’d know that if I don’t return alive to my ship at a specified time, there’ll be a signal at the nearest Foundation headquarters—so I doubt if your weapons will have much effect, practically speaking. (114)

Again, the sensitive dependence on initial conditions is apparent here. One small change in those conditions, such as the execution or the imprisonment of the Mule, could have repercussions for the Foundation later. The Mule understands this concept and uses it in his attempts at conquest. However, the Mule underestimates his opposition. The scientist Ebling Mis says, “Maybe Seldon made no provisions for the Mule. Maybe he didn’t guarantee our victory. But, then, neither did he guarantee defeat. He’s just out of the game and we’re on our own. The Mule can be licked” (158). One of the interesting things about psychohistory is that it seems inherently deterministic. However, Asimov does give his characters free will, and Mis’s statement is a reinforcement of this principle. Not everything will go according to a predetermined form, and the

conscious actions of certain characters who see the imperfections of Seldon's plan will be able to defeat the Mule. They are not winning, but Seldon did not make any mention of the Foundation falling to the Mule either. Gunn says about this point: "it is only to those looking from the outside that Seldon's Plan seems like determinism; from within, the Foundation leaders still must find solutions without Seldon's help" (42). Since the future actions of Mis and the Darells are not part of Seldon's Plan, they are yet another injection of chaos, another unforeseen element, into an already chaotic system. However, although the actions of these characters may seem chaotic, they are attempts to bring order to disorder. Gunn says further: "Each problem solved strengthens the Foundation and its progress toward the ultimate reunification of the Galaxy, but each solution contains the seeds of a new problem" (49). Not only does the perpetual problem-solving within the *Trilogy* reinforce chaos theory in terms of its undeniable appearance, but the problem-solving also serves to preserve the continuity of the series. A new set of problems surfaces in each novel, allowing for new and interesting characters to overcome problems presented by the complex workings of the Galactic Empire.

Regretfully, space limitations prohibit me from speaking further about the *Foundation Trilogy*. However, what can be said about Asimov's work is that his characters exercise significant amounts of discipline, rationalism, and faith towards their work and society, for it is these attributes that will end human misery and abate emotional imbalance. No other writer implements the usage of science as Asimov does, in that the way to solve problems is not through whimsical idealism, but through scientific rationalism. In addition, his characters, in a sense, do possess the adventuresome spirit and individualism needed to stave off a particular threat, although his characters are rather flat and two-dimensional. The *Foundation Trilogy* is not a rejection of chaos, but an exploration of it. Asimov holds the core belief that exploration ultimately leads to discovery. It is through the application of various discoveries that dictate the type of world we live in, and Asimov urges humans to exercise logical reasoning and practicality in the advancement of an idea. To understand how chaos (or any other technological advancement) works in any form, one must first welcome it and respect it before one can control it and use it for practical, useful purposes. The same holds true in any other aspect of life, in that Asimov urges humanity to deal with people and events with understanding and flexibility.

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Kissing the Present:  
Corporations, “Debt Slavery,” and the Incorporation  
of a Feminist “Cyborg Identity” in Octavia E. Butler’s  
*Parable of the Sower*

Amy Washburn

In a recent interview Octavia E. Butler, one of the few Black women currently writing science fiction, says, “The ugly things in [*Parable of the Sower*] happen because today’s dangers—drug use, illiteracy, the popularity of building prisons coupled with the unpopularity of building and maintaining schools and libraries, the yawning of rich-poor gaps and global warming—grow up to be tomorrow’s disasters” (qtd. in Stillman 15). Butler further says that she “made an effort to talk about what could actually happen or is in the *process of happening*” (qtd. in Dubey 336, emphasis added). As demonstrated by her thematic focus in this interview, Butler redefines the science fiction phrase “kissing the future” to include the present because she can speculate about what the future will bring only by recognizing her historically situated location in the present, which is the only cognitively possible way to discuss the future. In addition to understanding how the present forms the future, however, Butler also sees how the past forms the present in her “critical dystopian” novel, *Parable of the Sower*, as shown particularly by her numerous references to slavery, especially “debt slavery,” the new form of slavery, according to Butler, throughout the novel. *Parable of the Sower* discusses both old and new forms of slavery with regard to the present and how the ideology of domination is challenged. Butler’s novel not only intensifies structural problems within our present corporate-controlled global world, but also repeatedly alludes to our country’s bleak history to show the latent peril in the present. Of particular focus is the number of “cyborg” events that take place in this miscalled “futuristic” novel, most of which are vestiges of slavery and are happening now. “Cyborg” events can be discussed only with regard to the protagonist’s marginality as a Black woman, as noted feminist scholar Donna Haraway uses the word, and how the protagonist’s marginality creates her desire for social change.

In Butler’s *Parable of the Sower*, the urban communities of California from 2024 to 2027 are rampant with heightened race, class, and gender marginalization, which inevitably causes egregious social conditions, such as unemployment, drug trafficking, child abuse, rape, homelessness, theft, illiteracy, illness, prostitution, and murder. Lauren, the adolescent protagonist of the epistolary novel, whose diary challenges the conditions created by slavery because it is evidence of literacy, reveals that her “tiny, walled, fish-bowl cul-de-sac community” is a living hell (12). Lauren reveals that the National Guard is sent in to establish (dis)order in her dystopian urban setting because homeless people (namely the entire population) are killing and raping

privileged people to steal money for a drug that makes people pyromaniacs to escape their alienation, and the fires cannot be extinguished because water is an expensive (and thus a rare) commodity. The reason for social disarray, according to Lauren, is multinational corporate control of the state. Specifically, the multinational corporation *KSF* controls the entire city of Olivar, forcing people living within other walled cities to either relocate and compete for employment—employment that forces them into “debt slavery,” an interminable (and alienating) cycle of production and consumption—or leave the U.S. to survive. *KSF* is culpable of labor exploitation, described as “half antebellum revival and half science fiction,” because, according to Lauren: “Anyone *KSF* hired would have a hard time living on the salary offered. In not very much time, [they] would be in debt to the company. That’s an old company-town trick—get people into debt, hang on to them, and work them harder” (109-111). Lauren explains her notion of “debt slavery” as follows:

People were not permitted to leave an employer to whom they owed money. They were obligated to work off the debt either as quasi-indentured people or convicts. That is, if they refused to work, they could be arrested, jailed, and in the end, handed over to their employers ... either way, such debt slaves could be forced to work longer hours for less pay, could be “disciplined” if they failed to meet their quotas, could be traded and sold with or without their consent, with or without their families, to distant employers who had temporary or permanent need of them. (264)

In a clear example of metafiction, Lauren reveals: “Cities controlled by big companies are old hat in science fiction,” that these big cities control the global world “as a source of cheap labor and cheap land” (114, 119). Lauren is able to analyze what is happening around her because she is home-schooled—the only means of education available—by her father, a professor and minister; essentially, for her and her younger brother, literacy is a rare and marketable commodity, as it was for slaves in our country’s past.

Though Lauren’s concept of “debt slavery” is as fictitious as Butler’s “futuristic” intent in the novel, what becomes particularly obvious is that Lauren’s incessant discussion of “debt slavery” is used by Butler to admonish people about the present, of what is imminently occurring in today’s global world. As any informed citizen such as Butler knows, despite the transnational abolition of slavery—Mauritania was the last country to abolish it 1981—Anti-Slavery International, the oldest human rights organization in the world, estimates that twenty-seven million slaves exist today, one million of whom are women and children who are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Despite the fact that many people believe that slavery is a problem of the past, comparable to Holocaust exclusionists who incorrectly believe that genocide only pertains to World War II, various types of slavery—bonded labor (also known as debt bondage), trafficking, forced labor, child labor, early and forced marriage, and chattel slavery—still exist in our current world. Clearly, Butler has, in fact, made “debt slav-

ery” synonymous with debt bondage, which is when impoverished people become bonded to their labor to repay loans, thus merely changing a word to demonstrate how exploitative this type of labor is, especially in India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Brazil, where it is most common.

One of Butler’s underlying intentions of this novel is to bring the calamities of the so-called third world, upon which U.S. international policy has had a detrimental impact, to U.S. attention. Probably the most salient evidence of structural problems inherent in U.S. international policy with regard to the role of corporations, the creators of “debt slavery” or debt bondage in the novel, is the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO), for these international institutions force destitute people to become debt laborers to pay off their nations’ financial debt, thereby making entire populations, such as China and Mexico, for instance, U.S. corporations’ slaves. Joseph E. Stiglitz notes that the IMF and the World Bank were created to rebuild Europe after the World War II and to prevent economic depressions from happening in the future (11). According to Stiglitz, however, “the IMF took a rather imperialistic view of matter” (14). Essentially, the IMF and World Bank became the “neoliberal version of neoclassicism,” as Richard Peet argues (57). The WTO, too, plays an equally important role in perpetuating a country’s “debt slavery”; in fact, Lori Wallach and Michelle Sforza argue that the WTO “contains the strongest enforcement procedures of any international agreement now in force” (21). The WTO, established in 1995 to replace the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), was supposed to decrease the U.S. trade deficit by \$60 billion in ten years, help the economies of Latin American, Asia, and Africa, and even increase the annual median income per U.S. family by \$1,700, as Wallach and Sforza point out (13-14). In addition to the WTO’s financial promises not materializing, “WTO threats and challenges have ... interfere[d] with U.S. Clean Air rules, the U.S. Endangered Species Act, Japan’s Kyoto (global warming) Treaty implementation, a European toxics and recycling law, U.S. longhorned beetle infestation policy, EU eco-labels, U.S. dolphin protection legislation and an EU humane trapping law,” according to Wallach and Sforza (27). Clearly, this interlocking consortium—the IMF, World Bank, and WTO—enslaves most of the world, putting the power and wealth of U.S. corporations and financial institutions above human rights, including people’s economic well-being, health, and safety, as well as environmental protections. As a whole, this consortium is “a slow motion *coup d’état* over democratic governance worldwide,” as Wallach and Sforza put it, with the U.S. to be the last to feel its disastrous effects (13). For this reason, at “debt slavery’s” apex, Butler brings it to the U.S. to make the neoliberal agenda of the U.S. hyper-visible to isolated U.S. citizens, who need to see the effects of inequality, how it affects all human beings, and why they have to resist it, as *Subcommandante Marcos*, the leader of the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, does, identifying with every marginalized and oppressed human being in the world:

Marcos is gay in San Francisco, Black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristobal, a gang member in Neza, a rocker in the National University, a Jew in Germany, an ombudsman [sic] in the Defense Ministry, a communist in the post-Cold War era, an artist without gallery or portfolio, a pacifist in Bosnia, a housewife [sic] alone on Saturday night in any neighborhood in any city in Mexico, a striker in the CTM, a reporter writing filler stories for the back pages, a single woman on the metro at 10 P.M., a peasant without land, an unemployed worker ... an unhappy student, a dissident amid free-market economics, a writer without books or readers, and, of course, a Zapatista in the mountains of southeast Mexico. (qtd. in Parenti 209-210)

Despite the fact that Butler is interested in looking at structural problems in this novel, she is also equally interested in exploring the (im)possibilities of fighting macro problems on a micro level. Again, Butler particularly intensifies conditions with her notion of “organic delusional syndrome,” her main character’s defining identity. Lauren’s “organic delusional syndrome” or “hyperempathy,” which is a biological disorder that makes her deeply experience other people’s pain and pleasure, allows her to respond directly to “debt slavery” and the social disorder around her by becoming an active agent who embraces social change (10). Lauren says, “. . . if everyone could feel everyone else’s pain, who would torture? Who would cause anyone unnecessary pain? I’ve never thought of my problem as something that might do some good before . . . . A biological conscience is better than no conscience at all,” while reflecting on the painful component of her “hyperempathy” (105-06). Essentially, Lauren’s own bodily boundaries—her “hyperempathic” nature, which separates her from the community yet, at the same time, allows her to balance her personal needs with those of her community, as well as her marginal status as a Black woman—make her fit the quintessential definition of what Donna Haraway calls a “cyborg”: “a potent subjectivity synthesized from fusions of outsider identities” (e.g., people of color, working-class and/ or poor people, women, etc.) (174). In fact, Haraway lists Octavia E. Butler with other science fiction authors who write about “what it means to be embodied in high-tech world,” though Haraway is referring to Butler’s *Kindred* (173). Since Haraway argues that the entire genre of contemporary science fiction, an illustration of the social realities of patriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism, is replete with “cyborgs—creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted” (149)—it becomes apparent that Lauren herself is, indeed, a creation of fiction and lived experience who fuses these centers to create the possibility of historical transformation, that she is a feminist “cyborg identity.” Furthermore, it is Lauren’s feminist “cyborg identity” that makes her realize that, in Haraway’s words, “the need for unity of people trying to resist world-wide intensification of domination has never been more acute” (154). In other words, Butler’s entire

novel argues for attaining pleasure amidst blurred boundaries and for civic responsibility in their reconstruction.

Though it is somewhat problematic that biology functions as a means of promoting empowerment for Lauren and her society—because, historically, the body, especially the female body, has served as a direct locus of social control—“hyperempathy,” for Lauren, is definitely a counter-transgressive act. Moreover, “hyperempathy” allows Lauren to create new possibilities for change, for she cannot separate herself from her body, which is an obvious blurring of boundaries on Butler’s part that is comparable to her conflation of national “debt slavery” with transnational “debt slavery.” It is for this particular reason that, instead of falling abjectly into an abyss of despair upon realizing the difficulty of challenging repressive hegemonic structures, Lauren creates Earthseed, her own religion and initiation into the struggle. Lauren believes that the credo of Earthseed is not “mythology or mysticism or magic” but an “ongoing reality” as opposed to a “supernatural authority” (195, 197). According to Lauren’s philosophy of Earthseed, change cannot be eschewed when in the face of instability; rather, people need to adapt to change and influence it as best as they can. Madhu Dubey addresses the importance of Earthseed in the novel as follows: “The seed metaphor ... suggests ... the necessity of discarding ideas and ideologies rooted in the past that aim only to stabilize, not to transform, present social conditions.... economic processes impinge on every home and every neighborhood, clarifying the futility (and impossibility) of constructing urban communities on ‘village’ foundations” (104). Clearly, though religion is not necessary to start a revolution, Earthseed is important for Lauren and her community because it becomes a powerful mode of communication similar to oral tradition’s role in abolition in the past, as well as a circuit of unity.

Survival, then, becomes possible for Lauren and her subversive “crew of a modern underground railroad” (268), another obvious reference to famous abolitionist Harriet Tubman, primarily because of her “hyperempathy” and her religion, Earthseed. With these forces serving as her impetus, Lauren and her Earthseed community decide to flee to Canada after the Great Fire of California, which kills the remaining members of Lauren’s family, confessing that they are not going to live their lives as “some kind of twenty-first century slave” (155). Lauren and her community collaboratively make decisions related to survival, including when to disobey the biblical commandments “thou shalt not kill” (when they are seriously threatened) and “thou shalt not steal” (when their own preservation is at stake). Overall, they adapt, change, and embrace diversity to survive, and they persevere with a relentless commitment to restoring a community of people who value friendship, knowledge, respect, sharing, caring, trust, and love. At the end of the novel, Butler offers no answers with regard to enacting social change, except for Lauren and her community to resist settlement, to work together, and to take action.

While, like Butler, I will offer no specific answers with regard to eradicating slavery in today's world, I will argue that "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion," as Haraway does (149), especially as evidenced in Butler's *Parable of the Sower*. Because this novel provides a good illustration of slavery as it is happening now or, in Butler's words, as it is in "the process of happening" (qtd. in Dubey 336), as opposed being a problem of the past, we have a social responsibility to educate people about it, as Butler is trying to do in this miscategorized "futuristic" work. As an entire genre, "cyborg writing" is an educational tool that emphasizes the power to survive in an inequalitarian world, for it shows that, as Haraway notes, "The machine is not an it to be animated, worshiped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are they... [We can] build and destroy machines" (180-81). One way to create the possibility of freedom in our world for us non-"hyperempathic" people is to appreciate free expression with regard to "cyborg writing," especially the works of Butler, as well as alien genres as a whole.

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# V Poetry

## The Bicentennial Summer of '76

William Bedford Clark

When the young doctor saw Pop's biopsy  
Report and condescended to Mother  
Outside the room, she suddenly could see  
How it was people killed one another  
From rage, for she grew murder in her heart,  
But let him live. He had the healing art  
(Or so we thought). By the enabling light  
Above our dining table, Dad and I  
Sat late on more than one moth-ridden night  
And patiently contrived how not to die.

*Retire in six months, and build at the lake;  
A loft with half-bath for my sister's sake;  
A broad tiered deck; mantle of native stone;  
Good drainage; wood shingles; low-interest loan.*

He hummed to the blueprints a mantra, Hope,  
And moved toward the dark up a greening slope.

### Editorial Note

William Bedford Clark, Professor of English at Texas A&M University, is a widely published poet and literary critic. A leading Robert Penn Warren scholar, he is the author of *The American Vision of Robert Penn Warren* and the editor of Warren's *Selected Letters Vols. I-II*. He is the General Editor of the multi-volume Warren Correspondence Project.

Professor Clark's Keynote address at the 2005 English Graduate Symposium celebrating Robert Penn Warren dealt with his experiences as the editor of the vast correspondence of one of the most prolific writers in American literary history.

## Preventive Grace

William Bedford Clark

They never wed, so never quite divorced,  
But just now met by canny happenstance  
On the declining square (brickwork noon-scorched—  
And scarcely June), contrived a gimpy dance,  
Parleyed an inane word or two, and smiled  
Toward the middle-distance. Once stung, twice wise,  
Long-immunized against what will beguile  
Teens' buzzing surge, each copped a neutered guise  
That would (but didn't) hide the plot devised  
Full forty years ago against a child  
Who wasn't there—or let go on its own:  
Some spotty blood, no discernible bone.



