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1984

PACIFIC COAST CONFERENCE ON BRITISH STUDIES

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MARCH 23–25, 1984

Call for Papers and Proposals. *A JOINT MEETING* of the *PACIFIC COAST CONFERENCE ON BRITISH STUDIES* and . . . the *NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON BRITISH STUDIES* will be held at the *ASILOMAR CONFERENCE CENTER,* Pacific Grove, California—a unit of the California State Park System, near Carmel, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The meeting will be held on March 23 through March 25, 1984.

You are encouraged to submit proposals for paper sessions, panels and workshops on British history, literature, art, or interdisciplinary topics.

Proposals should be sent with a TYPED ABSTRACT by SEPTEMBER 1, 1983, to

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ARTICLES

Ted Hughes as a Writer of Children's Books

David Rees

TED Hughes is generally recognized in the English-speaking world as one of the most important poets of the second half of the twentieth century, but his achievements as a writer for children are not so widely known. In his writing for young people he shows himself to be a jack-of-all-trades—I would *not* add a master of none: he has produced volumes of poetry specifically for children, the text of a picture book, short stories, the unclassifiable *The Iron Giant* (a modern morality-cum-myth), one major critical essay, four plays, and a book on creative writing. A full-length novel is the only form he has eschewed so far. He has an immense concern for the young, for their vulnerability in a dangerous, industrialized world; he seems in this to be as much a teacher as a creative artist: the driving forces behind his writing are the need to stimulate creativity and imagination in children and to encourage the right kind of education to counteract the evils—as he sees it—of a blind faith in scientific progress. In this he resembles nineteenth century children's authors more than those of our own time; though never overtly didactic, he is certainly a moralist (and on occasion a stern moralist)—someone who feels that the young are *not* best left to their own devices, but need to be guided and taught. This may sound unfashionable, indeed to some reprehensible, but it has never impeded his creative powers. He does not believe, as a Victorian author might, that books should frighten the young reader into being good or should offer soft, sentimental solutions, but he does believe that children's fiction should not turn its back—as it sometimes does—on modern technology and wallow nostalgically in a cozy, rural past. He feels with some passion that children's literature is more important now than it has ever been, parti-

cularly as a corrective to scientific discovery and so-called advance.

The poetry need not detain us long, though six of his ten books for children are collections of verse. They are, curiously, much less successful than the plays and the stories. Or maybe it is not so curious: his energies as a poet have chiefly gone into the succession of volumes from *The Hawk in the Rain* to *Moortown*, major works for the adult reader. In writing verse for children he often seems to be floundering. The irony and grim humor is missing (though it is there in the prose) and is replaced by a childlike dottiness that is in effect child*ish:*

> "They are taking me to the Queen," thinks Nessie,
> "And the Duke of Edinburgh will say 'There's a Bonnie
>   Lassie!'
> "Then I shall be all right, I shall have class,
> "And everybody will say 'Oh everybody knows Nessie, she's
>   a grand lass.'
> "And all these good people are bringing this to pass."
>
> *Nessie the Mannerless Monster*

The themes are often similar to those of the adult poetry—landscape, usually bleak and without the presence of man, and animals. The volume called *Season Songs* is almost entirely about landscape and weather, and though it contains some remarkable lines and images, some startling and original perceptions—

> There came this day and he was autumn.
> His mouth was wide
> And red as a sunset.
> His tail was an icicle.
>
> *There Came a Day*

or

> The first sorrow of autumn
> Is the slow goodbye
> Of the garden who stands so long in the evening—
> A brown poppy head,
> The stalk of a lily,
> And still cannot go.
>
> *The Seven Sorrows*

There is an unsureness, particularly when he uses rhyme:

> But the cod is in the tide-rip
>   Like a key in a purse.

The deer are on the bare-blown hill
  Like smiles on a nurse.
    The Warm and the Cold

In his adult poetry Ted Hughes rarely, if ever, uses rhyme: perhaps he feels it adds little to the structure of a stanza. It is odd that in writing for children he frequently uses rhyme, and rarely with success; it is an obstacle with which he seems to collide, gracelessly.

Ted Hughes's finest poems are about animals: perhaps no one has ever written so much on this subject and so well. Animals, real and invented, abound in the verse for children. In *Under the North Star* there are memorable phrases and descriptions—the black bear's comment about himself, "I am God's clown;" clams in winter "gasped with blue cold;" the woodpecker is "rubber-necked;" the goofy Moose is "the walking house-frame;" the wolf "licks the world clean as a plate/ And leaves his own bones." But often these poems sound like simplifications of the animal poems in the adult books, or footnotes to them, not completely new ideas. There is also uncertainty in the nonsense verse of *Meet My Folks!* The imagination behind these poems is splendid—a sister who is actually a crow pretending to be a human, a father whose job is inspecting holes, a grandmother who knits clothes for wasps and goldfish, an aunt who grows man-eating thistles—but the use of rhyme is a hit-and-miss affair:

The very thought makes me iller and iller
Bert's brought home a gigantic Gorilla!
  My Brother Bert

works well; it's outrageous and funny, but

Not to forget the Bandicoot
Who would certainly peer from his battered old boot
  My Brother Bert

does not work: not only does the second line contain too many words, but a boot—as opposed to anything else—is the bandicoot's home only because the poet needs a rhyme.

Ted Hughes has not yet found a proper voice for himself as a poet for children, excellent though some individual poems may be. He probably needs to move away completely from the themes of his adult poetry and forge an entirely different instrument for what he wants to say.

Poetry in the Making is the printed version of a series of talks he gave on BBC Radio for the schools program, *Listening and Writing*. In the introduction to the book, he says that nothing, except for the odd word, has been changed; and indeed the prose throughout has the sound of

someone speaking. Each of the eleven talks is an attempt to motivate young people to write, poetry mostly, but two sections are devoted to the novel. There is much of autobiographical interest here, for Ted Hughes tells us how and why he started, in his mid-teens, to write, and he gives the reader much absorbing background detail about the genesis of some of his best-known poems, *Pike*, for instance, *Wind*, and *The Thought-Fox*.

His advice to young people is exemplary: he is enthusiastic, helpful, never condescending, and always practical. Words, he says, that are important are "those which we hear, like 'click' or 'chuckle,' or which we see, like 'freckled' or 'veined' . . . words which belong directly to one of the five senses. Or words which act and seem to use their muscles, like 'flick' or 'balance.' " Most words, he adds, "belong to several of the senses at once, as if each one had eyes, ears and tongue, or ears and fingers and a body to move with." Do not worry at first about punctuation, but "keep your eyes, your ears, your nose, your taste, your touch, your whole being on the thing you are turning into words."

Poetry in the Making reflects many of the orthodox ideas about teaching English that were current at the time it was written, the late sixties—creativity and originality at almost any cost. Teaching English has changed since then, but Ted Hughes's concern that children should enjoy writing, and the immense experience that he is able to impart, mean that the book rarely has a dated, *passé* feeling to it. Reading *Poetry in the Making* is a fascinating experience, for writers do not often allow us to peep so much behind the scenes as he does, to glimpse so much of the processes of creation: maybe that is because many of them are not so conscious of what they are doing as he is.

The four short plays in the volume *The Coming of the Kings* were also written for children's radio programs. Two of them, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Sean, The Fool, the Devil and the Cats*, are variants on ancient folk tales; *The Tiger's Bones* is a surrealistic fantasy about a mad scientist who thinks the end of the world is coming; and the best, *The Coming of the Kings*, is a nativity play. It is extremely difficult to write a nativity play and avoid the pitfalls of cliché and mawkishness; most modern versions of the Christmas story do not. A magnificent exception is *The Business of Good Government* by John Arden. *The Coming of the Kings* does not have the luminous, simple beauty of John Arden's dialogue, but it is a thoughtful and amusing piece, well within the capabilities of the child actor. John Arden and Ted Hughes succeed where others do not because they shift the focus of attention away from the traditional central characters to less important people; in *The Business of Good Government* the principal figure is Herod; in *The Coming of the Kings* it is two people who are not mentioned in the Bible, but who must have been in Bethlehem on that night—the innkeeper and his wife. However, effective though these four plays are, they are minor works, the products of a writer who is simply enjoying himself in a role that is not usually his own, and finding out whether he can do it or not.