## Scaling Parnassus

William Bedford Clark

*i. Hybris*

Rachmaninoff  
Strains, disdains, these small tight hands:  
Dropped notes, broken chords.

*ii. Practice, practice, practice*

Tantalizing phrase,  
Perfect, as if wrought by God:  
Yet fingers fumble.

*iii. Legato*

Pedal if you must:  
Best to shift the fourth finger  
To the depressed key.

*iv. Realpolitik*

Weak hand, take the lead  
In those sudden doubled-thirds:  
Slower, but certain.

*v. What Mr. Ricker Said*

Play into the keys.  
Preconceive the sound you'd make  
When the hammer lifts.

## No Lady of Shalott

William Bedford Clark

Back in the 60s (not yet THE SIXTIES)  
Near lightning and stumbling thunder  
Had emptied the links and pool at Twin Hills.

And a girl, hair wet, in new jeans, weejuns,  
At the window of a stone house  
Edged tight on the very far east of town

Watched as the long drought came roaring apart  
With wind and horizontal rain  
That humbled oaks, set old shingles clapping,

Turned the dry spruce free of its fibrous roots,  
Quite unmindful of the low wall  
Designed to keep ditch and world at yard's length.

Her pupils rounded wide to take it in.  
An awful glee razzed up her spine  
As mind danced in the throbbing disorder.

No Lady of Shalott, she looked, foresaw  
The greater shakiness to come:  
Ruined Camelot—long war—shamed Presidents.

(Not quite literally, of course. But still  
The next decade failed to surprise:  
The slow replay of a quick fast-forward.)

There is a certain virgin turn of soul  
That defines the girl from woman.  
She watched at the recessed Tudor window

Back in the 60s (not yet THE SIXTIES),  
The day lightning and bum-thunder  
Sent her home from the high pool at Twin Hills.

## Meatball Saturday

D. A. Carpenter

Three pounds of ground beef,  
bread crumbs,  
mysterious spices and seasons,  
bowl of extra virgin olive oil,  
bowl of red wine vinegar,  
and his two hands conducting  
the early Saturday symphony,  
as I forget about my Cartoon Express  
to get a table-level view  
of the chunky, meaty masterpieces  
in mid-creation.

It was the same thing every Saturday.  
It was the same ingredients  
and the same darting hands  
with rolled-up-sleeve forearms.  
It was always the same perfect  
collage of hands, meat, oils, and seasons,  
but every year the table-level view  
faded further toward the ground  
with a downward tilt of the chin.

Then came the Saturdays that I would  
sit with him and try to imitate the fluid  
darting movement of his hands  
grabbing a hunk of meat and cupping  
my hands with a back and forth  
muted slap of wormy strands  
that always seemed to crumble into a heap  
in front of me.

“No, look, you have to dip your fingers  
in the oil and then the vinegar.”  
Then he'd bellow some Italian tune  
that I didn't understand, but felt,  
and then try harder.

I remember watching his fingers dip  
into the liquids and thinking  
about those fingers dipping into the dirt  
barehanding a ground ball  
that would roll up into his palm  
and then sent on its way to first  
when he played semi-pro.  
When he kneaded the beef  
I thought about all those rainy days  
his fingers sunk in the mud  
on the line of scrimmage  
while the leather-headed quarter-back  
barked audibles.

And I continued to think about these things  
even when he was wheelchair-, and then, bed-ridden.  
I could still see it in his eyes when he had enough strength  
to ask me how my team was doing this year.  
Even in his coffin I could see the five foot five man  
who stood taller than anyone I ever knew  
with his dust-in-the-nose hazy days,  
with glove and cap,  
and nitty-gritty autumn afternoons in the trenches,  
with crooked nose and grin,  
and always,  
those meatball Saturdays  
I spent with him.

## Rolling Thunder and Consonant Shift (In Four Parts)

*A portrait of Dylan, 1975.*

D. A. Carpenter

### I

Bare that damned cross  
across your chest.  
Pick up that body,  
drag it inside.  
Your painted guise  
and apocalyptic talk  
call to God, drugs,  
and Egyptian kings.

### II

A false face hides under a flowered hat.  
From the vested and scarfed filth-stained shirt flows  
squeezed fists and harmonic screams of pharaohs.  
Isis thrives in the surrounding fumes of  
heroin and vivid hues of thunder.  
Howl for the hard rain that's a-gonna fall

### III

Mad, nymph fluttering wings  
move the singing arms to  
morning from moonlit night.  
The masked neurotic moves  
across the carpet stage.

### IV

Renaldo retells and relives his loves.  
You singing gypsy woman in white;  
you luscious lowland woman in red;  
are relics like Isis wanting to be  
rediscovered by reckless Renaldo,  
a roving woman loving legend.

## Infinity Bread and Butter

Dennis Doherty

“Breadenbutter.” “Breadenbutter.”

They came faster with our progress  
down the street, I on the sidewalk,  
she on the curb, interposing each  
meter, adding hydrants, signposts,  
shadows of awnings, of phone wires:  
“Breadenbutterbutterbutter.”

At last she noted that there was  
always something between us:  
dead leaves, cement cracks, brick borders,  
space—things that define, divide it;  
announced with finality her trump:  
“Infinity bread and butter!”

She stopped. I stopped. She smiled.  
“Dad, now you know that I  
never have to say it again.  
Infinity goes on forever.”

## Lipstick

Dennis Doherty

An opiate head rush like smoke,  
blond love assumes herself  
before my seat in the kitchen,  
commands me to pucker with all  
the sway a craven addict needs—  
endorphin hit of baby blues  
glimpsed through their water's mirage—  
and I submit like pie dough.

She leans on my crossed legs  
and surveys the target lips,  
abstracted before me, cooking  
in strategy for the next  
translation of passion's plan,  
the art beyond my crooked mouth.  
her own face is a sweet sour poem,  
her lips a mimic of my moue.

"Go like this!" She bares fierce  
teeth grimaced in a tiger's snarl,  
all points, gums, and scrunched-up nose.  
I do, and out comes the red plume.  
A swipe at my poised bite, and, "oops, your tooth."  
The invasion feints and probes,  
flanks beard, finesses moustache,  
subsides. "Like this!" she sucks in her  
mouth, then pock-pocks, so I pock.

There's a lull of pacing, study of work.  
Fingers swirl the lipstick lathe, dip  
and dab from palette to emergent view  
of what her wit has wrought. "Like this,"  
she puckers, and I stretch to her brushtips.  
They taste like my mother on sitter nights,  
cotillions, lingering cars, and cocktails.  
She unkisses and frowns, then smiles. "you're done."

## Meant To Be

Dennis Doherty

That shaggy hill a smooth blue stone  
in outline on the vast western light  
like a desert pebble to moisten your  
mouth that reminds you of a cool green hill.

Nearer, you find it was farther,  
a torture of glens and ridges  
beneath the line-of-sight mirage  
of uniformly liquid canopy,  
the insuck and exhaust of  
life-factory, of fiber in grind  
against itself, eruping and  
dissolving in its own desperate grip.

Climb in the hot breath. Wring your sweat.  
Deliver yourself from your own foam  
to the clearing of the woody vine  
whose purple marbles wink  
on the shelf like a compound eye  
refracting your shine from every globe.  
Pop the grape and taste the most  
exquisite stain, a sour that whiffs  
of half-realized half-imagined wonders.  
Call pith memoir; call pit stone, and call stone  
mission. Explain to the rocks their system.

So now that you've found your purpose  
you must draw in dirt a circle of rules  
and place subjects within to abide.  
Pluck them one by one from the sun;  
fondle them gentle into the knock and  
roll of their orbit, together  
again on the loose bruise of earth,  
with tongue and groove and a level view,  
with love, with care. These are the rules:  
one day when they're old enough to eat  
they'll remember that you were good to them.



## **These Useless People**

Corey Mittenberg

Compulsive consumption  
Or face the boredom  
It's obliteration  
For lost moderation  
Harmonic recklessness  
Ear-ratic false puritan descendants  
Who map mazes  
That blueprint the phases  
Eye over glassy  
Fragile sameness nation  
Want more cloning  
From the same station  
Glossaries shrink  
And words are defeated  
Brains sink into stomachs  
Ferment and repeat  
Do not hurt your wrists  
Trying to choke these throats  
Into comprehending some of this  
Ferment and repeat  
The selfishness of criticism  
Supplies the lies of temporary completion

## A Bullet Has No Face

Corey Mittenberg

Determinists through all this unscheduled misery  
Clap your hands—we'll beat the bulls back with blankets  
And they do not have to be red or long  
Rescind your gestures of apathy and sing this song

Ensnaring masturbation babies in cages  
Raised them blind on villainous pages  
Thought they were doing well by the interested parties  
Their ships burned viking-style, me hearties

Clean-kept ears remain your fastest assets  
Exercise their purpose and see what that gets  
The muck will dry and harden and then loosen from our shoes  
We will be free to run among clean, wide, placid avenues

Without worry or protective guards in tow  
Without escorts who will always follow  
And when the fireworks sound  
None of us will turn to face the ground

## Devotion Under .500

Corey Mittenberg

Teams choose you for their fanaticism  
By place of birth, or influencing friends  
That lure you to learn this catechism:  
Stats don't mean much rounding September's bend.  
You follow the failures of your doomed club  
In abbreviations of tragedy  
Capturing each error and foul inning flub  
In boxscores—the evidence of treachery.  
Someone's attempting to ruin your life!  
They're trading top prospects, benching big names  
Loss after loss, who can deal with this strife?  
How many seasons can you suffer shame?  
    We're willing captives come training in spring  
    For flinch-making sport that'd coxcomb a king.

## Driftwood

*To Folco de Baroncelli<sup>1</sup>*

Matthew Nickel

I was collecting driftwood that night,  
And I looked out over the sea and saw  
The crescent moon tilted  
Like the turning horns  
Of the rising bull from  
The silver sansouïre,  
And the sun was setting just  
Over the far horizon,  
While I was trying to find  
The good worn logs from the sea,  
Smoothed by time and currents  
From the great waters along  
The edge of the world.

Behind me I heard the bell  
Of the simbèu which  
Beckoned the darkness, while  
Before me, the current of  
The Petit Rhône met the  
Great Sea rolling in waves  
Against the rocks  
Where the water pulls you in  
In places unknown like a great shadow  
And I walked along the shore's rocks  
Where there I saw in the trident moonlight  
A tomb white in the night  
While the orange glow of the Saintes  
Lit the distance opposite the vanishing sun.

As I looked up toward the sound  
Of the bell in the field,  
I felt that cold wind coming  
And with it, a memory  
I had never known,  
There, I thought I saw a man beyond the reeds

On a white horse like a ghost  
With a long pole reaching behind him  
Into the darkness,  
Like an ancient Chevalier  
Protecting the innocent blood  
Of his herd, and the  
Sacred land beneath him.

Our eyes met for a moment and  
Then he turned his horse high and away  
And disappeared into  
The darkness, where there I  
Thought I saw a great black shadow  
Following like the shape of The Bull.

I could still hear the sea,  
Alone, and the wind coming,  
Remembering something in the moonlight  
And beyond, still the sound  
Of the bell in the darkness.

Les Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France, November 2004

#### Notes

1. Folco de Baroncelli was associated with some of the greatest figures of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Provençal literature and initiated many of the celebrations for which the Camargue is now famous. He was also a breeder of bulls.

## **Bois Roulés**

*Pour Folco de Baroncelli*

Traduit par Catherine Aldington<sup>1</sup>

Le soir, en ramassant du bois roulé par le Rhône,  
Je vis, par dessus la mer,  
Le croissant de lune incliné  
Tel les cornes  
Du taureau qui se lève  
Dans la sansouïre argentée.  
Le soleil déclinait à peine  
Sur l'horizon lointain,  
Tandis que j'essayais  
De trouver les bois  
Les plus usés par la mer  
Polis par le temps et les courants  
Des puissantes forces de l'eau  
A l'extrémité du monde.

Derrière moi j'entendis la cloche  
Du Simbéu qui faisait signe aux ténèbres,  
Tandis que devant moi, là, le courant du Petit Rhône  
Rencontrait les Grandes Vagues de la mer  
S'éclatants sur les rochers  
Là où les eaux vous entraînent  
Dans les profondeurs  
Des lieux inconnus comme une grande ombre...  
J'ai marché le long des rochers de la plage  
Et là je vis dans la lumière du trident de la lune  
Une tombe blanche  
Alors que le halo orangé des Saintes  
Eclairait l'étendue face au soleil couchant.

Lorsque je regardai vers l'endroit  
Ou sonnait la cloche dans le champ,  
Je sentis venir ce vent froid arriver  
Et avec lui un souvenir  
Que je n'avais jamais eu,  
Là, je pensai que je voyais un homme au-delà des roseaux

Sur un cheval blanc comme un revenant,  
Sur l'épaule une longue perche s'étirant dans la nuit,  
Tel un chevalier d'antan  
Protégeant le sang 'innocent'  
de son troupeau, et la  
Terre Sacrée sous lui.

Nos regards se croisèrent un instant,  
Puis il retourna vivement son cheval cabré  
et disparut vers

Les ténèbres, où je crus voir  
Une large ombre noire  
Qui le suivait comme la forme Lou Biòu.

Je pouvais toujours entendre la mer,  
Seule, et le vent arriver,  
Me souvenir de quelque chose dans le clair de lune  
Et au-delà, toujours le son  
De la cloche dans le noir.

## Notes

1. Catherine Aldington, daughter of noted writer Richard Aldington, is a poet, translator, and President Emerita of the Association for Provençal culture, who for many years has made her home in les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in the Camargue. She is the host of the biennial conference of the International Richard Aldington Society, at which many New Paltz students and faculty have presented papers. Last fall, 2004, Matt Nickel served as her Research Assistant.

## Wednesday Descends

Ash Wednesday, 2005

Matthew Nickel

What do we inherit  
Without the blood and  
Flesh on the day of  
Death, a day that will come  
Again to remind us what we  
Forget, to beget spirit  
In the shape of ashes  
To replace the empty question and  
Prepare the soul for the stillness  
Of reception;  
Without the blood and flesh  
To bind us to a name, a past  
But only an echo like the Word  
That we cannot utter  
On this day that falls gracefully  
Like the memory of palm leaves  
Sifting under the ashes.



## Memory Lingers

(Inspired by two poems from a small blue book titled *Collected Poems*)

For H. & S. & Catha

Matthew Nickel

Can you feel that, she asks me  
Inside the walls,  
I think of a line from a poem,  
Yes, I can feel something,  
I don't know how to describe  
It, she says,  
Don't, it's better off,  
Yes, she agrees, inside the  
Straight and narrow roads not  
Winding nor is there any wind today  
Within the walls that  
Hold in the feeling  
Like a good line in a poem;  
But somewhere there is the  
Memory,  
In her eyes that think  
Of memories  
Like remembering a line of a poem  
That father said, or of  
A poem that lingers in your  
Heart,  
So we salute you,  
In the flickered candle light  
Flickering like some distant image  
On the edge of an ocean's wave  
Like song or Saint Louis singing  
In the eye of a candle  
And we step out  
Into a light rain  
Like wet fingers on a forehead,  
And she smiles at me under the  
Gray sky, over gray stones  
Locked in place like in the center of  
A feeling.

I think of the place in a line from a poem  
Thinking about how the bulls used to feel  
Crossing the Petit Rhône, like  
Following a familiar path, but always  
Losing somebody along the way,

She hums a familiar tune as we  
Follow your path out of the walls and back,  
(The path, the only route)  
We follow the same route,  
Like saying the same prayer,  
Everyday,  
Or remembering a poem and somebody's voice  
And something about lingering  
And feeling beyond the  
Edge, something that touches  
The center of  
Love.

## Gargoyles

Robert Singleton

They certainly had a developed sense of horror,  
a poet friend said to me.

They hung a pig for eating a consecrated wafer,  
put others in stocks,  
and carried dragons in festivals  
through Louvain and Troyes.

They carved men out of stone  
and cast them into hell with toads in their mouths,  
the toad being a symbol of the devil  
(who was sometimes a priest).

The devil is more comic and less to be feared, these days.

A monster in human form clutches a lizard  
and carries a paper dragon in celebrations like the Feast of Fools.

A girl rides an ass in January,  
while in the same tapestry  
they carved a woman out of stone  
as a lustful monster  
with goat's heads for breasts.

Such horror in the contradictions  
when art is carved out of false pride  
by a vampire on the roof of Notre Dame  
who surveys the modern city  
with eyes of sculptured anger.

## Monuments, Little Round Top, Dawn

Robert Singleton

Like fall leaves on bronze skin,  
the sun drums in capillary flares  
and the scars of names in dead metal  
pit their tales with pitch,  
pit the granite where they rot  
in black metal and bronze cherry stone.

All their companies the same,  
yet their black reputation  
is quarantined from death  
if from cloth to granite  
passing birds  
lend them song.

## Ophelia

Robert Singleton

In memory, that ageless votive,  
lies the illusion of retribution.

The snake of other tongues  
moves roots from terror  
in torch lily, fairy wand  
and button root.

A fragile breath unwinds  
from its cowl  
and seeks its twin  
in shattered flowers.

Its spine is the world of seasons.

There lies a bright sonnet,  
having no purpose but kind,  
no kind oblique to the root.