How the Whale Became, a collection of eleven short stories and *The Iron Giant* which, though it is subtitled "a story in five nights," is a continuous narrative, are Ted Hughes's two works of prose fiction for children. The first of these is flawless, but does not aim at anything very profound, whereas *The Iron Giant* is on an altogether different level. *How the Whale Became* takes its central idea from the *Just So Stories* of Rudyard Kipling. Each character relates, in a fantastic and humorous way, how a particular animal obtained its shape or size or coloring or behavior. The fox and the dog both applied to Man to be the guardian of the farm, but the fox couldn't stop eating the hens so he had to be banished; the hare leaps and rushes and acts in such an apparently crazed manner because he is in love with the moon and is always chasing after her; the polar bear lives in the Arctic because she's extremely vain, and loves to use the icebergs as mirrors in which she can admire herself. The best story is how the tortoise became. It had no shell at first and was the fastest of animals, the great athlete, but the other creatures shunned it: it had no skin. So God made it a skin:

> "I would like," said Torto, "a skin that I can put on, or take off, just whenever I please."
> God frowned.
> "I'm afraid," he said, "I have none like that."
> "Then make one," replied Torto. "You're God."
> God went away and came back within an hour.
> "Do you want a beautiful skin?" he asked. "Or do you mind if it's very ugly?"
> "I don't care what sort of a skin it is," said Torto, "so long as I can take it off and put it back on again whenever I please."
> God went away again, and again came back within an hour.
> "Here it is. That's the best I can do."
> "What's this!" cried Torto. "But it's horrible!"
> "Take it or leave it," said God, and walked away.
> Torto examined the skin. It was tough, rough, and stiff. "It's like a coconut," he said. "With holes in it."

And so it was. Only it was shiny. When he tried it on, he found it quite snug. It had only one disadvantage. He could move only very slowly in it.

God plays an interesting role: he is portrayed as a kindly human being, capable of making mistakes—a nice touch, when one thinks of evolutionary "mistakes" that have occurred—and he is not always sure of what to do next. The whale, for example, was originally a plant that mysteriously appeared in God's garden; each day its size doubled, so that the garden was ruined, the walls smashed, the road outside blocked. It was on the advice of the other animals that God pulled it up and threw it over a cliff, for only in the sea was there enough room for it.

The invention in *How the Whale Became* is ingenious and amusing throughout, the prose sure-footed and simple without being dull:

> When God made a creature, he first of all shaped it in clay. Then he baked it in the ovens of the sun until it was hard. Then he took it out of the oven and, when it was cool, breathed life into it. Last of all, he pulled its skin on to it like a tight jersey.
>
> All the animals got different skins. If it was a cold day, God would give to the animals he made on that day a dense, woolly skin. Snow was falling heavily when he made the sheep and the bears.
>
> If it was a hot day, the new animals got a thin skin. On the day he made greyhounds and dachsunds and boys and girls, the weather was so hot God had to wear a sun hat and was calling endlessly for iced drinks.

The Iron Giant, though it began as stories Ted Hughes improvised for his own children, has an altogether more serious purpose. It is an attempt to create a myth-like tale that takes into account the world of modern technology, something the author feels has been ignored by contemporary children's authors. The early education of students he used to teach, he says,

> completely neglected the real major experience of their lives, namely the collision with the American technological world, and, beyond that, the opening up, by physics and so on, of a universe which was completely uninhabited except by atoms and the energy of atoms . . . What they should have been taught was a mythology where all these things would have had a place and meaningful relationships one with another, the student, the technology and the chaos, and his terror of the chaos.
>
> So when I began to tell this following story to my own children later, I shaped it in a particular way.
>
> *Myth and Education*

As the work opens, a gigantic iron monster suddenly appears on the top of a cliff (no explanation is given for this); he falls over the edge and is smashed to pieces. But he fits himself together, walks inland and begins to eat up all the farm machinery he can find. The farmers are terrified and dig a vast pit to trap him; a small boy called Hogarth lures him into the pit, which is then filled up with earth so that the giant is buried. But he gets out, and on Hogarth's instigation, he is taken to a scrapyard where he lives contentedly on rusty gas stoves and old cars. Another monster—

"terribly black, terribly scaly, terribly knobbly, terribly horned, terribly hairy, terribly clawed, terribly fanged"—from outer space then lands on Australia, and threatens to destroy whole countries if it isn't fed. The iron giant challenges it to a duel of strength and wins. The space monster is now his slave and is sent off to create the music of the spheres, which makes everyone so happy that there is peace on earth ever after.

One can recognize in this story not only a belief that modern technology should be used for man's benefits rather than for destructive purposes, but also a number of themes found in ancient myth—the death of a god, resurrection, the duel or jousting between the hero and the villain, the struggle between good and evil. The view of the world, however, is not Manichean, as is so often the case in myth; Ted Hughes departs from tradition when his story suggests that evil exists in all of us and has to be recognized for what it is; that only then can it be tamed and used for good. In *Myth and Education* he says he was attempting, in *The Iron Giant,* to create something that was opposite to the legend of St. George and the dragon in which evil is destroyed; that sort of tale "sets up as an ideal pattern for any dealing with unpleasant or irrational experience the complete suppression of the terror. . . . It is the symbolic story of creating a neurosis." The argument, in both *The Iron Giant* itself, and in the author's own comments in *Myth and Education,* is powerful and convincing.

The child reader, of course, is not going to be aware of all this, at least not in terms that can be verbalized in this way; but he will undoubtedly absorb in a subconscious fashion what is being said. Every story we tell a child "is a whole kit of blueprints for dealing with himself and for dealing with his own imagination," Ted Hughes says in *Myth and Education.* And *The Iron Giant* is a story that is told most seductively. The virtues of his finest poetry are all present in its prose: as, the ability to create landscape in a few telling words—"Just before dawn, as the darkness grew blue and the shapes of the rocks separated from each other, two seagulls flew crying over the rocks;" and, emotional tension:

> Suddenly he felt a strange feeling. He felt as if he was being watched. He felt afraid. He turned and looked up the steep field to the top of the high cliff. Behind that skyline was the sheer rocky cliff and the sea. And on that skyline, just above the edge of it, in the dusk, were two green lights. What were two green lights doing at the top of the cliff?
>
> Then, as Hogarth watched, a huge dark figure climbed up over the cliff top. The two lights rose into the sky. They were the giant figure's eyes. A giant black figure, taller than a house, black and towering in the twilight, with green headlamp eyes. The Iron Giant! There he stood on the cliff top, looking inland.

The frightening size of the giant is emphasized in a number of effective similes—"taller than a house," "his chest was as big as a cattle truck," "the great iron head, square like a bedroom"—but he seems a dwarf when the monster arrives from outer space. The "vast, indescribable, terrible" eyes of the space-bat-angel-dragon were "each one as big as Switzerland," and it sat "covering the whole of Australia, its tail trailing away over Tasmania into the sea, its foreclaws on the headlands of the Gulf of Carpentaria." The contrast between the two monsters is neatly illustrated by what they eat. The iron giant eats old trucks and rusty gas stoves—harmless, indeed useful. But the space-bat-angel-dragon demands

> . . . living things. People, animals, forests, it didn't care which, so long as the food was alive. But it had better be fed quickly, otherwise, it would roll out its tongue longer than the Trans-Siberian railway and lick huge swathes of life off the surface of the earth—cities, forests, farmlands, whatever there was. It would leave the world looking like a charred pebble.

The iron giant represents twentieth-century technology, tamed and in the service of mankind; the space-bat-angel-dragon is the untamed, horrifying energies of space.

Another quality of the writing is the humor, a bit grim compared with *How the Whale Became*, but entertaining nonetheless. When the space-bat-angel-dragon lands "it knocked down certain skyscrapers, sent tidal waves sweeping into harbors, and threw herds of cows on to their backs. All over the world, anybody who happened to be riding a bicycle at that moment instantly fell off." And the author never neglects the small detail the very young reader always likes, even if it is not particularly relevant. A family of holiday-makers is having a picnic right over the spot—though they do not know it—where the iron giant is buried; it is the moment when the giant chooses to reappear, but Ted Hughes has time to tell us what they were eating, "a plate of sandwiches, a big pie, a roasted chicken, a bottle of milk, a bowl of tomatoes, a bagful of boiled eggs, a dish of butter and a loaf of bread, with cheese and salt."

The Iron Giant is not without defects. Hogarth is a bit too clever to be totally credible, and the space-bat-angel-dragon is not as convincing a monster as the iron giant. He does not appear until the penultimate chapter, and, because he is such an important figure, the narrative seems to shift direction, leaving the reader with the impression that he could have been tacked on as an afterthought, to give the story the required climax and conclusion, rather than being part of the author's ideas from the beginning. The contest between the monsters is too heavily loaded in the iron giant's favor: in fact, the last two chapters are not as well thought

out as the first three, even if they illustrate perfectly Ted Hughes's ideas about harnessing the "evil" of technology for the benefit of mankind. But imperfect though it may be, *The Iron Giant* is remarkable for its originality, its writing virtues, and its attempt to place modern technology at the center of a children's story that also retains the age-old characteristics of myth.

Myth and Education, originally a paper given at the Exeter Conference on children's fiction and subsequently published in *Children's Literature in Education,* is not just a commentary on *The Iron Giant.* It is, in my opinion, one of the most interesting critical documents on children's literature of recent years. It is not invariably in book form or in the published essay that good criticism first emerges; in the past two decades much that is worthwhile began—and this is particularly true of contributions by the authors themselves—as a talk at a book conference. Catherine Storr's *Fear and Evil in Children's Books* and Penelope Lively's *Children and Memory* are milestones in contemporary criticism, and both essays, too, were originally talks given at a book conference. In *Myth and Education* Ted Hughes questions some of the fundamental assumptions of modern education, the so-called "enlightenment" of the past three hundred years, and points to what he calls "the breakdown of all negotiations between our scientific mental attitude and our inner life." Modern education with its tremendous bias towards science and technology, he says, began

> by questioning superstitions and ended by prohibiting imagination itself as a reliable mental faculty, branding it more or less as a criminal in a scientific society. . . . The scientific attitude, which is the crystallization of the rational attitude, has to be passive in face of the facts if it is to record the facts accurately . . . This detached, inwardly inert objectivity has become the prevailing mental attitude of our time. It is taught in schools as an ideal. The result is something resembling mental paralysis. It can be seen in every corner of our life.

This is obviously an extreme point of view, an almost savage attack on the harm done to us by science, pure and applied. Photography and television come in for a bashing—"OK for scientists," Hughes suggests, "but disastrous for human beings in general." He looks wistfully over his shoulder at Platonic ideas—the creation in children of an imagination by stories, folk tales and myths—but admits that even in Plato's Greece it was never more than a proposal. In a technological civilization, he says, literature is even more important than in ancient times; its imaginative importance is paramount. He is marvelously persuasive about the effect that literature has, particularly on young minds. Imaginative stimulus, he

argues, can have enormous consequences; a child absorbed in a story is like someone in a trance: "whatever happens to him in the story happens under conditions of hypnosis. In other words, it really happens. If in a story he is put through a humiliating defeat, the effects on him are of real defeat." It is the same for adults:

> We can't ignore that when we read a story, and enter it in a completely imaginative way, the story works on all parts of our nature, and it's impossible to know finally what its influences are. . . . This is the appeal of great works of imaginative literature to us as adults, that they are hospitals where we heal, where our imaginations are healed, that when they are evil works they are also battlefields where we get injured.

We have, therefore, an immense obligation to give our children the right kind of literature.

Ted Hughes does not specify what the right kind of literature should be; he gives us no examples. That is not necessary; we, his readers, are probably better as judges for having our minds so stimulated by such a polemic as *Myth and Education.* For it fulfills one of the major functions of criticism: it makes the reader go away and *think,* forces him to question his assumptions and look at literature with new eyes. To find a list of recommended books tacked on to such an essay would be shallow; Ted Hughes knows perfectly well that his opinions here are no more *ex cathedra* than those of anyone else. To return to basics, as he does, is much more important than saying, for instance, that *Charlotte's Web* is a good book for children if they want to come to terms with death, useful though that information may be. His own fallibility is neatly illustrated by his review, in *Children's Literature in Education,* of *The God Beneath the Sea* by Edward Blishen, Leon Garfield and Charles Keeping; placed beside Alan Garner's incisive and outspoken comments on the same book in the same journal, Ted Hughes's piece seems woolly and superficial, giving us little idea of the virtues and defects of the work in question, a task Alan Garner accomplishes admirably.

So the most interesting and successful writing for and about children by one of the finest of modern poets is in prose. In his poetry for children Ted Hughes seems to feel the need, in his concepts and vocabulary, to simplify, instead of stretching the reader; the result is that at times he is uneasy, or shrill, or trite, or unfunny when he has wanted to be humorous. In the prose, the "great poet" image does not intrude; he begins with a clean sheet, no previous achievements to disturb him, and therefore in *How the Whale Became* and *The Iron Giant* the tone of voice is assured, the humor makes us laugh, and nothing seems banal or strained. In *Myth and Education* he is able to think and argue with feeling and intelligence.

His poetry for adults is sometimes criticized for its narrowness of range, but the variety in his work for children is remarkable: one can only wish he could find more time to write for the young, particularly in prose.

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The Celebration of the Ordinary in Barbara Pym's Novels

Edith S. Larson

THE power of the ordinary to offer sustenance in the face of the indefiniteness, sadness, and even terror of life, is the most important theme in Barbara Pym's novels. In all her books she illustrates the potential of the mundane, as in the restorative ritual of tea drinking, to shore up the positive in life, even as its very foundations seem to be slipping. This power of the ordinary to sustain and cheer is presented most unequivocally in her first novel, *Some Tame Gazelle* (1950), in *Less Than Angels* (1955), and more subtly in her most somber novel, *Quartet in Autumn* (1977). Her insistence on its importance informs each of Pym's novels, and its celebration and delineation will continue to be responsible for the lasting appeal of her work. Certainly Pym's recurrent emphasis on anthropology and anthropologists can be

seen as a way of underlining her sense of the importance of everyday life. As anthropologists observe and seek to understand culture by recording the repeated actions and minute detail of daily life, so Pym establishes her fictional world through detailed and detached description of everyday activities.

This article illustrates the sustenance offered by the ordinary in *Some Tame Gazelle, Less Than Angels,* and *Quartet in Autumn.* The first is the most lighthearted of all Pym's novels and provides a context for the work which follows. It takes place in a village world which she glances at in *Quartet in Autumn* and returns to in *A Few Green Leaves* (1980).

The village is the only world that matters in *Some Tame Gazelle.* Within it the central relationship of the middle-aged Bede sisters sets a standard of closeness that the main characters in the other two novels being discussed do not approximate. The quiet comfort of this village where everything is within walking distance, and a new face is an occasion for speculation, is far removed from the buses and large restaurants crowded with directionless people that form a backdrop for the city dwellers of the less cheerful novels. The dead birds, mangled rabbits, and dried hedgehog corpses that upset the heroine when she visits the country in *Quartet in Autumn* are missing from the serene, sometimes farcical world of Pym's first novel.

In this small utopia the pleasantness and security of everyday life dominate. Small crises like the appearance of a caterpillar corpse in the cauliflower lunch of the Bede's sensitive seamstress, and longstanding competitions like that between Belinda Bede and Agatha Hoccleve, form the counterpoint to comfort. But faced with Belinda's honesty, diffidence, and unpretentiousness, the crises are resolved happily and the rivalry contained within civilized boundaries.

Within these secure boundaries there is room for celebration. Pym writes without irony of an impromptu tea party attended by the sisters and their independent friend Edith Liversidge: "At tea they were all very gay, in the way that happy unmarried ladies of middle age often are."[1] Their party is marked by liveliness and "hearty laughter." Edith entertains with a Balkan folk dance and Harriet, with a "ludicrous imitation" of a recent proposal by one Mr. Mold. It is this kind of spontaneous celebration among people who like each other and enjoy life that becomes more and more difficult for characters in later novels to experience.