## Above the Beach in Biarritz: Meditation on an Old Photograph

H. R. Stoneback

We stand there, on a balcony above  
the beach in Biarritz, leaning against  
a rustic railing; the Winter Palace,  
the beach and the surf in the background.  
You are lovely in black, a long gold chain  
defining your breasts; your eloquent wrist  
designs, refines, the railing. I hold a cane,  
bought in the Basque country, that I do not need.  
It is the early Seventies—we have just come  
from Paris, on our way to Pamplona.  
Your smile is more secret than the Mona  
Lisa. (You are far more beautiful.)  
The peasants in all the lost villages  
of the Pyrenees have bowed to us  
for they have seen how we are in love  
and all the world belongs to us. And yes,  
my mind is on Greece or Rome or Venice  
or wherever we are going next.  
Or maybe I am thinking of the evening  
meal, the mysteries of *terroir* awaiting  
our discovery, or you with me in bed....  
It's more than thirty years ago: the ocean  
is still the same ocean, making the same waves,  
as we are still the same, making the same songs,  
the songs that echo from everywhere-and-when  
we have sung, the songs that seek us like love  
on a thousand shores of Europe and Asia,  
from the hills of Kentucky to South Jersey  
sands, like ancient images, mystical,  
of love above the beach in Biarritz.

## Shoot Hoops, Support Troops: A Meditation on Two Old Photographs

H. R. Stoneback

### I. Meditation on My High School Varsity Basketball Portrait

I do not know the boy in the picture.  
I deny any knowledge of his identity.  
I remember nothing. Did I choose that number,  
that tight uniform? Was I ever that skinny?  
I haven't shot that hook-shot since 1960.  
I remember nothing. I remember that shot.  
I remember the first time I palmed the ball  
in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, the first slam dunk in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.  
I remember that time in the locker room  
with—what *was* her name—before the game.  
I remember all the basketballs, spinning spheres,  
globes, the earth on my fingertips—rivers,  
mountains, countries, turning at my command.  
I remember nothing. But my hands,  
arthritic now, count the hours spent fondling  
a basketball, caressing a guitar,  
writing words—192,333 hours.  
What is the return on my investment?  
Poetry is a form of life insurance  
(as our actuary Poet Laureate might say).  
Hand me down my walking cane, my memory.  
I remember cheerleaders, their uniforms,  
their legs, their voices, not their faces.  
I remember all the broken guitar strings  
and the way music made my jumpshot flawless.  
And Oh now I remember the team bus,  
champagne-skin cheerleaders riding with us,  
all of us singing like children in the chantry:  
down-down-down-down-down-down-dumby-doobie-doo  
I am the Viking in the Dell woe-woe-woe-oh—  
Come play come ride come sing come go with me

## II. Meditation on My Marine Corps Dress Blues Portrait

Who is that shave-head clean-cut erect boy  
in that dress-blue uniform? Why do I smile  
so effusively in the picture? In my  
Marine Corps memories I do not recall  
smiling. The portrait is fake, of course—  
they hung the cut-out chest-up dress blues  
on us, and that fine cocky white hat,  
visor angle precisely measured by fingers,  
just for the picture. Uniforms like that,  
PFCs never had. I never smiled like that  
in such a hat. I remember nothing.  
(Unless the photographer was a girl.)  
My hands remember rifles, bayonets.  
My legs remember marching; I forget  
everything but weekend leave, AWOL trips  
to see girls, when I must have smiled like that.  
My hands remember booze and guitar blues  
and how her skin was wine in the sweet small rain,  
then she ran along the platform by the train  
blowing kisses as I went back to war games.  
Ah all the books, the songs, on all those trains!  
Maybe that look lingered from some weekend  
and the echo of a November high  
entered history as the smile of Semper Fi.



## “Gentlemen, Start Your Engines”: Or, the Daytona 500 of Poetry

H. R. Stoneback

Is it true that more people watch a NASCAR race in one day than read poetry in one year? It might seem so, a safe generalization on the sorry state of our culture, but actually the truth is quite to the contrary....I calculate that on the average weekday at a midsized college alone an average of 1,000 students read some poetry in classes....How many colleges are there in the US? 2,262. So on an average weekday some 2,262,000 college students read some poetry. And since there are more than 53,000,000 grade 1-12 students we can safely guess that 40 million of them have some weekday exposure to literature and of that number, in a conservative estimate, half or 20 million read some poetry. Thus among the schoolgoing American public alone—not counting the poetry-readers in the 135,000,000 Labor Force, among the 20 million managerial-executive types, the 5 million in the medical profession, the 1 million lawyers, the 6 million teachers, the 4 million in farming & forestry, the 6 million truckers and transporters, the 39 million in sales, the 20 million in service, and the total of possibly 11 poets who actually make a living from poetry—some 22 million people read some poetry every day. And while you’re wondering where the Mario Andrettis or Dale Earnhardts of poetry are, or imagining John Donne or Ezra Pound driving a race-car, consider this—auto racing, they say, is the biggest American spectator sport, and Daytona has 200,000 people in attendance this year, but the number of people in attendance on poetry is the equivalent of 100 Daytonas *every* weekday of the schoolyear. Poetry has its own exciting world of speed and noise and wrecks and flat tires and fires and blowouts and pit stops....And, from close observation over four decades of teaching & writing poetry I would calculate that 90% of poetry’s audience hate it or fear it. Still that remaining 10%, or 2,200,000, who passionately “attend” poetry every day (equal to 10 Daytonas) is a stunning figure. So why aren’t they buying poetry books? Are they too busy writing their own poetry? Admiring old dead poets? Why aren’t they buying *my* books? Why does poetry have no economic consequences? Because it is like religion? No, millions of churches collect billions of dollars. Because it is like art, like painting and sculpture? No, because painters, e.g., are absurdly over-paid, like baseball players. Why should some jerk who hits maybe forty homeruns a year average 500,000 dollars per homerun? The poet who writes forty good poems a year is lucky to make a-dollar-a-poem. Even songwriters, a dime-a-dozen these days, make more money. And whoever heard of a museum of poetry, a gallery of sonnets, with lines forming outside? And why is there no Best-seller list for Poetry? Because the numbers would be so humiliatingly low, compared to other book categories, no one would want to

contemplate the shameful truth. Is it because addiction to Poetry, like Pornography, is generally a private matter? Or is it because Poetry, like Daily Bread for the flesh, is the unmentioned because taken-for-granted fundamental nutrient of the soul, the heart's driving force and fuel, the V-16 engine of the spiritual universe. Poets, Ladies, *Gentlemen*—as they say at Daytona—Start your Engines.

## Ford Theater

Robert H. Waugh

I am the enemy within,  
    I am the man with the big ears,  
I am the histrionic stumble,  
    I am the axe splits all, I am  
    your narrow furrow, your stubborn words,  
    I am the enemy within,  
I am the stumble and farce, the rollick,  
    I am the knife raised high to heaven  
    and I am the single shot pistol, I am  
the sly imposture, reciting my lines  
    over a shot in the bar, in the alley,  
    I am the enemy within,  
I am the dream and the festooned coffin,  
    I am the big nose poking up  
    out of the coffin, I am the stubborn  
furrow and rock and root and word,  
I am the enemy within,  
    I am the blood on the cotton, the smudge  
    on the coin, the swing of the hempen rope,  
    I am the hood on the accused,  
    the sun-buzz, I dangle dead in the sun,  
I am the list, I can name you names,  
    I am the man with the big nose,  
    I am the ghost in your rooms, I am  
    the body shot through the back of the head,  
I am the curtain and I am the grease lamps,  
    the joke in the backroom smoke and the clapping,  
    I am the roar of a million hands clapping,  
I am the enemy within,  
    the stubborn furrow, the stubborn verse,  
I am the enemy within,  
    I am the lamp, I am the fist,  
    I will never forget, I am the bullet,  
I am the enemy within,  
I am the man with the big nose.

## Tracking Vuillard in Montreal

Robert H. Waugh

It's all in you akimbo as you stand  
quizzing Vuillard.

Your lazy red dress drapes  
across your knee, its crooked yellow stripes  
peel from the two straps holding on for dear  
life to your shoulders. You strike one leg out  
for emphasis, as though that posture crooked  
your eye and eyebrow on the painting; your  
bristly red hair confronts the buns that those  
blurred faces bend upon their needles, upright  
unwillingly, but you elect the akimbo  
*contre-jour* streak behind your bronze composure  
that lifts you off the floor, like a streak of blood  
a bird's wing daubed and brushed and trailed  
in the dry obsessive snow.

I do not trail  
you through the halls, but hall by hall you copy.

Vuillard insists, his tangly red-brick beard  
watches and twitches from his frame but chooses  
not to move, only you possess this grace  
to be in motion, doubly and triply akimbo,  
your chin and head framed in his panels, the  
slant lines and crisp nonchalant lines in you  
finding their counterpoise and losing it,  
only to have your foot and knee once more  
saving you for inspection, your dress shed  
*toujours* in private for this public place.

## Picking up Shells

Robert H. Waugh

Picking up shells, the diverse works of time,  
to whiten on the paths up to my house,  
while the unstable waves fall at my feet  
in a white froth and streak the sand where high  
tides slop and slide in the lop-sided moon:  
soughing dry froth exasperates the sand  
that dribbles from my boot. I am resigned

picking up shells to diverse images  
of a lop-sided time, already bleached  
by the low sun. In some time pearls, goes round  
in tunnels to itself, in some time pools  
as though in a baptismal font, in some  
time hulks and leaks and dribbles back in sand,  
in some time swirls and makes a washing sound.

Picking up shells invents those diverse times,  
the harmonies within this incoherence  
we hear within each other, your time meets  
my time and says farewell to it, my time  
looks after yours, but all shells shatter, soon  
my house shall lie in a pool of shattered moons  
and a glow of shattered time that points us nowhere.

## Bob Dylan Friday Night

Meri Weiss

Sometimes I'm scared for no reason. Sometimes I wish I could sing. Sometimes I worry about my future and sometimes I worry about my past. Sometimes I wish I wasn't me. Sometimes I love people too much and it freaks them out. Sometimes I freak myself out. Sometimes I can't sleep. Sometimes I see a movie and it cuts to my core and I cry for hours. Sometimes I crave greatness. Sometimes I go for days without talking to anyone that matters. Sometimes I cannot live without music. Sometimes I feel very cold. Sometimes I want to curl up in a ball. Sometimes I spend money I don't have. Sometimes I wish I could change the past. Sometimes I feel trapped inside myself. Sometimes I am angry without knowing why. Sometimes I miss her. Sometimes I worry too much. Sometimes I finish a book and just stare at it for a while, because the story changed me. Sometimes I feel alone. Sometimes I hate the phone. Sometimes I wish I had a lot of money. Sometimes I love driving. Sometimes my bed is the safest place to be. Sometimes I think I have too much stuff. Sometimes I want to be alone. Sometimes I love being drunk. Sometimes I dance for three hours straight. Sometimes I cannot express myself. Sometimes I have a single conversation with someone and I know that person will always be my friend. Sometimes I wonder if I'll ever wake up next to the same person for the rest of my life. Sometimes I laugh all night long. Sometimes I can't cry. Sometimes I actually think Madonna and I would be good friends. Sometimes I miss innocence. Sometimes I lead and sometimes I follow. Sometimes I wish I looked different. Sometimes I listen to music for a long time and just stare at the ceiling. Sometimes my flaws seem so obvious. Sometimes I make good decisions. Sometimes I overanalyze. Sometimes I think I can do it alone. Sometimes I want to be kissed. Sometimes I think it's easier being one of them. Sometimes I forget that Princess Diana and John F. Kennedy, Jr. no longer grace this planet. Sometimes I feel lost in my own living room. Sometimes I feel really unlucky. Sometimes I wish I could fix people. Sometimes my soul feels so heavy I wonder if anyone else will ever help me carry it. Sometimes I abuse my body. Sometimes my favorite songs make me smile and sometimes they make me cry. Sometimes I am way too organized. Sometimes I worry what will happen if he dies. Sometimes I miss people I haven't seen or spoken to in years. Sometimes I eat too much. Sometimes I miss being an athlete. Sometimes I push people away just as I'm about to let them in. Sometimes I feel very tired. Sometimes I question if I have any talent at all. Sometimes I want to be with a particular person all the time. Sometimes I wish I had faith. Sometimes I'm not sure about things. Sometimes I wonder if I'm funny. Sometimes eye contact

is the best way to communicate. Sometimes words are magic. Sometimes I'm afraid it will happen again. Sometimes I close my eyes while I'm dancing. Sometimes I want to be nineteen again. Sometimes I put people on a pedestal that is too high. Sometimes I don't say what I'm thinking. Sometimes I watch three movies in one day. Sometimes I burp out loud. Sometimes I get impatient waiting to meet the love of my life. Sometimes I talk to myself. Sometimes I still cannot believe September 11<sup>th</sup> actually happened. Sometimes I eat pizza at three a.m. Sometimes I think it will all be okay. Sometimes I hate my habits. Sometimes I wonder why people like me and sometimes I wonder if anyone other than my family truly loves me. Sometimes I say the wrong thing. Sometimes I get too stressed out. Sometimes nothing can touch me. Sometimes I am tortured by what I did wrong. Sometimes I interrupt. Sometimes I look at old pictures and I can tell it hurt to smile. Sometimes I talk to the same person on the phone for three hours. Sometimes I am rude to people. Sometimes I wonder what it feels like to get shot in the stomach. Sometimes I feel really smart. Sometimes my memories are too sad. Sometimes I get a bad vibe and I am right and sometimes I get a good vibe and I am right. Sometimes I taste brilliance. Sometimes I worry about my karma. Sometimes I wish the phone would ring. Sometimes I fall for the wrong people. Sometimes the sun hurts my eyes but warms my back. Sometimes I feel like I don't belong. Sometimes things are perfect. Sometimes I like to just sit and watch things. Sometimes I wonder how long it will take to heal. Sometimes I go for days without turning on the TV. Sometimes I talk too much. Sometimes I'm very good. Sometimes it matters and sometimes it doesn't.

## Lines Written at 3 A.M. While Listening to Undermind

Craig Wynne

Mind maturation, growing older, big picture realized  
Developing deepness, a sense of place  
Seeing the images that illuminate the future  
A fog of haze, the view from space that sees the light  
Sophistication rising above the cheap piece  
The funk moves through my hips like wind through the grass  
Freedom breaks past the voices of blockers  
The true self emerging, arrogance a necessity perhaps to develop



## VI Fiction

### Whatever We'll Be

*William Boyle*

Pushing through the crowd at the 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue fair, Thomas suddenly felt very rotten. On every side of him there were people cursing and spitting and drinking. There were children doing drunken pirouettes, bumping up against him and then snickering and running off like little demons. On the curb there were crowded stands for sausage-and-peppers, *zeppole*, Italian ices, and pizza. There were also portable rides—a shaky-looking Ferris wheel, spinning teacups, and a bouncing bed. There was a dunk-tank with a priest in the hot seat, and a bunch of tough guys were hurling hardballs at the target to try to sink the poor priest, collar and all. Crooked police barriers blocked off the side streets. There was no way out. Thomas was sure he would collapse right there. Holding one arm across his trembling stomach, he pictured his thin body stretched out across the double-yellows, trampled.

Overwhelmed, he looked all around for Helen, who had left him fifteen minutes earlier to find a port-a-potty. When he found her, on the sidewalk near the corner of Bay 24<sup>th</sup> Street, standing against a telephone pole, eating a *zeppole*, he said, “Helen, we’ve got to get out of here.”

“What do you mean?” she asked. “We just got here.”

“This place is crazy. There are too many people,” he said.

“Take it easy, Thomas. Take a few deep breaths like I taught you.”

Thomas leaned against the pole, closed his eyes, and took a long breath.

“That’s it, Thomas,” Helen said. “Now, clear your mind. Don’t think of anything. Pretend these people aren’t here. That’s good. Now, let it out.”

Thomas let the breath out.

“You feel better?” Helen asked.

“Yeah, a little.”

“Good. Good.”

Helen bit down on the *zeppole* and sighed.

“Where’d you get the *zeppole*?” Thomas asked.

“Father Louis treated me.”

“Who’s Father Louis?”

“He’s the pastor at Cabrini, the church where we held the service for my mother.”

“He’s not the one in the dunk-tank, is he?”

“No.” Helen laughed.

Thomas had met Helen on the D train two weeks earlier and they’d started seeing each other. She was very unlike him and it always surprised him what an interest she took in his life. He was, after all, a bum of sorts. She, on the other hand, was one hell of a smart woman. She had grown up in the neighborhood, had gone to college across the Bay at Wagner, and then moved to Paris when she was twenty-three. After that, she lived all over the place—in San Francisco, Greece, New Orleans, Spain, Italy, and Mexico. She had returned to Gravesend two months earlier to bury her mother and to take care of her sick father. Thomas couldn’t claim to be a good son or a world traveler. He hadn’t seen his parents in almost fifteen years and hadn’t been any further away from Brooklyn than Albany. He was thirty-six, had been in love once, had even slept with a few women, but he had no real ambitions beyond drinking in bars and washing dishes and, now, being with Helen.

Helen brushed her hair away from her eyes and smiled at Thomas. She was forty-two but it didn’t show. There wasn’t a sprinkle of gray in her dark hair, and she still had a swell pair of legs. She was soft and very sweet and smart looking. There was always a book in her handbag, and Thomas was always amazed by the names of the authors—Lorca, Rimbaud, Tolstoy. The only thing that he hated about Helen, really hated, was that she had a scar across her belly that spelled out a man’s name: HANK. Thomas hated it from the first moment he had seen it, on their third night together. He and Helen had gone out for drinks at the Wrong Number, a bar on Coney Island Avenue where the lighting was romantic and Merle Haggard was on the jukebox. Afterwards, Helen took Thomas home and then she took him into her dead mother’s bed and sat him down and he lifted her blouse and she stood back and he looked first at her breasts and next at the name emblazoned in scar tissue just beneath her belly button. He stopped and asked what it was. Helen explained that her ex-lover, a writer named Hank, had cut his name into her skin with manicure scissors during an LSD-trip when they were very young. It made Thomas want to vomit. It was as if an artist had signed his painting, as if she were some sort of canvas or property. It almost stopped him from what he was doing, but he was drunk enough, he supposed, to forget it and kiss her neck and pull her down onto the bed and make love to her amidst the tangle of sheets that smelled like death.