In this self-sufficient world where daily activities are wholly absorbing and the major emotional support is provided by the sisters' enjoyment of their own company, the unsettling elements are two suitors who come from outside and threaten the effortless balance achieved by the Bedes through domesticity and companionship. It is a balance not to be achieved with such convincing effortlessness in any of the novels that follow, a balance that later characters glimpse and strive toward, and

succeed in capturing only at brief intervals. Because of it, Belinda commonly experiences what Pym describes as "sudden moments of joy that often come to us in the middle of an ordinary day."[2]

While enjoyment of the ordinary is the norm in *Some Tame Gazelle, Less Than Angels* is the novel where the ordinary is presented most clearly as having the power to comfort and sustain in the face of dissolution and death. It opens with its heroine, Catherine, "brooding over her pot of tea." Catherine, however, need not feel guilty for lingering so thoughtfully, because she is a writer, not a hurried office worker; ". . . she earned her living writing stories and articles for women's magazines and had to draw her inspiration from everyday life. . . ."[3]

Drinking tea or one of its substitutes is an important symbol of the ordinary in Pym's novels. It provides solace for the solitary, ceremony for the group, and in the case of Norman and Letty in *Quartet in Autumn,* who share the family-sized jar of Nescafe, it creates one of the fragile bonds of their relationship. Like other symbols of the ordinary, such as going to church, the importance of tea is sometimes exaggerated for comic effect, as in *Less Than Angels* where it is noted that a privileged few knew that Miss Clovis' quarrel with the President of the Learned Society "had something to do with the making of tea."[4] Or, its importance is remarked without a trace of irony, as when Catherine is restored by drinking tea after her discovery of Tom's unfaithfulness with Deirdre: ". . . it was strong and bitter, almost medicinal, and as she drank she was conscious that it was doing her good. Tea is more healthy than alcohol and much cheaper, she reflected, and there must be thousands of people who know this."[5]

In *Less Than Angels,* as in *Some Tame Gazelle,* two sisters, Deirdre's mother and her aunt, Mabel Swan and Rhoda Wellcome, are at the center of the ordinary. They live in a London suburb, in a household run by women; they are preoccupied with order, stability, and routine. "They both liked church work, bridge and listening to the wireless in the evenings."[6] Like the sisters in the first novel, they are in their fifties. Rhoda has never married and Mabel is a widow. Their nineteen-year-old daughter and niece takes their virtues for granted. She regards their routine as "humdrum" and thinks with some disdain, "At home her mother would be laying the breakfast [the night before] and later her aunt would creep down to see if she had done it correctly. And they would probably go on doing this all their lives."[7] But Deirdre is a romantic. Catherine, who is without family, sees that the dullness and pettiness of their routine are balanced by their kindness and the solid comfort of their stable lives. When Catherine learns of Tom's death, it is to this comfort that she turns. She runs from the selfish comments of one of Tom's colleagues to the generosity of Mabel and Rhoda. In their drawing room, "there was some light tinkling music on the wireless and the sound of it, together with the bright fire, chintz-covered chairs and sofa, and Mabel

Swan sitting with her feet up on a pouffe reading the latest work of a best-selling female novelist, gave Catherine a feeling of safety and comfort, for she had seen no domestic interior that day but the desolation of her own flat."[8]

Although this domestic tranquility can eventually prove inhibiting to the creative personality, as is hinted when Catherine leaves the Swans' household after a two week stay, the emphasis on the small everyday comforts and kindnesses upon which it is based clearly provides cause for thankfulness. The ballast provided by the sisters' household is juxtaposed to the eccentric and fearful vision of their next door neighbor, Alaric Lydgate, the hypersensitive fugitive from eleven years' work in Africa, who feels more comfortable wearing a mask even when alone and who regards life as "very terrible whatever sort of front we might put on it. . . ."[9]

Catherine, who is drawn to both Alaric's sensitivity and the sisters' ambience of safety, mediates between their viewpoints. When Mabel, commenting on the conclusions to Catherine's stories, remarks, "After all, life isn't really so unpleasant as some writers make out, is it?" Catherine replies: "No, perhaps not. It's comic and sad and indefinite—dull sometimes, but seldom really tragic or deliriously happy, except when one's very young."[10] It is the ordinary in this mixture of greyish qualities that both Catherine and Pym extol.

For example, one night while Tom is still living with her, Catherine happily cooks dinner and muses:

> Oh, what joy to get a real calf's foot from the butcher, . . . and not to have to cheat by putting in gelatine. The small things of life were often so much bigger than the great things, she decided, wondering how many writers and philosophers had said this before her, the trivial pleasures like cooking, one's home, little poems especially sad ones, solitary walks, funny things seen and overheard.[11]

Even Rhoda, a more mundane person, has a flash of insight like an epiphany, when, later on, she gazes at Alaric in his garden.

> He was in the vegetable part at the back, apparently digging up potatoes. Then Mrs. Skinner came out in her apron, holding an umbrella over her head, and began to cut some runner beans. Ordinary actions, perhaps, the getting of vegetables for the evening meal, but, like Deirdre's reluctance to talk about her feelings for Tom, it seemed as if they must have some strange significance.[12]

At the novel's conclusion, there is the same positive meaning attached to

the apparently ephemeral when Rhoda and Mabel see Catherine in Alaric's garden with her arms full of rhubarb; we assume with them that this ordinary sight is a cause for celebration and optimism.

In *Quartet in Autumn* there is less cause for celebration and optimism. The novel is shot through with images of death and loneliness. Like Catherine, Letty is without close ties or relatives, but unlike Catherine, who is thirty-one, Letty is in her sixties and she is without intellectually exciting work. Indeed, after her retirement, she is without even the routine that work provides. It is as if Pym, whose heroines, within their confines, seek the full life, posed the most difficult problem for herself: how is an ordinary woman who is aging, alone, and with none but the quietest comforts—the type of person upon whom fiction rarely centers—to realize the potential that life might still hold for her?

Along with Letty, the other three who form the quartet, Edwin, Norman, and Marcia, are unusual protagonists in that their talent for forming relationships is minimal and their lives, measured in terms of achievements, are barren. It is characteristic of Pym to focus on such apparently unprepossessing characters and to establish their significance.

Although Letty is without any particular talent, she is perceptive and her musings throughout the novel provide a commentary that emphasizes the bleakness of her situation without closing the door to change. When she sees the pigeons on the roof "picking at each other, presumably removing insects," she reflects, "perhaps this is all that we as human beings can do for each other . . . ,"[13] and yet she feels bound by the conventions of kindness. Her gestures are ordinary but they have ramifications beyond her imagination. When her former co-worker, Marcia Ivory, lies dying in the hospital, Letty feels compelled to send her something special, against the advice of the less magnanimous Mrs. Pope. After some deliberation, she decides on lavender water. The gift brings Letty no special recognition, but its fragrance creates a special bond between Marcia and the surgeon she reverences, Mr. Strong. The scent reminds him of his grandmother, and for a moment, almost the final moment of Marcia's life, she is imprinted on his consciousness in a refreshing way, bringing back memories of his boyhood. So this simple gesture of kindness on Letty's part contributes a touch of poetry to Marcia's death.

This, and a bottle of Golden Queen of Sheba sherry found in Marcia's cupboard after her death, are the only touches of poetry to surface above the prosaic materials that form the texture of the interaction among the four aging office workers. When Letty, Edwin, and Norman come upon the exotic drink while they are somewhat ignominiously dividing Marcia's store of tins—spam, peach halves, sardines, butter beans—it is as if a touch of glamour is granted as a reward for surviving and surmounting the essential drabness of their lives.

Marcia's eccentricity, bordering on madness, removes her from the ordinary, and therefore she is unable to forge bonds for herself outside of fantasy. She is unlike Letty, who is characterized as "holding neatly and firmly on to life, coping as best she could with whatever it had to offer, little though that might be."[14] Because of this firm hold on the conventional and her ability to appreciate even the meager offerings of Mrs. Pope, towards whom Letty feels "just the ordinary responsibility of one human being towards another . . . ,"[15] Letty creates opportunities for herself.

The opportunities involve being with and, albeit within limits, caring for other people. Toward the end of *Quartet in Autumn* Edwin muses about "what it was that brought people together, even the most unlikely people?"[16] In Barbara Pym's novels it is the ability to appreciate and share in the ordinary that brings people together, and this togetherness, however tenuous, provides the opportunity for celebration, as in Norman's toast, "Here's to us then."[17]

Notes

[1] Barbara Pym, *Some Tame Gazelle* (1950; rpt. London: Granada Publishing Limited, 1981), p. 169.

[2] *Gazelle*, p. 50.

[3] Barbara Pym, *Less Than Angels* (1955; rpt. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1980), p. 7.

[4] *Angels*, p. 12.

[5] *Angels*, p. 110.

[6] *Angels*, p. 35.

[7] *Angels*, p. 153.

[8] *Angels*, p. 237.

[9] *Angels*, p. 57.

[10] *Angels*, p. 89.

[11] *Angels*, p. 104.

[12] *Angels*, p. 175.

[13] Barbara Pym, *Quartet in Autumn* (New York: E. P. Dutton; 1977), p. 9.

[14] *Autumn*, p. 25.