Looking down now at Helen’s flower-print blouse sprinkled with confectioner’s sugar from the *zeppole*, Thomas realized that the blouse was no more than a cover for that terrible scar. That *scar*. He had seen it at least twenty times since that first night and he was constantly trying to push it out of his head, finding that in a sober state, when he wasn’t unnerved by a crowd or by sobriety itself, he would focus on its presence and it would eat away at his insides like so many tiny bugs. He wasn’t sure if he hated Hank the writer for doing such a thing or if he hated Helen for allowing it to happen or if he just hated the permanence of the thing itself. It was as if she would

live always for Hank and only Hank. Although Thomas had known Helen only a short time, he felt something strange and deep for her and he wanted the name gone from her belly and he wanted the history behind the name gone and he wanted it to be just the two of them drinking in a bar with no pasts and no futures, just that drinking time together and the walk home afterwards and the Hank-less lovemaking session. But Hank was there. He was always and would always be there. He was beneath her blouse now, straining toward her breasts, as she leaned against the telephone pole eating the *zeppole*. Thomas was suddenly mad with envy. His cheeks flushed over and he grew silent. Helen asked him something. He didn't answer her.

"Oh, what is it now, Thomas?" she asked again.

"Nothing," Thomas said, realizing that, after only two weeks, Helen had pegged him as the jealous type and could see the change in him whenever he thought about Hank.

"What is it, Thomas?" she asked. "Come on, we're having a good time. We'll stay a little longer, and then we'll go to the Wrong Number."

Thomas looked down at the ground.

"What? What is it now? First it's the crowd bothering you, now it's something else," Helen said. "What? Did you think about Hank again? Jesus Christ, Thomas. You'd think we've been going out for a few years. What made you think of him now?"

"I ..."

"What?"

"I was thinking how much I liked you and how much I like being around you and then I thought the only thing I don't like about you is his name in your belly."

"Jesus, Thomas."

Thomas looked at the crowd. He felt nervous again, like everyone on the street was witnessing his jealousy and thinking how goddamn pathetic he was. He turned to Helen. She smiled. "Come on, Thomas. Loosen up. We're not married and we're not dead. We're gonna get drunk and you get to lay me when we go home and tomorrow we can wake up and do it all over again."

Thomas thought about it and nodded. "I'm sorry," he said.

"It's okay, Thomas. You're sweet."

Helen took Thomas's hand and they walked around a bit more. They stopped for a ride on the Ferris wheel and, when it got stuck mid-turn for a few minutes, they laughed and Helen put her head on Thomas's shoulder and they looked out at the sad, dark rooftops of buildings. Thomas wanted to tell Helen that he loved her. He didn't, though. He knew it was too early and that saying it would probably scare her off. Instead, he stroked her hair. "Sing to me, Thomas," Helen said.

He laughed. "I can't sing."

"Sure you can," she said.

He thought about it and began to sing the only song he knew all the words to. "When I was just a little boy, I asked my mother, 'What will I be? Will I be handsome?"

Will I be rich?' Here's what she said to me: 'Que sera, sera. Whatever we'll be, we'll be. The future's not ours to see. Que sera, sera. What we'll be, we'll be. What we'll be, we'll be.'"

Helen cracked up. "Holy shit! I haven't heard that song in *years*, Thomas," she said. "Isn't it 'whatever *will* be, *will* be?'"

"Oh, I don't know," Thomas said. "Was it bad?"

"No, not at all, honey," she said. "It was wonderful."

Thomas blushed. "My mother always sang it to me," he said.

The Ferris wheel finally let loose and finished its last go-round. Helen and Thomas got off and walked around a bit more. "I remember coming to the fair when I was a kid," Helen said.

"Yeah, me too," Thomas said. "I always came with my grandfather and got a big blue cotton candy and he drank fifty-cent beers with the cops from the 62<sup>nd</sup> precinct."

"We always came as a family," Helen said. "Me and my mother and my father and my sisters."

"You have sisters?" Thomas asked. "I didn't know that."

"Yeah," Helen said.

"Where are they?"

"Joanne is a nurse at Lutheran and Maggie ... Maggie died a long time ago, before I left for France."

"Oh God, I'm sorry, Helen. I didn't mean to—"

"It's okay," Helen said, linking arms with Thomas and putting her head on his shoulder. "She died of leukemia. She was just a little girl."

Thomas thought about Helen's dead sister and her dead mother and he wondered what it was like to have dead people in your life. Helen didn't seem too upset about it, just as she didn't seem too regretful about her Hank scar. Thomas had never had anyone close to him die and the closest thing he had to a scar was a white sidelong swirl on the back of his hand where he had been cut with a broken shot glass when he was twenty. Dead people and scars, Thomas thought. What awful things.

"Win me a goldfish, Thomas," Helen said, pointing at a carnival tent just ahead of them where kids threw Ping-Pong balls at a table full of small glass bowls.

"It's a crime," Thomas said. "Those fish are always sick and yellow and they die the next day. It's too sad."

"It's romantic," Helen said. "We'll cut a Pepsi bottle in half and make him a nice little bowl, and then we'll buy him the best fish food around."

"Okay," Thomas said reluctantly.

They went over to the tent and Thomas bought three throws for a dollar. Helen clasped her hands together. "Come on, Thomas," she said. "You can do it."

Thomas put himself in position and threw the first ball underhand. It bounced from bowl to bowl before settling in a pile of green saran wrap in the center of the

table.

“Nice try, Thomas,” Helen said.

“You can do it, buddy,” the guy who sold him the balls said, and laughed. “Come on. Win your lady a fish.”

Thomas threw the second ball and it bounced around awhile and then landed in a red-rimmed bowl a few rows in. Helen cheered. The guy fished what looked like a thin bronze toe out of a large red bucket beneath the table and dumped it into a plastic bag. He handed the bag to Thomas, smiled, and walked away. “I got it,” Thomas said.

“I know, honey,” Helen said. “You did great.”

“It’s for you,” Thomas said, holding out the bag.

“I know, honey,” Helen said, accepting it. “Thank you.”

They looked into the bag at the sickly fish and smiled.

Soon after, they left the fair and took the bus to the Wrong Number. When they got to the bar, they sat at a booth in the back, and Thomas ordered two beers and an empty jar if they had one.

“An empty jar? Yeah, we got a couple of empty jars,” the waitress said. “What is it, for the fish?” She leaned down and looked into the bag. “That fish don’t have long. Maybe you should get him drunk.”

Thomas and Helen laughed.

“It doesn’t look too good,” Helen said.

“No, it doesn’t,” Thomas said.

The waitress brought back two bottles of beer, an ashtray, and an empty jar.

Helen carefully opened the bag, fumbling with the knot, and dumped the fish into the jar. “We need to name him,” she said, setting the jar in the center of the table.

“How about Clarence?” Thomas asked.

“Clarence? Where’d you get that one?”

“I’ve always liked that name.”

“Clarence? No. How about Thomas? After you.”

Thomas blushed.

“Thomas it is,” Helen said.

They sat back and got comfortable and ordered a few more beers and Helen bought a pack of menthols and smoked cigarette after cigarette, something she only did when she was drinking. Thomas noticed and admired the way she smoked, her elbow on the table, her head tilted to the side. It was a fancy way of smoking cigarettes. He wondered if Hank had ever admired the way she smoked.

“I like the way you smoke,” Thomas said.

“What?” Helen asked.

“I like the way you smoke. There’s something about it.”

“Thank you.” Helen laughed.

“Has anyone else ever told you that?”

“What?”

“Has anyone else ever told you they like the way you smoke?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

Relieved, Thomas let out a breath.

“What’s wrong, Thomas?” Helen asked.

“Nothing. No. Nothing,” Thomas said.

He finished his beer and ordered another. Helen considered that to be a challenge and chugged the rest of her bottle, banging it down on the table when she was done and ordering a new one. She was also, Thomas noted, a hell of a drinker, usually matching him beer for beer until closing time.

Helen got up and put a song on the jukebox. The song was “Ol’ ’55” by Tom Waits. “This was my favorite song when I was a little girl,” she said. “My father used to play it every night after dinner when he was drinking a beer and smoking his pipe.”

Thomas nodded. He put his chin down on the table and looked at the little fish swimming around in the jar. He stayed like that for a while, watching everything the fish did. “I think he’s dying,” Thomas said.

“What?” Helen asked.

“I think he’s dying.”

“Already? It can’t be.”

“He wouldn’t be jerking around so much if he wasn’t really sick.”

“You think?”

“Yeah. He’s dying.”

They had two more beers each, and then left the bar for Helen’s house. When they got there, Helen quietly opened the front door and they went inside. Her father was asleep on the couch with the television on. His glasses were hanging off the edge of his nose and he was snoring. Helen put a finger up to her lip and shushed Thomas. She took him by the hand and led him up the back staircase, as she had done so often already, and they went into a dark room at the end of the hallway, the room with the only bed where they had ever made love, the room where he had first seen the Hank scar, and where Helen’s mother had sat, propped up against the pillows, for all the slow, lonely weeks before her death. Helen put the fish jar on a bureau between a black-and-white picture of her parents and a tray full of perfumes.

Thomas sat down on the bed and Helen sat beside him. She took off her flower-print blouse and her skirt and began to help Thomas undress. Drunkenly, she fumbled with his pants buckle and the buttons on his shirt. He looked at her, at the scar on her belly, and pulled away. “Hank!” Thomas said. “Hank! Hank! Hank!”

“Sssshhhh, Thomas,” she snapped. “What are you doing? What’s wrong with you?”

“Look at you! Look at your belly! Hank! Hank! Hank! You want Hank! Well, I’m not Hank! You wish I was Hank, but I’m not!”

“I don’t wish you were Hank, Thomas,” she said. “It’s just something that happened when I was young. Now keep it down. My father is sleeping downstairs.”

“Did you think it was romantic when it happened?” Thomas asked.

“What? Did I think what?”

“Did you think it was romantic?” he asked again, standing up and going over to the bureau.

Helen covered her naked body with her crumpled clothes and said, “I don’t know, Thomas. I don’t know. I don’t remember.”

“Liar!” Thomas shouted. “Hank! Hank! Hank!”

“You know what, Thomas. I don’t need this. You’re drunk. You missed your chance with me tonight. Let’s go to sleep and we’ll wake up in the morning and forget about this.”

“I’ll never forget Hank!” Thomas said. “You don’t understand! You don’t see where I’m coming from! I wish you’d never known Hank!”

“You’re fucking crazy,” Helen said. “I’m going to sleep.” She got under the covers and sprawled herself out across the center of the bed. “If you want to come to bed,” she said crossly, “then come. I’ll forgive you in the morning. Otherwise, just leave and don’t wake my father up on your way out.”

Thomas sat down on the floor, his back against the bureau, and put his head in his hands. He began to cry. Helen didn’t move. “Hank,” he said softly to himself. He turned in his seat and half-opened the lowest bureau drawer. He riffled through some old papers and pictures and through Helen’s dead mother’s clothes. At the very bottom of the drawer was an antique vanity case. He took it out and opened it in his lap. There was a four-inch circular mirror and several cakes of discolored make-up and ratty old rouge brushes. In the center tray was a pair of rusty tweezers and manicure scissors. He took out the scissors and put the case on the floor. He lifted his shirt and began to stab at his lower stomach with the scissors, absent-mindedly trying to spell out the name HELEN. “Helen,” he said softly to himself. “Helen. Helen. Helen.” He looked up, over his shoulder, at the jar. The fish was still jerking around inside and the water was becoming cloudy. Dead people and dying fish and Hank scars, he thought. What awful things. He stabbed out some more of the name, bringing small beads of blood to the surface of his skin, and cried. He would never understand.

## VII Other Essays

### “I Could See Everything Sharp and Clear”: Hemingway, Bra Saunders, the *Valbanera*, *The Gangs of New York*, and the Symbolic Weight of Knots and Rings

*William Boyle*

For months, I’ve been looking at “After the Storm” in the wrong way. It is fitting, then, I think, that I have taken for part of my title the story’s most vital line—“I could see everything sharp and clear” (6)—when it took me so long to see “After the Storm” with any sharpness or clarity.

The task I set forth for myself initially was to do a fairly straightforward source study: Look into the wreck that Hemingway used for the story—the sinking of the Spanish liner, the *Valbanera*, in the Half Moon Shoals quicksand in the hurricane of 1919—scour old *Miami Herald*s, *Times-Picayunes*, and *Miami Metropolitans*, and, of course, find out all I could about Eddie “Bra” Saunders. Saunders, Hemingway’s good friend, was a Key West charterboat captain, and “After the Storm” was, according to Hemingway, Saunders’s story “word for word” (*Letters* 400).

Not long before beginning work on my essay, though, I found Susan Beegel’s superb “Just Skillful Reporting?: Fact and Fiction in ‘After the Storm.’” Beegel had done such a thorough job that I felt there was nothing else I could contribute to the matter. I realized that she had said all that I wanted to say about Saunders and the *Valbanera*, about how Hemingway made the story his own, and about his possible and likely research into the historical details of the wreck. To take on any of that would have been to tread already well-covered ground. I decided then and there that I would change topics.

But something drew me back to “After the Storm.” The more I read it, and the more I read the three manuscript drafts—all of which name Bra Saunders as the boatman—the more I felt compelled to write about it. But how could I approach it? How could I offer anything new and interesting to the mix? The story was neglected surely—often overlooked and under-appreciated—but the few essays that had been written on it—Beegel’s, Robert Walker’s, Anselm Atkins’s—were exhaustive studies, especially in regard to sources and influences.

I scrapped many versions of this paper. I felt suddenly that mentioning Saunders and the *Valbanera* would be misleading when really I wanted to explore the story’s themes and meanings or compare the Saunders character to *To Have and Have Not*’s Harry Morgan.



Again, though, something told me to stick with it.

Some answers finally came to me when I picked up A. E. Hotchner's commentary on adapting the story for the screen. In his introduction, Hotchner writes: "To begin with, what is there about this brief story that motivated me to attempt the obviously difficult task of turning it into a full-fledged screenplay? Quite simply, I felt it touched something common to everyone, including myself: the desire for a wind-fall against great odds" (29). Hotchner had put his finger on what made the story so fascinating to me. And likely, it's exactly what made Saunders's version of the story so fascinating to Hemingway. I began to think about the story in a new way.

Since, in Hotchner's reworking of the tale, the Saunders character becomes a young beachcomber named Arno, and the action of the story takes place in the Bahamas, not Key West, fourteen years after the *Valbanera* tragedy, I began to wonder about things I had taken for granted. I apparently had not comprehended Beegel's lesson—that Hemingway used fact to facilitate fiction, and that was all. Once I saw clearly, I began to wonder about the narrator, much as Hotchner says he did when he first sat down to adapt the story. He recalls that, among dozens of questions, he asked himself first: "Who is the man who is telling the story—a beachcomber? a fisherman? an American? a Limey? Who was the man he fought with, an old enemy?" (30). While Hotchner's screenplay strays a great deal from the story, he gets one thing straight: The main character is *not*—even if he was the model—Bra Saunders.

Interestingly enough, this line of thinking led me to Herbert Asbury's *The Gangs of New York: An Informal History of the Underworld*, which was published the same year—1928—that Hemingway first heard the *Valbanera* story from Bra Saunders on a fishing trip to the Dry Tortugas with John Dos Passos and Waldo Peirce and began work on the earliest draft of what was to become "After the Storm." This connection is not as much a stretch as it seems. We know, thanks to Michael Reynolds's *Hemingway's Reading: 1910-1940* (see entry 313), that Hemingway had Asbury's book in his Key West library. Though there is no mention of the book in Hemingway's *Selected Letters* or any biography or criticism I could find, we can venture a guess that he read it sometime soon after its initial publication and—considering that the subject matter of his story (a character of action tries to make off with a sunken liner's cargo) was not that far removed from Asbury's study of river pirates, thugs, and ruffians—that it had some bearing on the composition of "After the Storm," which spanned the years from 1928 to 1932.

Of course, Asbury's book has nothing to do with Key West, hurricanes, or sunken Spanish liners. It is, on the other hand, a landmark text of American criminology. It also marks a departure point in the American consciousness. The market crash of 1929 ushered in the Great Depression, an era when criminals like Bonnie and Clyde, Pretty Boy Floyd, and John Dillinger became folk-heroes, when the line between legend and reality was blurred and the folk-belief was that sudden luck could and would come in the face of overwhelming forces. It's no coincidence, then, that in

Hemingway's earliest manuscript draft, as Susan Beegel tells us, "the Bra of the story ... is reluctant to describe his attempts to loot the wreck, probably due to uncertainty about how his audience [three sport fishermen] will receive his illegal conduct" (78). But by the final draft, as times had changed drastically in four short years, any such reluctance is gone from the narrator. He is now as violent and unrelenting as nature itself; according to Beegel, as "brave and amoral as a predatory animal," a "hollow man" narrating the events of a tragedy (87). If anything, Asbury's book is filled with hollow men and women.

Consider this from Asbury's introduction to *Gangs*: "The basic creed of the gangster, and for that matter of any other type of criminal, is that whatever a man has is his only so long as he can keep it, and that the one who takes it away from him has not done anything wrong, but has merely demonstrated his smartness" (xv). I'm not suggesting that the narrator is a gangster; nor am I suggesting that Bra Saunders was a gangster. What I hope to get across is that both Bra—we can use "Who Murdered the Vets?" as something of a gauge of his character—and the character based on him have certain qualities—resourcefulness, self-reliance, self-command, endurance—that make them exemplary. These are the same characteristics that permeate the toughs from Asbury's rogue's gallery.

So, I don't think it would be out of line to apply Carlos Baker's claim that *To Have and Have Not* anatomized "Depressed America at large ... by using a microscope on Key West in little" (206) to "After the Storm." In both, Hemingway is critiquing the moral predicament by "[embodying] the diagnostic notes on decay," not preaching them (206). In Harry Morgan and the nameless narrator of "After the Storm," Hemingway invented characters that indeed weren't far off from Albert E. Hicks or even Dillinger and Floyd, in that they did what they had to do to survive. The reason that this character-type appealed to readers in the '30s—in fact, still appeals to readers—was precisely because they have the qualities I mentioned in the previous paragraph—resourcefulness, self-reliance, self-command, endurance—and, often, the ones who were supposed to have these qualities, didn't have them. Thus, the *Haves* (those with money, power, authority, prestige) popularly became the *Have-Nots*, while Dillinger and Floyd, Bra Saunders, Morgan and the Boatman with No Name, born poor, born as *Have-Nots*, became the *Haves*. This is reflected in *To Have and Have Not* and *Winner Take Nothing*. The reciprocal action of both titles has one real purpose: to show us that the *Have-Nots* are the heroes.

Of course, we know that Hemingway's heroes are always wounded. Perhaps with Morgan and the narrator of "After the Storm" the wounds have taken the shape of their hollowness or maybe the hollowness is the result of some other more concrete wound. Either way, we understand that they are not phonies.

Coincidentally, before I stray from the subject, the famous Midwest Crime Wave that made John Dillinger, Pretty Boy Floyd, and Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow household names began in early 1933, somewhere between the publication of

“After the Storm” in *Cosmopolitan* and its appearance as the first story in 1933’s *Winner Take Nothing*.

Allow me now, if you will, to shift gears and discuss a scene central to the action of the story that goes along with what I’ve been saying. Susan Beegel tells us that the vision of the drowned woman at the center of “After the Storm” “is one of the imagined details Hemingway used to make his fiction ‘round and whole and solid and give it life.’ It is the invented touch that makes the reader respond emotionally to fully realized fiction as to life itself, when ‘skillful’ reporting of fact remains flat and unmemorable” (82). Beegel also reminds us that in his first manuscript draft, which has Bra seeing the dead woman through a waterglass, Hemingway has made the note: “Have him dive down and see the woman” (82). In the second manuscript draft, Bra does dive down and sees the dead woman inside the porthole with “her hair floating all out” (226a, 17). After that, Bra climbs up, catches his breath, and then dives down again. On his second trip he “could see the woman,” and here Hemingway has inserted “floating in the water through the glass” (18). Then he’s crossed out “she had a ribbon around her hair,” changing it to “her hair was *tied* close to her head and her hair was all floating in the water” (18, emphasis added). He continues: “She had on a red dress. I could see the rings on one of her hands and she had pearls around her neck” (18). Here, he’s inserted: “She was floating right up against the porthole face down” (18). In this draft, Hemingway has begun to reveal what his outline suggests is key to this scene. In his manuscript notes, which recall in shorthand Bra’s story and the events of the *Valbanera* tragedy, Hemingway has written “12 feet down—people floating,” and then penciled in: “woman’s hair *knotted* up” (226c, emphasis added). In the published version of the story, Hemingway has settled on: “I could see the woman floated in the water through the glass. Her hair was tied *once*”—*once* being an insert—“close to her head and it floated all out in the water. I could see the rings on *one* of her hands” (*WTN* 8, emphasis added). Significantly, Hemingway cut “one of” from the last sentence and then reinserted it in the final draft.

What to make of all this? Well, as with all of the High Modernists, Hemingway drew heavily from James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*. That this most crucial scene is Hemingway’s invention—that it really makes the story his—is not solely because of the presence of the dead floating woman but because of the significant details of her knotted or tied hair and the rings on the fingers of one of her hands. The symbolic weight of knots and rings comes straight from Frazer. In Chapter 21 of *The Golden Bough*—“Tabooed Things”—Frazer writes of “Knots and Rings Tabooed.” He begins: “Many people in different parts of the world entertain a strong objection to having any knot about their person at certain critical seasons, particularly childbirth, marriage, and death” (288), the fear being that the soul’s necessary departure or delivery will not occur. The knot is also closely associated to the lock, which is fitting since most of the dead in “After the Storm” are locked in the sunken liner. In short, the ring also, like the knot or lock, can be seen as a “spiritual fetter,” an instrument that exercises “a certain

constrictive influence which detains and imprisons the immortal spirit in spite of its efforts to escape . . ." (293). Rings and knots can be seen as amulets that protect against demons or death and that guard the soul, as well. The same constriction, Frazer writes, "which hinders the egress of the soul may prevent the entrance of evil spirits" (294). In any case, Hemingway's use of knots and rings seems to facilitate what Beegel calls his "insistence on the difference between experience reported and experience truly imagined" (82). Sure, maybe given the chance, the narrator would have snagged the dead woman's rings. Certainly it would have been better to a hollow man than not getting "a nickel out of" the liner (*WTN* 11). Still and all, the symbolic weight of the knots and rings is undeniable for one major reason: Since this is the dramatic monologue of a hollow man, these very human details prompt us to consider the significance of the almost five hundred deaths that have taken place. Maybe the narrator has noticed the dead woman's rings for selfish reasons, but her hair "tied once close to her head and [floating] all out in the water" (8) signifies what Beegel calls the "ironic tension" between emotion and response.

In a letter to Maxwell Perkins dated April 8, 1933 and sent from Key West, Hemingway wrote of *Winner Take Nothing*:

At present I know the book needs one more simple story of action to balance some of the difficult stories it contains. I thought I had it with the last story I wrote, one I just finished about the war, but that turned out to be a hell of a difficult one. Stories like *Fifty Grand*, *My Old Man* and that sort are no where near as good stories, in the end, as a story like *Hills Like White Elephants*, or *Sea Change*. But a book needs them because people understand them easily and it gives them the necessary confidence in the stories that are hard for them. (*TOTM* 188)

A couple of months later, Perkins wrote back, suggesting that "After the Storm" was indeed a simple story of action, "probably the most popular sort of story" (195) and that it—not "The Light of the World," as Hemingway had planned—should be first in *Winner Take Nothing* so the book would be more accessible. So, is "After the Storm" a simple story of action? Such a claim certainly works well with what I have said here—that the narrator is representative of the times, that he is the sort of hollowed-out character who endures and survives. If "After the Storm" is a simple story of action, a story meant to balance more difficult stories like "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," which follows it in *Winner Take Nothing*, it is deceptive in its simplicity. It is, as Carlos Baker said of *To Have and Have Not*, "a study in doom" (211), and, as Borges said of Herbert Asbury's landmark *The Gangs of New York*, it "possesses all the confusion and cruelty of barbarian cosmologies, and much of their gigantism and ineptitude" (xi).

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## The Turning of Reality and the Blackness of Eradication: Wallace Stevens's "Domination of Black"

*Joshua Gran*

The giants of Modernism are a celebrated group of artists: Joyce, Picasso, Stravinsky, Proust, Schoenberg, Eliot, Matisse, and Kafka. Wallace Stevens, a poet long absent from the list, has received critical boosts from champions such as Harold Bloom and Helen Vendler. Despite the overdue esteem, his verse still occupies a minor position when compared with the aforementioned greats. And yet it is impossible to read Stevens without reading his times. In his Eliot-inspired vision, "Sunday Morning," Stevens writes:

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men  
Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn  
Their boisterous devotion to the sun  
Not as a god, but as a god might be,  
Naked among them, like a savage source. (91-95)

The paradoxical nature of their Dionysian dance, exhibiting both agility and instability, is violently sublime, like Diaghilev's choreography; their quest for a "savage source" is typically modern, seeking a natural order amid the maniacal workings of busy bourgeois life. In "The Poems of Our Climate" Stevens's narrator is a Kafkaesque epistemological seeker, in search of what lies beyond "The evilly compounded, vital I" (13). It is this neurosis about modern life that makes Stevens so relevant; he seeks the essential core within our consciousness and its relation to nature, finding beyond our sluggish wakefulness an inert splendor, the bird's shining feathers of his late masterpiece, "Of Mere Being."

Stevens is a craftsman on the level of Eliot, utilizing doubt, indirection, and irony as tools to critique and examine the particulars, as well as the dangers, of modern life. His 1923 collection of poems, *Harmonium*, lacked the obvious surprises of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Stevens's poetry seemed quieter, deceptively simple, sometimes flashy, but *always* ambiguous. His poem "Domination of Black" stands as a mark of excellence among his earlier verse, packing uncertain meanings into a matrix of colloquial language, much like Eliot. Even the title of the poem evades our craving for secure understanding. "Domination" can mean either the act of dominating, or the circumstance of being dominated. Black is often a figurative replacement for death, annihilation, or nothingness; but Stevens's poem is also concerned with the use of color, in necessary contrast to black (which is nothing more than the absence of retinal stimulation caused by the reflection of light). As a concept, black relies on an absence rather than a presence. Therefore, one is not sure whether black is being dominated

by an external entity or if it is dominating, though if black achieves dominance, then it ceases to be black because it lacks its necessary opposition. Its dominance must mean its own erasure, a telling paradox indeed.

The poem opens with austere simplicity:

At night, by the fire,  
The colors of the bushes  
And of the fallen leaves,  
Repeating themselves  
Turned in the room,  
Like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind. (1-7)

Stevens, the precise stylist, is here a reductionist, constructing the poem with a bare honesty. The poem's English is rooted in an emphatically American vernacular (tight, monosyllabic, modern), but the imagery is thoroughly British, a little taste of Coleridge's conversation poems; like "Frost at Midnight," "Domination of Black" skips along lily pads of thought. The attack of the terminal tee-sounds of "at" and "night" creates a nervous tick, melting into the breathy, "by the fire": twitch, twitch, and then calm. The black dark lingers outside, while the fire provides the solace of both light and likely warmth. The poem is clearly about space and movement, exciting the senses with an unusual description of the kinetic dancing of the fire, plastering the colors of the world onto the dark walls of a room, a setting that is both cozy and restrictive. In his book *Wallace Stevens*, William Burney writes of the location: "In general, when Stevens uses the image of a room with a window, he is thinking of the mind with some mode of perception, characteristically visual" (28). The area is small, signifying the diminutive mind when gauged against the immensity of existence. But the fire burns from within, radiating outward, like a mystical inner light, giving the metaphoric room life and movement.

The speaker continues by observing the correlation between the colors of the outside world with the lights upon the room's illumined walls. What a sharp taste for the spectral palate this man has! The colors are not merely reminiscent of the bushes and the leaves of the outside world, but are *repeating themselves*. We have wonderful options here. Is the verb acting on the noun? A deep mystery seems to be contained in that little monadic statement, "Repeating themselves." One has to wonder what Stevens means by "repeating." The word is so deliciously precise. How much of Plato is in the statement, and how much of the skeptical modern? Is there really a unity there, or is the speaker constructing it. Harold Bloom comments on the passage in his book *Wallace Stevens: Poems of Our Climate*; he writes of the apparent deficiency:

Stevens says that the autumnal colors troped in the room, yet he means mostly that they repeated themselves, with the repetition being a play of substitutions

and not of the color themselves. “Repeated themselves” requires to be read as its opposite, “failed to repeat themselves” .... To get started his lyric had to say the opposite of what it meant. (377)

Bloom makes the point as precise as can be. Like the title, the statement “Repeating themselves” works through evasion. In doing so, the poem broaches the obvious issue: Is the room as reliable as what lies beyond it? One immediately feels trapped in Kafka’s world, perhaps *The Trial*, seeking an out while Schoenberg’s music skims around the periphery, ensnaring the reader in an exhaustive, shadowy film of subjective skepticism.

If, according to Burney, the poem is typical of Stevens, then the fire within the speaker is replicating the natural world onto the caverns of the intellect. And what of the symbolic importance of bushes and leaves? The bushes might symbolize the speaker’s feelings of self-doubt, a small piece of shrubbery in a colossal world. Perhaps they are simply the colors of experience, of a mere bush and figuratively nothing more. The fallen leaves are, of course, a more complex metaphor, deriving some of their poetic function through inter-textual importation from Shelley, whose “Ode to the West Wind” employs a similar trope: “Drive my dead thoughts over the universe / Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!” (63-64). In his ode Shelley describes the generative power of an autumn wind to bring animation to dead leaves, employing the wind as an unseen creative presence, and making the leaves a metaphor for his own poetic powers. Shelley’s fallen leaves do not contain the strength of life, but they are full of energy. They are given significance by two extrinsic entities, the wind and the onlooker. Their beauty is noticed when they absorb the wind’s energy. By being appreciated, they have a importance beyond scientific utility. But what are these fallen leaves in Stevens’ poem? As Bloom says, the colors can only be said to repeat in the speaker’s head, where the trope finds its source as poetic reality. Is Stevens’s speaker questioning Shelley? Is he pointing to the futility of Romanticism’s transcendent godhead? Perhaps the speaker is reveling in the metaphor, noting that although the leaves have fallen they are part of an integrative nature, receptive to human feeling, crossing over from the outside into the room. Stevens’s poetry, like Eliot’s, evades certainty for the sake of possibility. It constantly seeks outlets from constraints, here the domination of black, the loss of the thought-inspiring movement-filled fire. The speaker keeps adding to the poetic vision with subordinate clauses (a hypotactic state of sorts), attempting to evade the inevitable. He (or she) follows the scene’s patterns, noting similarities between colors and actions, all turning in the wind, Shelley’s wind—an unseen power, perhaps even the black itself. But it is important to note that the colors turning in the room, even the repeated fallen leaves, are like actual leaves turning in real wind. The speaker has moved from a correlation of light to a correlation of movement. Are the colors in the room somehow imbued with the principles from which the actual leaves derive their color? Does the movement of the light share a common reason with the movement of the leaves? The speaker seems intent on



following these metaphoric patterns.

The poem continues:

Yes; but the color of the heavy hemlocks  
Came striding.  
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks. (8-10)

The “Yes” seals the first part, closure for the first vision. Now the speaker turns his attention to a new part of the fire light, the darker hues of the hemlocks. But to which hemlocks is the speaker referring? The “heavy hemlocks” might be a reference to the poisonous hemlock herb, used in the concoction administered to Socrates for his execution. This would naturally make their color “heavy,” the lumbering dark of annihilation. But the reference is more likely to the hemlock tree, a large plant that usually, like other conifers, dominates its habitat, darkening with shade the small bushes below. The darker tint is contained within the flame’s weakness; fire is a capricious symbol, easily quenched. As the fire is slowly extinguished, the heavy (nearer to black) hues will continue to dominate the brighter shades of the bushes and the leaves. Hemlocks also stand in opposition to leaves, the symbol of the poetic mind, for coniferous trees lack foliage. The beauty of the poem is that both connotations of hemlock seem equally valid; both seem to “come striding,” dominating the scene with darker tones, intimating the darkness that lies ahead. Stevens places “Came striding” alone on its own line, a poignant death march, heavy and gaited. The speaker is now conscious of the eradication of not only himself and of the poetic mind, but of all color, of existence. Suddenly another memory finds its origin, “the cry of the peacocks.” What is that line of Nietzsche? *Many a peacock hides his peacock tail from all eyes—and calls it his pride.* The peacock, a classic trope for vanity and conceit, waits to expose its beauty. The speaker, a wonderful example of Stevens’s skeptical persona, hears the human cry of death at this point, and wonders if all of this poetic posturing will end with a peacock’s cry.

The poem continues:

The colors of their tails  
Were like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind,  
In the twilight wind. (11-14)

What is the speaker thinking now? The colors of those very peacocks, remembered by their cries, are like the actual leaves turning outside. It should be immediately apparent how important movement is to the speaker’s understanding of life and consciousness. What keeps him from confronting the dread of the hemlocks is the movement of the poem’s thoughts, which actually *do* seem to turn like leaves in the wind, only now it is a “twilight” wind. Even in the speaker’s vision, the encroaching darkness looms. But the reader must remember that the poem is still taking place in the room, in the mind.

This simple reminder allows us to see the greater structure of the poem, taking into account its systematic leaps from one subordinate clause to the next. Remember the question from before—how much of Plato is in the poem? The allegory of the cave certainly haunts this compartmental setting. We feel trapped in the endless divisions of the intellect, seeking to emerge. Examine the agitated thinking involved here: *The colors of their tails were like the leaves themselves turning in the wind, in the twilight wind*. The speaker is engaged in a search for truth, for an objective “Yes” (from line 8). But that *yes* must confront the dread of the hemlocks. The ultimate question of the poem becomes, if reality is destined to be annihilated, then why emerge from the cave? What awaits man on the outside? The dreadful cry of the peacocks?

Yet there is a chance that the leaves, the colors, and the peacocks are indivisibly linked, again harkening back to Shelley’s poetic vision of placing meaning in an object’s use, its human significance (see “Mont Blanc”). They perhaps repeat each other by deriving from the selfsame principles, therefore placing each within a Neo-Platonic infrastructure of purpose, an inclusive world that smashes through the boundaries of the illumined room and the human mind.