[15] *Autumn*, p. 79.

[16] *Autumn*, p. 212.

[17] *Autumn*, p. 217.

POETRY

David Citino

Sister Mary Appassionata Lectures the Eighth Grade Boys and Girls on the Nature of Symmetry

No single human life can be symmetrical.
The Chinaman's right must ever be our left.
The earth spins to the right; we lean left.
There's treachery on either side, but what's
on the left's easier to conceal. The man's
left testicle always hangs lower, the woman's
right breast. God placed the heart a little
to the left; those who overlay the right thumb
with the left when they fold hands
to pray look for too much passion, stumble
reasonless, lost in life's desert, blizzard,
woods, making a circle of hours counter-
clockwise. They're nearly never found.
In sleep the flesh of the left side's
hotter, readier for love; the right's
more realistic. But turn around and each
becomes the other once again. God gave us
different hands so friends could clasp,
warriors war, lovers make a perfect fit;
so every other could become the rest of us
in every mirror.

Sister Mary Appassionata's Lecture to the Eighth Grade Girls and Boys: The Song of Bathsheba

She made a name for herself that night
written in sweat and blood, a love-braille
even those too used to darkness could read.
Uriah, patriotic, well-meaning, dull
as hell was gone again, besieging another town
where men with unpronounceable names
and unchiseled tools had raised their skirts
to jeer at Yahweh's priests. God sent
his terrible sword to cut them down to size,
pronounce his stiff sentence on children,
writhing daughters, weeping wives.
He ordains that others bear men's sins.

She bathed on her roof beneath David's,
singing, hoping the steamy music of beauty
would persuade him from his crowded bed,
teach him to tango under God's stars—
so many that night there weren't enough myths
to name all the lovers and beasts
their lights composed. Uriah always took her

abruptly, as if she were a heathen town,
her sacred tabernacle a breached wall.
He saw it as his duty to the nation.
All the times she pleased him in the night
he never said her name. She was only wife.

David was easier to work with. The second
time, he shouted "Bathsheba" so loud
his guards ran in, afraid some woman
was killing their king. "I've just been named
your queen," she laughed to them from under
God's anointed, a field furrowed
by the tribe's best plow, brimming
with his select seed. Before, David was
only an entry in the chronicle. She made him
a story. All who say his name now need
to add "and Bathsheba." Too many sisters
die unknown. The book says her name forever.

Sister Mary Appassionata Lectures the Pre-med Class

Chemistry informs us, quickens even
the dead. Four fluids God gave Adam
combine and recombine, gurgle
and roar, simmer and cool even as we
do, in the body's labyrinthine tubes.

Blood. Dark as midnight when it
pools, deep enough to drown us all.
A race's history smeared thin as dust
over the pathologist's slide, life
inscribed, unfathomable as the tide.

Milk. Blood purified by the loveliness
of breasts, kiss of nipples stiff
and soft as lips, one of love's recurring
wounds, smooth as the belly rounded
and taut. In a world of ice, it's fire.

Tears. Blood conducted through canals
of sense: touch, sight, scents, speech
and feel. Juice squeezed from fruit
of generation. How we pronounce
our sentence, mourn our receding sea.

Semen. Blood boiled, concentrated
in love's retort. Man's acrid dew.
God's manna brightening our fields as we
sleep and love. Yeast by which we rise.
Puddles of the sea that spawned us.

Mother Ann Lee Preaches to the Shakers from Her Death Bed, Niskeyuna, New York, 1784

When true simplicity is gain'd:
To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd
To turn, turn will be our delight
Till by turning turning we come round right.

—Shaker song

My four dead babies danced around me
all night long to keep me from his bed
where it was so easy to stoke the smoldering coals
he'd become, afraid their mother'd drown
in night's well, wake to hell's brittle stillness.

I couldn't even walk before him or remove
my shoes. Even a word, a glance, could
stiffen him, his breath when he got that way
a roaring at my throat, his limbs a vise,
from his mouth sounds measureless and base.

Once, after he'd spent three days frolicking
with the spirits who live in bottles and kegs,
he led to my bed a whore he'd found along
the wharves, her lips and cheeks the hue
of overripe berries, skirts too stiff

with old love to rise when she turned, and said
if I didn't uncross my legs to him he'd take
and keep her in the praying room. I told him
marriage was a dance of death, compact with a fiend,
a cataract of concupiscence and satiety pitching

all indulgent lovers into the abyss. (She wasn't
even pretty, her ankles too thin to take the pain
of moving always in God's footsteps.) He beat me
then, his trousers bulging with that ugly serpent,
too heavy in the flesh to know the intricate dance

that sets the dancer free from the gravity
of bone, songs that shout out love in every tongue.
He never learned the plenty to be found
in economy and abstinence, the freedom earned in saying
to the body, as to a child, "no," and "no" again.

I once angered father in the same way by teaching
mother to roll away from him and the alternating
gestures of apathy and need a wife and man
perform together throughout the partnership.
Wantonness means rape and greed and strife

in the wedding bed as well as on the battle field,
the street and in the counting house. In hell
Lucifer torments those who've loved too well
in the very parts where they've known pleasure.
Can a body point to heaven when it's on its back?

Be upright. Dance so death can't catch you. Shake
hard enough to throw off every shred of flesh.
Remember, we've a partner yet unseen, every
movement, step or posture's incomplete, never
meaning more than half. Love the one who lightens

each step, provides the music, pays the piper.
Help me now to my feet. As this night brightens
to the Great Awakening, I twitch and shiver like
an aspen in His holy symphony of rain and wind.
He's come to lead, to whirl me out the door.

Emily Keller

The Funnel Cloud

It was something
foreign in these flat, watery parts
that rose, black and spinning over the woods
and carpeted the sky.
A machine
with debris and water aswirl in its center.
It came down in circles.
Downspouts and rain gutters shuddered,
a garage tipped its second floor.
Suspended and omnipotent, the giant toppled over,
smashed roofs, rained into chimneys,
sucked toys, bicycles, lawn furniture,
spat them out far as it could,
slammed doors on arms, tails, apron ties,
shook four creaking houses shutterless,
quivered over a flinching field,
shot up and hid in the smoky sky—
still blowing. We saw the rim inflame.
After, birds wired to slices of air
were not astonished at chairs nested there.
Flowers lay down, faced in one direction,
as if in prayer, some Mecca for storm clouds.

Falling Off Thruway I-190

Because we thought we could fly,
we swirled a blizzard's path
off the thruway onto the slippery sky.
Our lives frozen in a single leap dangled like starlight.
Then we were falling,
falling from regrets,
falling into surrender, wonderless calm.
A dark smudge revolving
above a billowing field.
We landed before a convent school.
The car yawned.
Shocked, as though having wakened
a nun asleep with wimple askew,
I gave birth to another life.
In the hospital a voice whispered,
what will you do?
I will dedicate myself to mankind,
work in hospitals without pay,
go into the ghetto.
I will be known for my ministrations.
Not long after, I was caught in the
hum and drum of the past
and tumbled into familiar grooves,
undirected as before,
but wary, careful not to fly.
Yet I accept the shabby shreds
of that exalted state—that withered pain—
there may be other bridges to leap,
other stars to climb.

After the Marriage

There was no victim, no victor—
The barren peach still offered
feathered picks for
someone else's frenzy
at furry tunnel makers
in that clipped battlefield.
Sleeping bluejays
sang in contractions
at visions of cherry rot
they'd find this summer.
A rabbit, bronzed by
the car's glare,
snapped a tulip neck
in blank air.
All struggle ended.
The marriage closed with a thunderclap.
That which willed,
endured the frantic calm after storm
until winnowed to acceptance.
The cottage disappeared.
Only a few panes
stuck to walls of space
stood in bewildered stare.

ARTICLE

Germany *Wohin*

Charles Burdick

THE most popular history courses in America today are classes devoted to Adolf Hitler and the Second World War. The most valuable stamp collections in the world are those devoted to Germany. The most sought-after autographs and artifacts are those of Germany's Third Reich. The very term—*Germany*—is bound up with the most intense and irrational emotions, infinite hatred and love, boundless admiration and horror.

Observations on the breadth of the German problem must be "subjective" if we are to discover the physiognomy, the human image, even the taste and smell of an historical time. Such thoughts are often dry, professional tea distilled from a much-used tea bag but they may provide some insights for thought. Perhaps the lives of various personal friends may serve as a simple Woolworth 5¢ and 10¢ store mirror reflecting Germany's immediate past and current dilemmas.

My initial German visit took place in 1955 through the courtesy of the American Fulbright Commission. In 1968 the German Alexander von Humboldt Foundation paid for my trip. This was followed by a 1981 journey sponsored by both parties. On my sojourns I met various individuals with whom I have maintained contact during the intervening years. Their lives, with their fluctuating changes, may provide a translucent framework for assorted observations on Germany.

Friedrich Kleinsoldat was a graduate student in Political Science in 1955. Born in East Prussia he owned an unhappy personal history. His father had perished as a soldier on November 10, 1918. At a formulative age in 1938 the Nazi bureaucrats had drafted him into the German Army where he served until 1945, ultimately reaching the grade of Major. While never a party member, he had accepted the emotional, prideful

concepts put forth by Adolf Hitler as the positive, unique, philosophical expression of collective German hopes and aspirations. While he had heard many rumors of unpleasantries during the Second World War, he had dismissed them as defeatest propaganda. When the enormity of Nazi crimes appeared in conjunction with the cataclysmically destructive end of the conflict, Kleinsoldat's psyche could not accept the overwhelmingly cruel fate visited upon his country. He spoke with fervor but possessed no solutions, no answers, no guidance. He was alone and helpless.

In 1955 he was a quiet, lonely man incapable of active participation in discussions involving political philosophy—his chosen field of study. Ever cordial, eternally pleasant, eagerly studious, and enviably well-read, he was constantly with our group but never part of it.

Subsequently we traded holiday greeting cards, no more. During this time he completed his degree requirements, and, in his spiritual uncertainty, rejoined the newly created West German Army where he received promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel. In 1968 I visited him at a remote Bavarian duty station. He sat eight hours each day, shifting papers from the IN box to the OUT tray awaiting retirement. Kleinsoldat had changed little beyond those corroding scars of time which must erode all human tissue. He remained a quiet, lonely man incapable of active participation in discussing political philosophy—with a prestigious Ph.D., a title without substance, a degree without meaning, a sign without direction. He had married a war widow and they lived in a dark, somber house, an edifice filled with the artifacts of an earlier era which lacked any real cheer, hope, or optimism.

In 1981 I visited with him in his retirement. He had little to say. His step-son, a young Lieutenant-Colonel in the West German Army, was present. The latter complained bitterly about the miserable American force in Germany—drugged, understrength, poorly equipped, a suspect ally. He ran on, railing against his own country for its parsimonious approach toward equipping the military.

Despite the peaceful solitude of middle-class retirement and the active interaction with a thoughtful soldier, I was relieved to depart for more pleasant climes. Kleinsoldat and I will continue to exchange greeting cards whose weight will not exceed the requirement for minimal airmail postage.

Paul Goetterschlafen belonged to our intellectual commune. He had entered the Hitler Youth, achieved high position, switched to the Army and obtained an officer's commission for bravery in 1943, and completed his military career with five years in a Soviet prison cage. By 1955 he was completing his doctoral degree. A man of enormous drive, he was clearly the leader of our miniscule group. His boundless self-confidence,

infectious good will, and unlimited optimism marked him as a being living under a golden star. As well, he was a concerned political person, an eternal critic of the somnambulent academic community and one eager to learn from Germany's recent debacle. The new Germany, his Germany, would be a democratic, youthful, progressive country, the harbinger of a true utopia filled with everything good and useful.

Through the intervening years we maintained a lively exchange of intellectual ideas, professional aspirations, and family news. He married and soon had five little Goetterschlafens. Keeping pace with this domestic productivity, he wrote several books and obtained a distinguished university professorial chair. When I visited him in 1968 he kept me as an honored guest in his magnificently opulent country manor. He was still filled with energy, good humor, serious determination, and commitment to professional responsibilities. We had a memorably good time filled with talk of our difficult earlier years and the bright promise of the future. Our exchange was the high point of my journey.

In 1981 I returned to his home, the same palatial mansion, now increasingly filled with the symbols of his growing addiction to Byzantium. While his embrace was warm and hearty, the air of genuine cordiality was absent. The unyielding optimism, the unrelenting energy, the unrequitted dedication were also gone. Instead he could only complain about the unruly students, the maddening academic demands, the omnipresent difficulties, the distracting television appearances, the disorganized, terrorist world conspiring to destroy his modular existence. His idyllic circumstances had disappeared into an impenetrable fog of cynicism, of doubt, of fear. I left, uncertain and confused; even my own academic position proferred a better future.

Carl Wandervogel existed in abject poverty in 1955. His single room provided more draft than space and his financial deficits more hope than belief. He survived—barely. Nonetheless his hospitality and good will were unmatched in our peripheral ghetto of impoverished, if aspiring, spirits. Shortly after graduation he received a scholarship to the Stanford Graduate School of Business and spent two years there on a new survival course. He remained a delightful, plodding soul whose past was a mystery, whose present was inconsequential, and whose future was predictably bleak. We thought of him as a probable dean of a rural school for boys or an unremembered military bureaucrat in a forgotten district.

He learned his lessons in America and returned home in full command of American techniques and practices. Like an unruly rocket he lifted upward without control and soon became the chief financial adviser to an international firm. In 1968 his success was clear; by 1981 his annual income lapped over the $150,000 tide line.

I visited him in 1968 for a brief moment; he lacked time for a lengthy exchange. A chauffer picked me up at the railway station in a Mercedes 600. The house held fourteen rooms, a wife, and two daughters. The gardener and maid came in from their own places which helped frame the swimming pool—a body of water approximating my idea of an alpine lake. As we chatted about uncertain themes, his position intruded often. In midsentence he would suddenly jump up to make a telephone call, to jot down a hasty reminder, to discuss the future with his patient wife. He had, in the following month, four trips to Paris, one to London, three to New York, two to Tokyo, which blended well with intervening jaunts to Berlin, Frankfurt, and Munich. Ideas, words, activities were piled like unruly driftwood on a tide-ravaged strand. I departed, impressed with a way-of-life far removed from my experience.

In 1981 he was in the same house with the same magnificence. Still Wandervogel was tired. He complained about inflation; about American failings at every level from education to culture, from economics to movies, from Salt II to World War III; about employment problems; about everything. He had no time for happy pleasures. Wandervogel was frustrated, angry, uncertain. Obviously he felt threatened and lost without focus or objective. Wandervogel—we had been good friends; we would not see each other again.

During my 1955 visit we received a visitor from East Germany—that enigmatic, feared Marxian colossus in the East. Hermann Unfug had a sharp wit, engaging manner, and an unequalled knowledge of American ways which made him an interesting curiosity. While this was his first foreign visit, he knew every flaw, every failure, every mistake in the United States. I sat dumb in a corner as he quoted the Sinclairs—Upton and Lewis—chapter and verse on the capitalistic depravities of the United States. His enthusiastic endorsement of the newly created paradise almost made me a believer, if not quite a convert.

Subsequently we exchanged notes; like all East Germans he could not maintain a regular correspondence for political reasons. His few reports were always filled with glowing predictions concerning the communist future. He sent me the announcements (albeit not copies) of his numerous books on American affairs. For them his government awarded Unfug two prizes which brought him prestige, position, and capitalistic cash. His reports excited my imagination and I decided to see him in 1968.

A West German Foundation provided the means. They sponsored a bus trip through Germany for some thirty professional people. We had a grand tour until we headed for Berlin. The individuals from communist countries—Rumanians and Poles—had to fly across East Germany to avoid imprisonment by their suspicious ideological colleagues. When our

smaller group reached the frontier, the guards ordered me off the bus and, with my suitcase in hand, into a nondescript building nearby. Inside other guards searched through my clothes while a heavy-handed female guard searched me paying minute attention to my orifices. My anger dissipated when, through an open window, I saw huge banners proclaiming, "Hearty Welcome to the Peoples Republic" and "Together with us Against the Fascists in Bonn and Washington." It was an instructive experience.

Unfug met me at Check Point Charley where one undergoes the eerie experience of metamorphosing into another world. A visitor crosses the demarcation line between depressing dragon's teeth and concrete abutments beneath the high watch towers which house binocular-swinging guards. All of this movement takes place in religious silence. In fact the Wall must be one of the quietest places in our noise abused world. This quietude born of fearful uncertainty and naked power, takes place below a huge television tower which looks like a subversive church cross when the sun strikes it at high noon.