We still have said nothing of the poem’s temporal setting. It takes place in a peculiar, timeless past, yet is nonetheless grounded in its seasonal implications of autumn. The transition to winter is here, and the twilight wind is certainly not merely ushering in night, but winter. The reader should feel one of Eliot’s inescapable voices from *The Waste Land*: “I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.” We are beginning to see how Stevens’s simplicity is diamond sharp, dancing, between a word and a world. He continues:

They swept over the room,  
Just as they flew from the boughs of the hemlocks  
Down to the ground. (15-17)

The peacocks fly from the hemlocks down to the ground. Isn’t this a curious new image? The prideful bird swoops down from the branches of the dark hemlocks. They originate from where the speaker sees the signs of darkness and black. Now Wordsworth’s great “Ode” has invaded the poem: “The Soul that rises with us, our Life’s Star, / Hath had elsewhere its setting” (59-60).

Wordsworth writes of the pilgrim spirit, neglectful of its source, radiating outward as it absorbs experience.<sup>1</sup> Our peacock demeanor, radiant and beautiful in its innate splendor, ascends to us from the black. Does the light of the peacocks sweep out of this mystical nothingness?<sup>2</sup> Or is experience the coloring of the otherwise inert blackness of existence? William Burney describes the latter option with precision: “As a negation—a lack of light and color—and as an intelligible quality, unnamed and untamed, this dominant black is an excellent example of what Stevens means by saying that ‘Reality is a vacuum’” (31). It is difficult to argue with Burney’s claim, yet one must not feel desperation in the assertion. Stevens is too crafty and hallowed to

be a nihilist.

The poem continues:

I heard them cry—the peacocks. (18)

How chilling. The speaker then asks,

Was it a cry against the twilight. (19)

Was it an elegy that the human spirit sings?

Or against the leaves themselves

Turning in the wind. (20-21)

Note the repetitions. The speaker is following all of the patterns, weighing all of the options. Now he wonders if perhaps the cry is against the dance of fallen leaves, seemingly infused with animation and purpose. Is the cry against Shelley's trope for poetic genius? We are certainly back to Plato here, mistrustful of poetry when gauged against truth: *Close up those barren leaves.*

After the wind, the speaker thinks back to the source of the stimulating light show, the fire. The question still remains, what is the cry of the peacocks against? Now we are just stuck turning:

Turning as the flames

Turned in the fire. (22-23)

And more repeating:

Turning as the tails of the peacocks

Turned in the loud fire,

Loud as the hemlocks

Full of the cry of the peacocks?

Or was it a cry against the hemlocks? (24-28)

Back to the peacocks and then the fire again, now "the loud fire"—talk about *the ineluctable modality of the visible*. The loud fire rings in the speaker's head, yelling *wake up!* But there is another loud, the deafening quality of the hemlocks, which at its loudest is not loud at all, but separate from the moving leaves outside of the room in which the speaker sits. Isn't it interesting to note the recursive quality of the speaker's thought-pattern, the confusion in the end of the questions? *Full of the cry of the peacocks?* The peacock's cry is full of itself? We are jammed in the infinite caves of the human mind. *Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?* More questions! The speaker is asking if it is a cry full of infinite possibilities, or simply against the dread of annihilation. The latter would be Shakespeare's *sound and fury*. The former causes skepticism and doubt.

The poem concludes:

Out of the window,  
I saw how the planets gathered  
Like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind.  
I saw how the night came,  
Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks.  
I felt afraid.  
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks. (29-36)

All of creation is now turning in the speaker. Night comes, the hemlocks absorb into the black, and the poem's motion is complete. Note the essential link established in this final section between universal laws of motion and the human mind's ability to connect creation's order. Yet, in the end, there is still a feeling of deficiency. The speaker is still stuck in the realm of substitutions, of metaphors, observations that do not triumph over annihilation. But within that sense of incompleteness the reader undoubtedly feels as if a long journey is over. What seals the poem is the confession, "I felt afraid." What makes the statement so poignant is that it is achieved not by a victory over petty emotions, but rather by an intellectual journey from ideas and principles to gut reaction. In an evasive way, the poem *is* complete, in that the speaker has achieved an honest statement that without the intellectual draining would not have achieved such eminence; it is a passionate response to man's ultimate dilemma. The cry of the peacocks continues.

### Notes

1. Note Wordsworth's use of light and movement.
2. I use the word *mystical* without explanation. I will let Stevens's visions speak for themselves. They are honest, revealing, cosmic. They allow me the word.

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Subverting the Gaze in the “Absolute Photograph”:  
An Exploration of Identity in Marguerite Duras’s  
*The Lover*

Kathena M. Hasbrouck

The image doesn’t exist. It was omitted. Forgotten. It never was detached or removed from all the rest. And it’s to this, this failure to have been created, that the image owes its virtue; the virtue of representing, of being the creator of, an absolute.

—Duras (10)

Marguerite Duras has a keen skill for toying with traditional notions of identity and image. While some might believe that society alone constructs a person, she has a different perspective. Her attempts at defining and redefining herself through writing topple the idea of performative acts of gender and self. She builds her character and her history as she sees it, not as someone else does and not as history books know it. The nostalgic narrator in Duras’s 1984 novel, *The Lover*, employs this tactic by reflecting back on her life, on what has and has not been. By destabilizing history and how the world interprets it (in relation to her life specifically), she is able to personally secure her individual identity.

Duras’s book is much more than a mere coming-of-age story guided by fragmented memories. Instead, it illustrates how one approaches identity through coping with surroundings, expectations, and a subjective understanding of the world. Some critics focus on the bulk of Duras’s own autobiography that invades the text; as a result, they neglect some of the more important themes being conveyed. While authorial history is interesting and often provides new dimensions to the story, the purpose of *The Lover* is different, more specific, more revealing. Though knowledge of Duras’s life may add different layers to the novel, it is the story’s narrator, and how she presents herself, who actually breathes life and meaning into the text. By taking her past into her own control, *The Lover*’s narrator asserts herself and, in essence, actively owns her life. It is she who chooses what is represented or hidden, what is reminisced on or forgotten. It is she who makes facts surface or fade.

In *The Lover*, Duras uses a number of different methods to articulate her purpose. Most importantly, in utilizing a narrative that continually shifts between first and third person, and that focuses on re-conceiving as a way of knowing the true self, the narrator of the novel (supposedly the young Duras) learns to deal with the scrutiny of an external gaze that seeks to dominate and frame. In her essay “The Laugh of the Medusa,” Hélène Cixous explores how society asserts its gaze on women as a method of ensuring its dominance. If women willingly give in to such thinking, they relinquish power altogether. It is women’s duty to reclaim themselves from the

patriarchal myths that have shaped their thinking and actions. Cixous believes that simultaneously reclaiming the body and language is the key to embracing identity. *The Lover* accomplishes just this.

In actively representing the development of her narrator, Duras takes control of how the woman's identity is perceived and assessed. Over the course of the novel, she herself becomes the source of the gaze. In their article "Objectifying the Subjective: The Autobiographical Act of Duras's *The Lover*," Jeffrey Staley and Laurie Edson explain that: "For Duras to objectify herself is to create an image like a photograph, which exists outside of subjectification and claims to make a representation of the private self public" (290). The things that might once have been hushed or quieted due to propriety, shame, or family loyalty are granted freedom to exist once Duras (and her narrator) place their own buffers around fact and fiction. By sharing specific anecdotes from her childhood in French Indochina, as she understands them, the narrator assumes ownership of her experiences. In short, this actively claimed ownership leads the way to the autonomous construction of self while simultaneously reconstructing history.

By maintaining a wavering narrative voice in the novel, the narrator ensures that she never becomes trapped by outside convention or definition. With the flow between actual recollection and embellished memory, her perspective changes, thus enhancing the split subjectivity present in the process of finding herself. Breaking personal perspective apart serves to distance the narrator from her past so that she can view it from a more analytical vantage point and can objectively come to a clearer understanding of what happened when she was fifteen. Leslie Hill writes:

The narrator-protagonist doubles up as a third-person heroine of a mythic narrative and the first-person witness of an apocalyptic enactment. But the text refuses to mediate between these two positions, and merely shifts back and forth between them. This serves to emphasize the unbridgeable gap between the first and third person, between 'I' and 'she.' (123)

The constant shifting of voices alerts the reader to the narrator's ever-discerning and sensitive awareness of self. It also pays attention to the unfixed nature of identity as a part of history. Interpretation and understanding change with the teller of the story, whether it is the person who actually experiences the event, or an outside observer.

In considering the division of narrative voice, the question arises: what events make *The Lover's* narrator switch from *I* to *she*? The first time third-person narration enters the text is when the young woman first comes to the realization that she is no longer a mere child, that instead she is becoming a sexual object. The curious voyeuristic attitude she takes toward herself works to separate her from the child she was and the woman she is developing into. While she methodically catalogs the clothing that her youth knew—the threadbare silk dress, her brother's leather belt, and her canvas sandals—it is when the narrator discusses the addition of a man's brownish-pink

fedora that she steps away from the naïve, unknowing figure of the child. An awareness of her new self awakens when she sees her reflection in the shopkeeper's glass:

There, beneath the man's hat, the thin awkward shape, the inadequacy of childhood, has turned into something else.... Suddenly it's deliberate. Suddenly I see myself as another, as another would be seen, outside myself, available to all, available to all eyes ... I take the hat, and am never parted from it. (13)

Much like French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's theory regarding the mirror stage, this scene portrays the narrator truly recognizing herself, seemingly for the first time. However, while Lacan's subject feels whole and empowered with this new glimpse of identity, *The Lover's* narrator feels differently. She, like the child in Lacan's essay, sees something new in her reflection, a new image, a new fullness, yet hers is fractured and confused. Still a young girl dealing with the onset of womanhood, her character and image are not fully formed. Thus, her split subjectivity shifts between child and adult, objective and subjective. With the addition of the fedora, the young woman, now partially conscious of what the world knows her to be, accepts her changed role with a rapt fascination. She wants to see where exactly this fresh identity will lead her, and so is eager to do her part to ensure its continuation. With the introduction of the fedora, the narrator becomes cognizant of the fact that she has the power to watch (herself as well as others) and to be watched. She never wants to relinquish this newfound asset.

To continue, the theme of an all-encompassing gaze is what drives the narrator's actions; ultimately, identity is built on both the public and private image of a person. Awareness of the existence of these two components develops a full understanding of character. At the commencement of *The Lover*, the narrator is already old, worn. A man approaches her and remarks: "I've known you for years. Everyone says you were beautiful when you were young, but I want to tell you I think you're more beautiful now than then. Rather than your face as a young woman, I prefer your face now. Ravaged" (3). His assessment of her appearance revives the male gaze that first held the narrator captive as a child, the one that based her identity on her gender and outward form.

Directly following the scene of the novel where the man commends the narrator's changed face, the narrator brings the reader into her own gaze, into the intimate world that she controls. She explores a time that was never recorded, a significant moment that marks a great change in her life. Alone on a ferry, crossing the Mekong River, events and the narrator's self-knowledge change forever, yet no one knows. The narrator fancies what the photograph might have looked like if the subject (her life) had been important enough to document, but it was not, so she alone is left with the memory of what happened on that crucial day. She alone is able to reshape her image and identity in the face of reality, because no one else was available to bear witness or present an outside gaze to contest her version of events. Marilyn Schuster notes: "This

is the ‘absolute photograph,’ the photograph that was never taken, that exists for her alone—generator and product of her writing. It is precisely because the photo was never taken that it is powerful; its absence is the space in which representation, writing, can happen” (119). The void left by another’s gaze presents the narrator with an opening to reconstruct her past as she deems appropriate. Beginning with that precise moment on the ferry, she adopts an active viewpoint of what her history is composed of. She makes herself important by investing time and effort into the building of that absent “absolute photograph.”

When she meets the Chinese man, her first lover, the narrator slips into the objective third-person voice she has chosen to represent the leap from childhood into adulthood. Their initial encounter situates her in the position of being observed and measured, although the man is tentative and scared. He is not white, and racial tensions cause grief and barriers. Despite this, after commenting on the originality of her fedora (the symbol of her sexual development), the man from Cholon tells her that, “She’s so pretty she can do anything she likes” (33). Taking this as permission, the narrator grasps the chance to start looking at him, to appraise his looks and value. She utilizes her newly honed objective eye and gleans key information from the volumes that lie within the man’s history. She learns that he is lonely and misses Paris, and that his mother is dead and he is an only child. She learns that he (or, more specifically, his father) is rich (34). By asking questions and placing the man under scrutiny, it is she who holds the power, she who owns the gaze.

The narrator revels in the idea that she has the ability to control the situation she is entangled in. Neither the Chinese man nor her family controls her. The choices she makes are structured entirely on her own ideals and views. Power rests within her because she wills it to be so. In her article, Morgan elaborates on the lovers’ relationship: “The balance of passion is weighted on his side, while the balance of power (the passive power of a desired woman) is on hers” (274). The man is swept up in a great love for the young woman, enraptured by her beauty, her dreamlike qualities, but the narrator is almost void of these irrational fits of passion. She maintains control by distancing herself, by remaining almost impersonal and asserting: “What she wants is for him to do as he usually does with the women he brings to his flat” (38). She wants to blend in with all who have come before her, perhaps so that her image and identity are not assaulted by the lover’s gaze. She wants to retain her newfound autonomy. It is important to note that throughout the novel the man from Cholon is never referred to in a possessive tone. He is never “my lover” to the narrator; instead, he is merely “the lover,” a man observed by a detached observer (Morgan 276). The young girl’s first lover becomes almost a pawn, an experiment in life’s offerings.

Even as the narrator becomes wrapped in her new feelings of physical intimacy, she reacts almost with surprise, almost with a scientific interest at what she is experiencing. She does not pant and moan with the thrill of passion. Instead, she simply notices that she desires the man from Cholon (Duras 40). When they



consummate their relationship, the young girl applies the same objectifying gaze on the lover that other men had used on her. She notes: “The skin is sumptuously soft. The body. The body is thin, lacking in strength, in muscle, he may have been ill, may be convalescent, he’s hairless, nothing masculine about him but his sex.... He moans, weeps. In dreadful love” (38). The narrator depicts the man as an article to be looked over, studied, and catalogued. By feminizing her lover, by disempowering him through her observing and evaluating, the narrator forces him to endure the same objectification that society once pushed on her. Doing so puts her in power (Staley and Edson 293). The narrator comes to the understanding that sex not only helps provide power but helps to assert her autonomy and control.

While the narrator begins to realize that the new sensations she is privy to are enjoyable, she longs to expand both her knowledge and might. In a vivid passage regarding her longing for schoolmate H el ene Lagonelle, the narrator explains how she feels worn out with desire. Despite the fact that she feels an urge “to devour and be devoured by” H el ene’s breasts (74), in the same manner that her own are eaten by the man from Cholon, it is not pure carnal lust that drives her, but a lust for control. Though she may crave intimate relations with her schoolmate, it is not for mere physical satisfaction. H el ene is not as bright as the narrator: “She can’t learn, can’t remember things. She goes to the primary classes at the boarding school, but it’s no use” (72). Her parents want to marry her off as soon as possible. In short, she is the narrator’s opposite; she is simple, very beautiful, and cast as an object for the duration of her life. To make certain that the same lot does not happen to her, the narrator places H el ene in the direct line of her gaze. She objectifies H el ene, for example, so that she herself does not risk becoming objectified once again. She remarks: “H el ene Lagonelle is seventeen, seventeen, yet she still doesn’t know what I know. It’s as if I guessed she never will” (73). One of the narrator’s distinct goals is to guarantee that she never falls back into the accepting innocence of youth that H el ene still embodies. She will not be a thing made to conform and yield to another’s reign. She requires self-rule, and so in having sex with either the Chinese lover or H el ene, the narrator makes this a reality. Because sex is a source not only of delight but, more importantly, of control, the narrator “does not describe pleasure as something shared, but as something imparted to, something taken” (Staley and Edson 296). Her longing for H el ene renders the narrator more eager for dominance and power than before. The knowledge she holds leaves her hungry; she wants more autonomy, more conquests, more experiences. H el ene, like the man from Cholon, is a mere object to the narrator.

The final scene of the novel shows the young woman leaving for France by boat. Her image on the vessel recalls the day, the un-photographed day, when she stood on the ferry. Similar to that essential day, crossing the water secures the young woman’s new understanding of herself and the world. As on the day the man from Cholon approached her on the ferry, “She knew he was watching her. She was watching him too” (112). Unafraid to embrace the objective certainty experience and confidence

have instilled in her, she moves forward, to France and womanhood simultaneously. At this point, her narrative voice no longer trips between first and third person. Her questioning of identity and voice no longer falters. She is conscious and vibrant. The narrator now solely speaks as an empowered, objective person able to look back on her past as a construction of her own making. She certifies her position as owner of the gaze, and object of it, thus guaranteeing complete autonomy.

Duras's intention in *The Lover* reaches beyond a basic understanding of self and identity. She illustrates one example of the play for power that society reacts to on a regular basis. In life, regardless of time, place, or situation, men and women are victim to the same dissection and objectification. *The Lover* provides not just memoir and story, nostalgia and remembrance, but a judicious analysis of what all people experience one way or another. By omitting names, dates, and specific places (streets, restaurants, and what have you), the novel becomes the story of everyman (and everywoman). This coming-of-age tale as expressed by a woman combating past and future defines the meaning of identity as a struggle for autonomy. The narrator in Duras's novel, much like the dynamic author herself, goes on to be strong and independent, regardless of the hurdles that dizzied her adolescence. Rising above the constricting gaze of an outside observer returns the narrator's identity (both body and mind) back to her.