In the midst of this Kafkaesque panoply, Unfug met me and drove me to his palatial villa in an East Berlin suburb, far from the workers' quarter. He was, after all, a party member of good standing and the director of a prestigeous institute. As a result he enjoyed a comfortable life. He did not make the expected remarks about American imperialism, race relations, or the evils of the western world. Instead he hurried into a well-rehearsed and well-learned speech about the "people's paradise." His family provided a fine welcome and, subsequently, a meal. Afterwards the children disappeared while we engaged in desultory conversation about the weather, sports, and beer. It was painfully dull.

As we talked in his living room I raised a question about life in East Germany. Unfug simply answered, "Very good" and, with a beckoning finger, hurried me into the frigid garden where he confessed that he would show me certain utilities which came with the house.

When we reentered the mansion he quietly pointed out three wall micro-phones, two rusty with age, but one new and clearly operational. With this revelation our conversation shifted to his professional success, to his wife's secretarial labors, and to his assured future through centralized planning. When I departed he asked that I not write too often and thus avoid undue suspicion. His wife shook hands in hasty farewell; we were in the front yard.

In 1981 I wrote him about a brief visit. He responded quickly, telling me that he was too busy for visitors. Two days later a note arrived from Unfug's son inviting me, and asking for a pair of American jeans. Two days after his letter came a telegram from the senior Unfug, "Disregard Peter's invitation." Obviously I did not visit East Germany.

My final friend came into my life in 1968 when I wandered off a train into the Munich railroad station. It was an indescribable sight beyond even the depictive talent of a modern Hieronymus Bosch. The stench of unwashed flesh, cacophony of babelesque tongues, and masses of upright animal life created a sensual catastrophe. As I fought my way through this Alice-in-Wonderland maze, my foot encountered a massive pile of cardboard boxes and olive oil cans. Beneath it was a youth whose pasty complexion revealed his frightened homesickness. In volatile Italian he expressed thoughts beyond my comprehension. We could not communicate beyond finger, toe, and eye-rolling gestures. Nonetheless I helped him pick up the gastronomic symbols of his nationality and need, and, with a snail-like, lurching motion we drove our way through the crowd like an errant tank on an aggressive mission.

We found him a room for the night and then set out to surmount the Everest of Germany's incomparable paper bureaucracy. It was a true comedy to observe three serious parties mangle three languages! Between collective tears and laughter we registered him, located living quarters, and found him a job as a waiter. Man may be both rational and intelligent but everyone concerned in this exercise had serious doubts about such judgments.

In 1981 I visited Luigi Capri again. In the interim he had married a German girl and they spoke a dialect of love never to be recorded by man—one certain to give the poorest language student confidence. The Capris lived in an apartment of indeterminable antiquity while he worked as a waiter in a small restaurant.

After a simple meal on his free night, we went for a stroll to the gathering hall for all of Munich's foreigners—the central railway station. The buildling was the same otiose structure as in 1968 but the crowd had changed—the odor was of lubricating grease rather than that of human sweat. The milling mass was dressed in poor quality, but clean, suits with colorful ties and hats. We had a fantastic night proving that the heart provides greater happiness than the brain. Everything went well and I shall see Luigi Capri again.

These then are my friends. They provide an impressionistic view of Germany today. Kleinsoldat and his stepson reflect a fundamental difficulty in that troubled land. The senior Kleinsoldat sought a new world—he tried, he believed, he served, he failed. No matter how he tries the past will not go away. The approbrium of the Nazi years remains as a permanent stain. His beloved country does not occupy a clear geographic entity, does not have a defined identity, does not possess a dignified, orderly history. He exemplifies a generation which has died in spirit, but continues to live on physically, proving somehow that suicide may be consumated without bringing death. West Germany is a divided,

frustrated community without any sense of collective purpose, thrust, or future. The German army must be powerful enough to defeat Russia without threatening Belgian security; the German economy must maintain the American dollar but not threaten Italy's viability; German foreign policy must help underdeveloped communities without threatening their integrity. The mission is not impossible; it is schizophrenic.

The junior Kleinsoldat is likewise bound up in turmoil over his future. He confronts general disillusionment and fundamental doubt concerning the United States. Only 8% of the German populace have confidence in America's military and political commitment to Europe. They perceive that "most" American Army recruits are illiterate, morally weak and ignorant of their obsolete equipment. In that perception Germans find a vast change in America. Where they once accepted the United States as a powerful, self-assured nation with boundless self-confidence, they now see a somewhat flabby, ignorant, and ominous power. They worry.

Germany's earlier Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, once suggested, "The Germans are eager to be left out of international conflicts." They are not alone. Europeans have a long, common history, much of it soaked in blood. The two apocalyptic encounters of this century have created a belief in this Europe that war is an unacceptable instrument of policy. While tired of the Soviet-American rivalry, unwanted American advice on their needs, of suspect American leadership's adventures, the Germans and their allies want progress toward peace. They no longer believe in the dynamic, innovative American society which they once voluntarily submitted to for moral as well as military guidance. The uncertain vagaries of the moment found expression in the recent German election where five political groups received public endorsement but no consensual endorsement of a directional policy emerged.

Once they believed in "Gemeinutz geht vor Eigennutz," or that the idea of the collective, national good came ahead of individualism. Now the pendulum's swing has shifted everything in another direction best reflected in Bob Dylan's song, "Too Much of Nothing:"

> Too much of nothing
> Can make a man feel ill at ease
> One man's temper might rise
> While another man's temper might freeze
> In the days of long confessions
> You cannot mark a soul,
> But when there's too much of nothing
> No one has control.

Is Germany simply the land of beer, sauerkraut, and war or is it a place

for art, humanity, and progress? The Kleinsoldats—two generations—do not know, do not know where to seek an answer, do not know how to find repose in certainty.

Goetterschlafen stands in the image of many self-styled modern communities. He is a frustrated liberal who has lost his directional sense. Unlike many of his countrymen, he learned from experience but to no avail. Somehow reality and dreams remain estranged from any accepted planning outline. His countrymen are desperately seeking a system, a mechanism which will assure social stability, unifying purpose, historical continuance.

He enjoys the glories of governmental support but that very underpinning is disrupting his sense of order. In fact said support has accelerated unwanted professional adjustments—changes which have turned philosophy into semantics, linguistics into mathematics, psychology into rodentology, sociology into methodology, and music into computer cacophony. The academic disciplines have married the political enterprises of our time—a cohabitation doomed to sterility from the outset, like the improbable mating of a whale and an elephant. They have not found a way to consider human change outside a system and research new models, new machineries but decline the more dangerous experiment of a new, emotionally satisfying endeavor. There is no way for Germans to avoid talking anymore. After thirty years of almost phobic silence among people frantically rebuilding a society and, concurrently, unable or unwilling to examine what they were rebuilding, the facts of academic overcrowding, native political terrorism, and uncertain intellectual leadership have given Germans the beginnings of a vocabulary for talking about themselves. Kleinsoldat remains a living memorial to the last bellicose experiment and Goetterschlafen, while he never sees Kleinsoldat, remembers him all too well.

Wandervogel remains the figure of popular caricature; the German phoenix who threatens dreams and politics like a circling hawk. Germany remains more an economy than a culture today. Every country has a symbolic figure—a John Bull, a Marianne, an Uncle Sam. For Germany it is the remarkable Deutsche Mark. The Germans possess one of the strongest economies in the world. They pay almost one-third of the Common Market's budget and provide the key forces to European defense. Twice they tried to conquer extensive territories by force, soon they may just buy them.

Momentarily there is a semblance of order and control but there are growing indications that Wandervogel's flightiness is infectious. 10% unemployment, the expanding gap between aspirations and responsibilities, the growing addiction to materialism are catching up with the people. Despite the shortest work week in Europe, the best job emoluments, the most stable structure, Germans are increasingly less satisfied with their lot. With the split-level houses, automobiles,

dishwashers, keeping up with the Schmidts, they have overcrowded schools, unbreathable air, polluted rivers, onerous tension, ulcers and heart attacks, and spiralling crime rates. Even their language is changing to a form of "Engman" or "Gerlish;" German as it used to be "gesprochen" or "gewritten" is past.

Behind all of this hedonistic materialism lies the challenge of our decade. Years of Atlanticism, of American emphasis on American leadership for Germany, of acceptance that unity required support for American policy papered over fundamental concerns. The American commitment to Europe arose from a strategic decision to prevent the Soviet Union from acquiring control over the industrial plant, the skilled manpower, and the warmaking capacity of Western Europe. This American strategic interest in the autonomy and independence of Western Europe remains unchanged today.