By reclaiming her self and spirit, the narrator asserts independence and clasps hold of her past, as she sees it, for her sake. *The Lover* is built on the recollections of a woman looking back at her youth in Indochina, at what did and did not occur. What justifies her story even more intensely is the fact that no "absolute photograph" exists; there is no document to impede her view or bias her story. The novel's narrator and Duras simultaneously take control of their lives and pasts by setting pen to page, thought to reflection. Some of the most valuable memories in people's lives are not recorded via document or photograph, and that is what offers new light in regard to identity; people do not necessarily have to live with the weight of an official history. Once the gaze of the outside world is lifted, identity and self can be restructured, rebuilt, and reknown.

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## VIII Book Reviews

Stephen Greenblatt. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*.

New York: W. W. Norton, 2004.

Thomas G. Olsen

The publishing world is currently awash in editions of Shakespeare, study guides and “companions” to Shakespeare, scholarly research on Shakespeare, and even lighter fare intended to make Shakespeare fun: graphic novels, children’s versions, quotation and quiz books, recipes for brushing up your Shakespeare, or for learning Shakespeare “without tears,” or without fear, and so on. And despite his fragmentary and mostly unrevealing life records, Shakespeare has also been the subject of no shortage of full-length biographies. But it’s a daring author who accepts the challenge (or perhaps commits the folly) of attempting to construct a life record from these shreds and patches of hard evidence.

And yet this is a siren’s call that many over the years have answered. I was not surprised, some time ago, to learn that Stephen Greenblatt, arguably the leading early modern scholar and, as the *de facto* founder of New Historicism, one of the English-speaking world’s most influential contemporary critics, heard this call as well. There is, after all, a core human instinct to want to know more about the personalities and psychologies of our celebrated artists, thinkers, performers, and leaders—even about our most notorious criminals. Stephen Greenblatt’s impulse to render Shakespeare a subject of biographical research has to be understood, I think, as one that we all share in, a curiosity to know (or to try to know) that we all possess to one degree or another. Greenblatt, however, answers the siren’s call better than almost anyone could.

His title, with its Shakespearean pun on *will* as the artist’s given name, as libido, and as general appetite, says a great deal about his book’s purpose and methods. Essentially, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* is a journey, an essay into the interior life of Shakespeare. And such an endeavor must perforce be an “essay” in the root sense of the word—an *attempt*, a *try* at building a coherent life story out of material that, notoriously, refuses to yield much at all about how Shakespeare’s mind (or his will) worked. Yes, it is true that scholars such as Samuel Schoenbaum did make a career out of sifting through the scant documentary evidence that can still be dug up and re-assembled, but even Schoenbaum’s meticulous efforts don’t get us very close to the really big issues: what was Shakespeare doing during “the Lost Years” of 1585-92, just before he is first mentioned as part of the London theatrical scene?

what was his married life or his life as a parent like? why did he pack it in and retire to Stratford-upon-Avon when he was still very in possession of his creative powers? Most hard documentary evidence is cold legal stuff or is otherwise peripheral to what we assume must have been his emotional and intellectual core. Where in any of this is the record of an interior life? Where is the material that might help us to piece out, even to guess at, the thoughts, emotions, the hopes and anxieties that would offer us a glimpse into the creative mind that brought to life the likes of Richard II, Falstaff, Hamlet, King Lear, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, or Prospero?

Inevitably, of course, in response to these insurmountable lacunae in the documentary record, Greenblatt is forced to turn to the content of the plays as a form of evidence. And it is here, on this methodological point, that his critics will surely cry foul. For although he marshals a battalion of carefully chosen terms (“might have,” “may well be,” “Shakespeare no doubt would have”) to signal again and again that he is writing in the conditional, the speculative, the supposed, or the wished-for, Greenblatt over and over slips into the terminology of a straight, confident biographical narrative (“This was a crucial experience for Shakespeare, a challenge to all of his aesthetic and moral and professional assumptions”). I anticipate that some readers will resent Greenblatt’s constant blurring of the line between the possible and the factual; but to them I would ask, how else can a biographer of Shakespeare proceed? Any biographical narrative must make leaps; there is never a way really to know the full interior, in all its nuances, complexities, and contradictions, of any subject, even of an inveterate diarist such as Virginia Woolf. The alternative—a manifestly unattractive one—is never attempting to present Shakespeare as a subject. Biography is perhaps a bit like love in this respect: it is better to have tried and distorted than never to have tried at all.

Greenblatt’s title also signals a great deal about how his book is written. A masterful writer of academic prose, able at least since his landmark *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), to render complex, even inchoate materials comprehensible and exciting to readers of many levels of sophistication and experience, Greenblatt manages here to craft a narrative that reads like fiction and yet tells us all that can be discovered or reconstructed about Shakespeare as a subject. To be sure, Greenblatt has several themes that may strike readers as new or somewhat idiosyncratic. For example, the apparent Catholicism of his father John forms a theme that other biographers and critics seldom make so central to the son’s life, surfacing especially in Greenblatt’s account of what he imagines to be Will’s meditations on Purgatory as he crafts his *Hamlet*. This is, I find, a very persuasive line of argument that may shake up Shakespeareans for a long time to come. If so, the conventional image of Shakespeare as a spokesman for authority and the status quo (at its most extreme, the notion of a “Great Chain of Being” popularized by E. M. Tillyard’s hugely influential *The Elizabethan World Picture*) is in for a rough time as Shakespeareans begin to think of the great English playwright and poet as someone living multiple forms of double lives.

Though Greenblatt has become famous (notorious to some) as the leading figure of New Historicism, this project bears few telltale marks of a New Historicist outlook. True, Greenblatt tends to see the world as a material place and Shakespeare as a material guy, and he is vivid and persuasive in describing Elizabethan and Jacobean England, with its daily reminders of death, violence, and spiritual oppression that most of us would find intolerable. But at the same time, his emphasis ultimately falls not on the material but the emotional and creative life of Shakespeare; the world is what Shakespeare drew upon. The only intangible realm not adequately represented in the book is the rich imaginative life that we must assume that Shakespeare enjoyed as a result of his voracious and ranging reading of everything from the classics to lowbrow penny pamphlets.

Though the book really is, to my mind, a success from end to end, some chapters strike me as especially brilliant. Chapter 4, entitled “Wooing, Wedding, Repenting,” is the best global account of the moral sensibility that produced the comedies that I have read in a long, long time. His eighth chapter, “Master-Mistress,” is, I think, the most valuable short critical assessment of the Sonnets that I have ever seen. And, as I hinted above, his discussion of *Hamlet* in the second half of chapter 10 really does make me think about this masterpiece in a new way. In some ways, he beats Harold Bloom at his own game in this chapter, making a more plausible case for Shakespeare’s “invention of the human” than Bloom does in five times as many pages. True enough, all these discussions (and others, too) rely on a heavy dose of speculation and connecting of dots that aren’t really there, but we must remember that *any* biographer of Shakespeare is going to have to do the same.

At its core, *Will in the World* is true to its subtitle: it’s a biography devoted to Shakespeare’s *becoming*, not his *being*. The book’s energy comes from observing closely and commenting upon Shakespeare’s loving regard for the endlessly stimulating world around him. Greenblatt’s central objective is attempting to make sense of a creative synergy between the world that Will lived in and the ultimately unfathomable reaches of his imaginative genius. *Will in the World*’s great theme is that Shakespeare drew from his world, lived fully in it, loved it, and re-presented it in his works in a nuanced way that forever changed the rules of literary representation. It’s an approach that certainly has its risks, but as I mention above, I am not sure there is any solution to the problem, short of never attempting a biography at all.

Does it follow, then, that perhaps the least satisfying chapter in a very, very satisfying book is the final one, in which Greenblatt describes Shakespeare as no longer *becoming* anything, but rather withdrawing from his art and from the stimulating world of London as he retires to his native Stratford-upon-Avon and takes up the life of a middle-class gentleman (a position his feckless father never could hold onto), apparently obsessed by materialism, legalism, and family quarrels? In particular, Greenblatt offers what feels like a too reductive reading of *King Lear* and *The Tempest*. Of course, his facts are all in the right places: *Lear* is indeed a strange brew of early

modern cultural anxieties over succession and aging, of topical scandals in the news, and of the 40-year-old artist's interior impulses as he himself reached middle age. And though he acknowledges that *The Tempest* was not in fact Shakespeare's last play, he is nonetheless drawn to see in the magus Prospero a version of Shakespeare himself, drained by a life of creative endeavors and ready to break his magical staff and (most significant) to burn his book of spells. Traditional biographical critics will be pleased to see that Greenblatt falls into line by discussing the play as if it were Shakespeare's great "farewell to theater." This reading of *The Tempest* is a pleasing fiction, perhaps the most alluring Shakespeare story to romantically inclined biographers. Even if this story's chronology does not work out and even if one has the strong sense that Greenblatt would like to say much more about the critical impulse to cast Prospero as Shakespeare's proxy, he manages to make a plausible, comforting case for this reading of *The Tempest*, but at the cost of adequately presenting all that the play really encompasses.

Still more reductive, however, is Greenblatt's suggestion that *King Lear* is principally a play about Shakespeare's retirement or his plans for retirement. Well, yes, of course it is, but in roughly the same way that *Moby-Dick* is a novel about whaling. In a book so alive to the metaphysical dimensions driving Shakespeare's great career, it is disappointing to see so little attention given to the metaphysics of Shakespeare's most probing, most questioning tragedy. No, Greenblatt does not fail to quote Gloucester's observation that we are to the gods what hapless flies are to cruel schoolboys. But this is a play that insists upon, that hammers away at the great metaphysical puzzles: why should a dog have life and not the hanged Cordelia? what are we to make of Lear's raging against the elements during the storm or his prayer at the mouth of Poor Tom's hovel? how much authorial "intention" should we see in Edmund's radical skepticism about the workings of the cosmos? *Lear* becomes a play about retirement because this book has to end somewhere, because like all conventional narratives, it has to have a *telos*, an endpoint, a purpose. I am willing to concede, however, that despite my criticisms, one could do worse than construct a *telos* for a great creative life out of *King Lear* and *The Tempest*.

This final disappointment aside (caused, as much as anything, perhaps, by my wishing this wonderful book would never end), I recommend Greenblatt's study with all enthusiasm. If you are going to read one biography of Shakespeare—and there are many, many to choose from—make it this one. His rare combination of scholarly discernment, narrative sense, and stylistic grace makes this project four hundred pages of delightful reading. *Will in the World* will prove accessible and interesting to the most general of readers, just as it achieves a welcome combination of familiarity and freshness for those with a deeper personal or professional investment in the life and works of Shakespeare.

Valerie Hemingway. *Running with the Bulls:  
My Years with the Hemingways.*

New York: Ballantine Books, 2004.

H. R. Stoneback

Let's get the fundamental business of a "book review" dispatched post haste: this is an extraordinary book that tells a remarkable story, written in elegant understated prose by a witness to and participant in the saga of one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's greatest writers—Ernest Hemingway. It is also very much a *family* saga, for the author Valerie Hemingway was not only Hemingway's close friend and confidante and private secretary in his final years, but also the friend and assistant of the author's widow, Mary Hemingway, with whom and for whom she performed one of the monumental literary tasks of the 1960s: organizing the vast collection of Hemingway's papers—his correspondence and manuscripts and unpublished work—after his death in 1961. And then, in 1966, Valerie Danby-Smith became Valerie Hemingway when she married Ernest's youngest son, Gregory. Even for Hemingway scholars and aficionados who have read *all* the biographies—and have known, as this reviewer has, many of the biographers, what they knew or thought they knew, and what they omitted from their volumes—this volume is indispensable, containing both new information and new *understanding*, and it belongs on the shelves of every student of Hemingway's life and work.

Since it is fashionable among reviewers in all the best places to offer "full disclosure" early in their essays, I will do so here, even if I distrust words like "full" and "disclosure," or any word remotely akin to that c-word "closure," which is even more sinister than it is popular these days. Life's great passions, dramas, tragedies—the suffering and joy, the love and loss that are the material of a proper memoir about a full, complex life well-lived—must not be subjected to the popular fantasy of a kind of talk-therapy parliamentary cloture. What I must reveal here, then, is that I cannot take the book-reviewer's public vow of (often phony) detachment, because the author of this book, Valerie Hemingway, is a friend for whom I feel great admiration and affection. She has been my keynote speaker at three conferences I have directed, in France and in New York. Some readers of this review will recall that I published a "Discussion" with Valerie along with her essay "Grace Under Millennial Pressure" in these pages a few years ago in our Hemingway Centennial Issue (Vol. XI, Spring 2000). She has been a charming and cherished guest in my home in New York, my rented homes in Provence and Italy. Indeed some of the best stories she tells in this compelling book I first heard in late-night conversations at my kitchen table in the Hudson Valley, at my dining room table in the artist Yves Brayer's thatched-roof gardian cabane in the Camargue, and at the long table in my apartment perched on the edge of Isola Pesca-



tori with a three-way view from our terrace doors of Lago Maggiore and the Alps. If that is not sufficient disclosure, I will add that I also knew two of the primary characters in her narrative—Gregory Hemingway and Mary Hemingway. Surely all this will serve, for some readers, to disqualify this as a book review. So be it, and if it makes some readers more comfortable to regard this as a “personal essay,” or an anecdotal memoir-about-a-memoir, that’s fine with me.

Now then, why should we read and treasure this book? For that mythical creature the general reader (hereafter m.c.g.r.), there are many reasons to read this volume: 1) because it is a well-told tale of travel and adventure with the rich and the famous; 2) because it is the moving story of how an Irish girl from a shattered family spent fourteen years at a convent boarding school—“the youngest pupil ever ... as well as the student who spent the longest time there” (11)—on the gray north side of Dublin, before courageously going out into the world on her own as a teenager; 3) because it has romantic appeal—important for the m.c.g.r., they say—the romance of a teenager who was loved by two famous writers, Ernest Hemingway and Brendan Behan, who stood by Hemingway in his last years (and later married his son), who bore Behan’s son; 4) because it is the story of a strong and loving mother who held together a large and complicated family; 5) and perhaps because our m.c.g.r. happened to see her on the *Today Show* and was charmed by her interview (all 5.3 minutes of it as Valerie told me with typical exactitude in a recent letter).

But for the student of literature and the Hemingway aficionado, the main reason to read this book is for the Portrait of Papa. Valerie has a good deal to say about Ernest’s “urgency and vitality,” “the intensity of his presence,” and how “around him everything came to life” (88). “Traveling with Ernest was never dull,” she writes; he enjoyed life “to the fullest, and he had the gift of being able to impart his pleasure and enthusiasm to those around him.” He was funny, imaginative, “deeply sensitive,” and had “the most inquiring mind of anyone I’ve ever met”; his “knowledge was vast and diverse” yet he “constantly deferred to those around him,” and when he asked questions he really listened to the answers (73). He was “a born teacher, and few things gave him greater pleasure than to introduce everything he loved to a receptive pupil”—including food, wine, history, architecture, and especially bullfighting, painting, and literature (111). Valerie understands, too, that he “had a mystical side to his character,” that he believed in the “power of prayer, the power of magic” (212). All of these aspects of Hemingway’s character have been amply documented by friends and eye-witnesses before, yet most such portraits predate by a number of years the brief period, near the end, when Valerie knew Ernest. In fact, most biographical sketches of Hemingway’s final years suggest that by 1959, when Valerie met Ernest, he was a mere shell of his former self and all his old *joie de vivre* had died. Thus her portrait of Papa takes on particular importance for future biographers, for students of Hemingway’s life.

This book raises another question, implicitly, that Valerie Hemingway—given her natural reserve and good taste—does not deal with directly. Why would a



worldly-wise-and-wary 60-year-old writer (and world-celebrity) immediately trust and take into his intimate traveling and domestic circle an unknown teenager he had just met? Maybe the question is unanswerable. Or maybe the person who needs to ask that question wouldn't understand the answer anyway. Surely, at first, Hemingway had one of those sudden sharp intuitions about her character, loyalty, and discretion. If it later became a romantic (and spiritual) attraction, that is her story to tell, and she tells it well here, with no betrayal of Hemingway's trust. In recent years I have traveled a good deal with much younger friends and adopted family and we have met up with Valerie Hemingway in France, Italy, and elsewhere. The universal response of my intimate circle of friends—Valerie and others call them “my posse”—after they have shared one meal, one round of drinks, one conversation with Valerie always goes something like this: “She's a great lady. I see why Hemingway trusted her, loved her.” That's it, exactly, and that's one very good reason why anyone who cares about knowing Hemingway should read this book.

There are also superb portraits of other Hemingways in this book, including Mary Hemingway, Ernest's widow, with whom Valerie worked closely for a number of years. Mary, of all the wives, has been the one most slighted by the biographers; and ill-informed Hemingway enthusiasts indulge daily (especially in Hemingway chat-rooms on the web) their silly fantasies about Hadley and Martha (wives #1 and #3) as they speak dismissively about Pauline and Mary (wives #2 and #4). In all the writing I have ever read about Mary, I have never recognized the Mary Hemingway I knew—until I read this book. I first met Mary in the 1970s, over drinks at a Hemingway Conference. Later the same day, we sat together while a panel of Hemingway scholars pontificated about Hemingway's *life*. Mary whispered in my ear: “Stoney, please get me out of here.” I was happy to oblige. For a number of years after that occasion, I saw Mary often, in New York and elsewhere. Since we discussed at length many of the important matters that Valerie covers in this book—Mary's role as Hemingway's literary executor, her gutsy extrication of important Hemingway papers from Cuba (with Castro's assistance), her concern over the publication of Ernest's letters (against his expressed intent), her rage over what she thought was A. E. Hotchner's “betrayal” in publishing *Papa Hemingway* etc.—I was pleased to see exactly confirmed here my memory of those discussions. It was also good to be reminded of Mary's pleasure in her Cuban garden at the Finca; we often talked about gardens, plants, things that had nothing to do with Hemingway. And eventually our talk would come around to more delicate matters, such as Adriana and Valerie, the two attractive teenagers who had come into Ernest and Mary's life about a decade apart. I knew a great deal about Adriana, having read everything available in various archives, trying to make sense of Hemingway's romantic-spiritual infatuation with her that began in 1948, and I'd talked to people who knew her—but I knew very little about Valerie and it would be years before I met her. In brief, there was always an edge to the things Mary had to say about Adriana that was not in her voice or her words when she spoke of Valerie.

One night I walked Mary home from the Lotos Club on East 66<sup>th</sup>; the Lotos is one of the grand old “gentleman’s clubs” (Mark Twain was a member), and Mary was the first woman member in its long history—she was also my sponsor, along with Robert Penn Warren, when I joined. After the Lotos reception honoring the publication of her memoir, *How It Was*, I walked her around the corner to her penthouse. Before the reception we’d been talking about Ernest’s Catholicism. On the elevator, even after all the free-flowing gin at the Lotos, Mary said with particular intensity: “What we were talking about earlier—you really should talk to Valerie about all that.” Eventually I would. On balance, the portrait of Mary Hemingway presented in this book seems to me to be warmly human, precise and true, and no reader should miss Valerie’s story of Mary taking charge of “smuggling” Ernest’s possessions out of Cuba—an act that, for me, is the quintessential Mary Hemingway.

And then there’s the portrait of Gregory Hemingway. It is probably axiomatic that no mere book reviewer should presume to make pronouncements on any marriage that endures twenty years or more. Fortunately, there is no temptation to do so in this instance, since Valerie’s portrayal of her marriage with Gregory is rich and nuanced, honest and courageous. Her portrait of Gregory—with all of his charm and wit and intelligence, his gallantry and ebullience, his crackpot schemes, classic manic depressive behavior, transvestism, and finally, after their divorce, his sex-change operation—will ring true for all readers who knew Gregory. I knew Gregory, and our paths crossed many times in places like Paris, Cuba, Bimini, Oak Park, Miami, and New York, when he was generally on his best behavior. He was a charming and witty and generous friend, and I never saw him in his “Gloria” avatar, although I was called on to help deal with a difficult situation or two over the years. Increasingly, in the 1990s, as his cross-dressing and then his sex-change operation made gossip headlines, Hemingway aficionados would ask me questions about Gregory and I would always brush them aside, pretending that all the talk was much exaggerated. Then came the news in the fall of 2001 of his arrest for public indecency, walking the street naked, carrying his dress and high-heels, and his tragic death in the women’s jail.

Since Valerie’s book came out last fall, I have heard some of her readers and admirers wondering aloud why she stayed married to Gregory after all the dangerous patterns of his behavior had become plainly visible. Some of these readers proposed her as a near-candidate for sainthood for her loyalty, her exemplary motherhood and commitment to her family, and her undying optimism, her hope that Gregory might change, might conquer his sickness. Others have wondered why she put up with it.

I think I know something about that, based on the Gregory that I knew. For example, in Cuba in 1995 Gregory and I talked a good deal about how he wanted to do another book about his father, to get right some of the things he felt he’d gotten wrong or said too harshly in the first book, and he wanted me to collaborate with him on the project. My first impulse, of course, was to run fast and far in the opposite direction. But as I listened to him over that week, saying acutely perceptive things

about Hemingway novels and stories, and about his father, I came to feel that he must be encouraged in the project, so I agreed to collaborate with him. Maybe I decided to do so the day a few of us were out on the boat Greg had chartered, after marlin in the Gulf Stream off Havana, and he said many gentle things about his father; then as we passed the cliffs of El Morro he said: "It was right here that Papa handed me a copy of Frazer's *Golden Bough* and said, read this, it's all in here." That kind of information seemed worth recording, so I encouraged him, we drew up a proposal and outline, and somewhere in a New York publisher's office there may still be a copy of the tentative contract we both signed. Then, another day in Cuba, I was with Gregory when he made his first return visit to his father's house since his boyhood. He was deeply moved, and he was in tears when he met some Cubans he'd played baseball with as a boy. After our small group, accorded a rare privilege in honor of Hemingway's son, had all the time we wanted inside the Finca, some journalists arrived. Gregory waved me over to the snack bar and proceeded to introduce me to the press as Gregory Hemingway, asserting that he was the Hemingway scholar H. R. Stoneback. The illusion was maintained as the interview proceeded for a good fifteen minutes—I suppose at 6'6" with whitebeard and hair I could pass for a Hemingway son—and as the cameras clicked and silly questions flew, Gregory, master illusionist and funny man, orchestrated the whole business, even down to my signing autographs—"Best, Gregory Hemingway"—for a dozen bystanders. Then there was that last morning in Cuba, a nightmare in the hot crowded airport, where I shuffled, held up by both arms around the shoulders of friends, to a seat. I'd had a bad fall on a cliff the night before, and though I knew I had some broken bones I also knew I had to get home—I would not go to a Cuban hospital. Dr. Gregory Hemingway, sitting calmly on the filthy floor of the teeming airport, carefully examined my foot and ankle, told me exactly which bones were broken (confirmed two days later by x-rays), and somehow produced bandages to wrap my foot and ankle. Not long after I got home from Havana in a wheelchair, my daughter was killed in a car wreck. When Gregory heard about this, he called several times from Montana with moving words of empathy and comfort for my grieving wife, for me, offering to fly me and my family (including our sons and their children) out to Montana for a week or as long as we needed, for healing—we could go fishing or hunting in some good country, Gregory said, or just sit around and read, whatever we needed. It was the kindest, most generous thing anyone offered in that terrible summer of grief.

These few vignettes may evoke the charm, humor, intelligence, kindness, and generosity of the talented and decent person, the solicitous doctor, the Gregory Hemingway that I knew—with the dangerous reefs of a deeply troubled man sometimes faintly discernible just beneath the surface. In 2002, the summer after Gregory's death in that women's jail, there was an International Hemingway Conference in Stresa, Italy. Valerie Hemingway was scheduled to speak at the closing banquet at the Grand Hotel et des Iles Borromees. Several times that week Valerie asked my wife and

me what she should say at the banquet. I doubt that we said anything useful and I'm sure she didn't need our help to know what to say. I only remember one night late, drinking wine at the kitchen table in our apartment on Fishermen's Island, I kept repeating "don't give the few bastards who might be there looking for sleazy gossip anything they want to hear"; and we told her with wet-edged eyes about Gregory wanting to fly us to Montana. The next night she read, in part, what would become the last three pages of this book. It was the most moving and courageous talk we had ever heard anyone give.

This book is like that from beginning to end—honest, courageous, poised, and beautifully written—bringing fresh news to scholars, students, and fans of Hemingway. It is the best "Hemingway memoir" in a long, long time, perhaps ever. And it is far more than that, for it conveys the voice and presence of an extraordinary woman, the remarkable life-story of a true exemplar of grace under extreme pressure.

## IX News and Notes

In this column we feature news from current and recent graduate students: honors, achievements, publications, conference papers, progress in PhD programs, and other news.

1. Four recent recipients of our MA will enter doctoral programs in the fall: Danielle R. Bienvenue (2004) at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette; Nicole Camastra (May 2005) at the University of Georgia; Timothy Gilmore (2004) at the University of California, Santa Barbara; Amy Washburn (May 2005) at the University of Maryland (in Women's Studies).
2. Eleven recipients of our MA and one of our MAT continue their progress in PhD programs: Eileen Abrahams (2002) at the University of Texas at Austin; Lawrence Beemer (2002) at Ohio University; Nicole Boucher-Spottke (1996) at the University of South Florida; Kimberly Combs (1995) at the University of Delaware; Debbie DePiero (2001) at the University of Rhode Island; Steven Florczyk (2002) at the University of Georgia; Christopher Hartley (1999) at Fordham University; Tina Iraca (2001) at the University of Connecticut; Jennifer Kaufman (2003) at Fordham University; John Langan (1998) at the City University of New York; Cornelius Rose at the University of North Carolina (MAT 2001); Cristy Woehling (2002) at Miami University of Ohio.
3. Nicole Boucher-Spottke and Nicole Valentino (2004) are currently adjuncts at Valencia Community College (Florida).
4. Tina Iraca is currently an adjunct at New Paltz.
5. John Langan continues to work as an adjunct at New Paltz. Last April he co-directed the first national Fantastic Genres Conference held at New Paltz, and he is now planning the second FG conference for 2006. He has published two reviews in *The Internet Review of Science Fiction*, and two more in *Science Fiction Studies*. His article, "Sailing the True Void: H. P. Lovecraft's Influence on Fritz Leiber's *The Wanderer*," was published in the 2005 *Fantasy Commentator*.

6. Brad McDuffie is currently an adjunct at Nyack College and will begin full-time teaching there in the fall.
7. Meri Weiss won First Prize in the *American Kennel Club Gazette's* Short Fiction contest for 2004; she was a Short Fiction nominee in 2005 for the Best Dog Writer in America.
8. New Paltz graduate students and recent recipients of the Master's degree continue their extraordinary record of scholarly presentations at conferences. Since the publication of our last issue, the following students read conference papers (note: the XI International Hemingway Conference was held in Key West, FL, in June; the Third International Richard Aldington Conference was held in les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France, in July; the Robert Penn Warren Centennial Conference was held at Western Kentucky University in April; the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference was held at Saint Catharine College, Kentucky, in April):

Larry Beemer at the XI International Hemingway Conference.

Michael Beilfuss at the XI International Hemingway Conference, the Robert Penn Warren Centennial Conference, and the Seventh Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Mark Bellomo at the Seventh Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

William Boyle at the Sports Literature Association Conference, Williamsport, PA, in June, the XI International Hemingway Conference, the Third International Richard Aldington Conference, the Robert Penn Warren Centennial Conference, and the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference. He was also Co-Director of the Roberts Conference.

Nicole Camastra at the XI International Hemingway Conference, the Third International Richard Aldington Conference, the Robert Penn Warren Centennial Conference, and the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

D. A. Carpenter at the Robert Penn Warren Centennial Conference and the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Jane Dionne at the XI International Hemingway Conference, Third International Richard Aldington Conference and the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Steven Florczyk at the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Confer-

ence. He was also recently elected President of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society.

Tim Gilmore at the CUNY Conference, New York City, in March.

Kathena M. Hasbrouck at the ESA conference at the City University of New York in March 2005 and a Faculty Workshop at New Paltz in February. She also published “Study Questions and Lesson Plan for *Boy Gets Girl*” in the textbook *Legacies*.

Carrie Holligan the Stony Brook University Graduate Conference in February and the New York College English Association Conference in April.

Tina Iraca at the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Noah Jampol at the Robert Penn Warren Centennial Conference and the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Brad McDuffie at the XI International Hemingway Conference, the Robert Penn Warren Centennial Conference, and the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Matthew Nickel at the XI International Hemingway Conference, the Third International Richard Aldington Conference, and the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Rachael Price (May 2005) at the Third International Richard Aldington Conference.

Adam Romano (2004) at the XI International Hemingway Conference.

James Stamant at the Robert Penn Warren Centennial Conference and the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Stefan Spezio at the XI International Hemingway Conference.

Goretti Vianney-Benca at the Robert Penn Warren Centennial Conference and the Seventh Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Amy Washburn at the State University of New York Council on Writing, Queensbury, NY, in April (with Lynne Crockett and Jennifer Lee) and the Second Annual SUNY New Paltz Trans-Forming Feminism Conference in April.

9. The Editors would remind students of the Russell S. Cleverley Memorial Fellowship, established by Luella and Donald Cleverley in memory of their son Russell S. Cleverley, who earned his MA in English from SUNY

New Paltz in December 1995. The Cleverley Fellowship is open to students matriculated in the MA English program with a 3.5 GPA who register for 41590, Thesis in English, in the award semester. The award is \$500. Please submit a letter of application with transcript, the thesis proposal signed by the thesis director, and two letters of recommendation (one from the thesis director) to Daniel Kempton, Director of English Graduate Studies. Applications for the next award (spring 2006) are due December 15, 2005.



## Guidelines for Submissions

As the journal of the English Graduate Program, the *Shawangunk Review* publishes the proceedings of the annual English Graduate Symposium. In addition, the Editors welcome submissions from English graduate students in any area of literary studies: essays (criticism; theory; historical, cultural, biographical studies), book reviews, scholarly notes, and poetry. English faculty are invited to submit poetry, translations of poetry, and book reviews.

Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with MLA style and should be submitted as an electronic file accompanied by a hard copy. Essays should not exceed 3500 words (10-12 pages), stories 3000 words, book reviews 1250 words, poems five pages, and MA thesis abstracts 250 words. With your submission please include a brief biographical statement about yourself.

Please submit material to the Department of English, SUNY New Paltz and/or [kempton@newpaltz.edu](mailto:kempton@newpaltz.edu); the deadline for Volume XVII of the *Review* is December 15, 2005.

## X Contributors

**Catherine Aldington** (See Note 1 on page 65.)

**Michael Beilfuss** is in his final semester as a student and Teaching Assistant in the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz.

**Danielle R. Bienvenue** received her MA this year from SUNY New Paltz. She is currently teaching English in China and next year will enter the doctoral program in English at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

**William Boyle** is a student and Teaching Assistant in the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz. He is a winner of the Russell S. Cleverley Memorial Fellowship and is writing his master's thesis on Hemingway and Hard-Boiled Fiction. He has recently published a story, "Most Precious Blood," in *Aethlon: The Journal of Sport Literature*, and he is at work on a novel.

**D. A. Carpenter** is in his final semester as a student and Teaching Assistant in the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz.

**William Bedford Clark** (See editorial note on page 49.)

**John Clute** is the author of many essays and the novels *Appleseed* and *Earth Bound*, and he is the co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* and the *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. He has won the Hugo, Locus, and Nebula awards, as well as the Pilgrim Award from the Science Fiction Research Association and the Distinguished Scholar Award from the International Association of Fantasy in the Arts.

**Dennis Doherty** holds the MA in English from SUNY New Paltz, where he is currently an Instructor and Coordinator of Creative Writing. He is a widely published poet, whose first volume of poetry, *The Bad Man*, has recently appeared.

**Ernelle Fife** is an Assistant Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. She specializes in eighteenth-century literature, children's literature, and medical rhetoric; she has published work in *Women's Writing* and the *South Atlantic Review*, and she has an article forthcoming in *Mythlore*.

**Tim Gilmore** is a graduate of the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz. He is currently an adjunct instructor at New Paltz and Marist College, and next year he will enter the doctoral program at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

**Joshua Gran** is in his final semester as a student and Teaching Assistant in the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz.

**Kathena M. Hasbrouck** is in her final semester as a student and Teaching Assistant in the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz. She is a winner of the Russell S. Cleverley Memorial Fellowship and is writing her master's thesis on Marguerite Duras.

**Daniel Kempton** is an Associate Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. He is the co-editor of *Writers in Provence* (2003) and *New Places* (2005), essays from the first three International Richard Aldington conferences.

**Corey Mittenberg** is currently in his final semester of the MAT program at SUNY New Paltz and is also pursuing the MA degree in English. He received a Graduate Student Research and Creative Project Award for 2004-05.

**Matthew Nickel** is a student and Teaching Assistant in the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz. This year he has been on leave while serving as a research assistant to Catherine Aldington in les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France.

**Thomas G. Olsen** is an Associate Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. He specializes in Shakespeare and has published in such journals as *Studies in English Literature* and *Shakespeare Yearbook*. His edition of the *Commonplace Book of Sir John Strangways* for the Renaissance English Text Society appeared in 2004.

**Matt Saikaly** is in his final semester as a student and Teaching Assistant in the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz.

**Robert Singleton** is currently a PhD candidate at New York University and an adjunct instructor in English at SUNY New Paltz. He is a widely published poet, whose work has appeared in such magazines as *Xanadu* and *Accordion Flyer*.

**Jenn Smits** is a student and Teaching Assistant in the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz.

**H. R. Stoneback** is Distinguished Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. He is a Hemingway scholar of international reputation, author/editor of nine books and more than 100 essays on Durrell, Faulkner, Hemingway et al. He is also a widely published poet, author of five volumes of poetry including *Café Millennium* (2001) and *Homage: A Letter to Robert Penn Warren* (2005). He is the co-editor of *Writers in Provence* (2003) and *New Places* (2005), essays from the first three International Richard Aldington conferences. Forthcoming books include *Reading Hemingway: The Sun Also Rises* (late 2005) and *The Amazing-Grace-Wheelchair-Jumpshot-Jesus-Love-Poems*.

**Amy Washburn** is in her final semester as a student and Teaching Assistant in the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz. Next year she will enter the doctoral program in Women's Studies at the University of Maryland.

**Robert H. Waugh** is an Associate Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz and the Director of the New Paltz annual Lovecraft Forum. He has published on science fiction and fantasy literature in such journals as *Extrapolation* and *Lovecraft Studies*. He is also a widely published poet, whose work has appeared in such magazines as *Hunger*.

**Meri Weiss** is a student and Teaching Assistant in the English MA program at SUNY New Paltz. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Southampton College. Before coming to New Paltz, she taught at Suffolk County Community College and Southampton College. Her fiction has been published in a variety of literary magazines and her novel is currently being shopped to publishers.

**Craig Wynne** is a student in the English MAT program at SUNY New Paltz. He is also a freelance writer and is currently working on a book about the psychology of investing.