This concern cannot obscure the fact that the German economic curve has flattened out, that uncertainty erodes the German currency, and that competition will be harsh and mean. Wandervogel lacks any direction.

Part of this problem can be noted by looking at the capitol city of Bonn. The distance between Bonn and Berlin is some 500 kilometers and 200 years. Bonn is still ambling through the 18th century while Berlin still bears the scarifying wounds of the 20th. Bonn is Beethoven, the Rhine, culture and a government in search of a capitol. Berlin is Bismarck, the ice of Prussia, history, and a capitol in search of an empire. Bonn is cleaner, more beautiful and better preserved than its predecessor while Berlin is more experienced, more pleasant, more exciting. Berlin has "champagne air" and the "winds of freedom." Bonn has the oppressive air of a laundry works.

The problem for Wandervogel grows too quickly. He came from a zero past filled with discontinuity and confused directional ethics. American tutelage after 1945 provided a momentary vehicle for everyone. Using this foreign guide for technique and direction, people like Wandervogel created an exciting, dynamic thrust to German economics. They failed to identify precisely and consistently how these elements merged into a German power configuration. With time and success they forgot major issues—resolving problems rather than creating models, analyzing the German experience rather than understanding its uniqueness, sacrificing the specific for the totality. Wandervogel obtained a major victory over himself and his surroundings without anticipating time. He is older but not wiser. The world is not as orderly as his youth proclaimed. Confusion reigns.

Unfug remains a curious exhibit in this zoological garden of friends. He lives under an authoritarian system which has had to build the only wall in history to keep its citizens isolated from their relatives. Unfug must constantly confront his leader, Erich Honecker, a prune-dry, unimaginative soul weaned on a dill pickle who sees a joke only by appointment.

Like his colleagues, Honecker is doctrinaire, autocratic, unimaginative. Despite years in power no one knows where he stands beyond total loyalty. One story has it that a friend saw him carrying an umbrella on a sunny day. When the friend pointed out that the sun was out, Honecker suggested that it was raining in Moscow.

Despite his cloying, obsequious attitudes East Germany has made material progress. Gone are the days of shortage, exploitation, and puzzlement. Anyone can discern the change. Unfug is clearly a success filled with the aspirations and accomplishments of material fulfillment. Yet, despite everything, Unfug reminds one of East Germany's exiled troubador, Wolf Bierman's poem which astutely observes

> But finally the government passed a law
> That all men are
> Happy
> Breaches of this law
> Were punished with death
> Soon
> There were really only
> Happy men.

He—Unfug—is caught between a palatable existence alone, a reeducation camp, and future aspiration. His countrymen have made the compromise in favor of survival. The level of their dedication remains unclear.

Certainly East Germany is a strange land, suspended in space between the fearful uncertainties of western, individualized freedom and eastern collectivized security. They believe that they know all of the social rules of Marxism-Leninism which holds its truths to be self-evident and infallible, while abhorring a permissive social order in which the individual may follow his own pursuits and impulses. The problems of reconciling the issues and interests of individuals with those of the group becomes insignificant. Instead primary attention is paid to enticing individuals to accept the dictates of the regime. The ambiguity remains to plague our judgment; so does the naked power. Yet another current story recounts that Honecker died and knocked on heaven's gate. The gatekeeper suggested that he had the wrong address and belonged in hell. A few days later a quiet knock on the portals revealed three devils who reported that they were the first refugees.

The note from Unfug's son was most revealing. Influenced by West German television, foreign visitors (who pay for the privilege), and education, the youth of East Germany are sputtering. They demand, they complain, they mutter. One sees punk rockers, angry outspoken youth on all sides. Young people like to tell the story of Honecker meeting a child and asking "Who is your father?" Much satisfied with the

answer "Erich Honecker," he then asks "Who is your mother?" with a gratifying response, "the Communist Party!" He then requests "What do you want to be as an adult?" The answer—"an orphan!"

Whereas the senior Unfug's society underscored labor, the factory, the collective, and the progress of society as a raison d'etre—the end, not the means to a better life, a society requiring acquiescence, as the total human requirement, his son refuses that task. The creative notion that East Germany was a community dedicated to the principle of collectivity, to a new philosophy of togetherness, was unique. The East German authorities badgered their subjects with incessant propaganda to obtain voluntary loyalty and commitment. It has not shown durability nor generational transfer. When East Germans propose that Adam and Eve were their progenetors because the latter walked around without clothes or roof with little to eat while proclaiming their residence in paradise, they make a statement. The future, even in its eastern translation, remains most uncertain.

Luigi Capri provides a new factor. He furnishes comic relief, muscle power, and an increased population. As well, he threatens a closed society, challenges traditional standards, and batters long-held mores. Capri is justifiably proud of his accomplishments, eager to build a stable community, determined to succeed, and tenacious in attitude. He is a foreigner but his impact upon Germany is beyond words. He will stay because he cannot go home. His financial contribution and material satisfaction preclude departure no matter what some angry natives may shout. The problem poses a serious challenge to an uncertain society. Following the erection of the Wall as a barrier against losing young labor, West Germany imported foreign workers as an absolute necessity. Currently more than 4,000,000 foreign laborers and their families live in West Germany. Of that number the Turks—over 500,000—are the most numerous, followed by the Yugoslavs, Italians, Greeks and Spaniards. While the German authorities have curtailed recruiting foreign laborers, those already in the country remain longer.

As a result Capri and Germany are engaged in a major conflict. With unemployment over 10%, economic problems without foreseeable solution, and an uneasy political situation, the natives are concerned about their life long prejudices. Incidents of prejudice multiply at an alarming rate. Capri must remain but his future is less optimistic than it was ten years ago.

You have, then, my friends. Everything they have done and said is true and untrue. A case may be made for praiseworthy and enthusiastic opinions; the same can be said for negative and critical comments. Germany is a reality that eludes one and remains concealed from view. Germany is hiding.

It does not hide from the visitor's curiosity. On the contrary, it would be difficult to find a people more open and confident, and apparently without any secrets, reticence or shame about their immediate past. Certainly Germany does not conceal its splendors, its wounds, its reconstruction, its prosperity, its uncertainty. Germany does not obstruct the view of others; it hides from itself.

Germany remains in shock. Despite all the facade the trauma of its national past remains as a backdrop for every event. No German of mature years believes a country that suffered defeat in two wars, revolution and counter-revolution, rampant inflation and unemployment, National Socialism, and division into two spheres in the first fifty years of this century can survive the next fifty in prosperity, quietude, and tranquility. To be sure the East-West division remains the simplistic, understandable division of forces; the "West" shaped by the contours of distinct individuality with personal gardens, independent houses, and the manifest self-assertiveness of individualized human beings. The "East" with its flat, unimaginative horizons, collective housing projects, collective, smoke-like lines merging into one another, provides an image of helpless, uncertain acceptance of survival over happiness.

After everything one must accept Germany as an earthquake fault. It provides a seam where the key forces twist and turn, where contravening action takes place. Surely Germany remains subject to periodic adjustments, twists, turns, displacements. These jolts and tremors are never constant, never predictable, never complete but they create and groan as the earth shudders grotesquely under the stress of conflicting stress posed by ideological geography. Human beings must resolve these unwanted, unnatural shifts; the thrust for unity, the expression of nationalism, the satisfaction of material goals, the demands for international agreements. The Germans upset Europe in 1870 with horrific results. They are back to that moment in time in terms of division, frustration, concern. These problems must find an answer before the Gordian knot overwhelms humankind.

Goethe once wrote about that fugue of the human race in which the voices of each of the various peoples can be distinguished in turn. Now we hear only piercing discords from the German people whose shattered unity has more to do with a lost future than a real past. Somehow we must look forward to the realization of those few words put down by Benjamin Franklin, engraved on an American memorial a few yards from Berlin's Brandenberg Gate:

> *God grant that not only the love of liberty, but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man may pervade all nations of the earth so that a philosopher may set his foot anywhere upon its surface and say: This is my country.*

FICTION

Sign

Kirby Wilkins

"TURN it down!" Adele shouted, but her daughter paid no attention, apparently not hearing, and whatever electric punk noise she was playing continued to blare into the desert air. Only when her mother actually stood over her, casting a shadow, did she turn it down.

"Use the earphones, or else," her mother said.

Of course, it was just the opposite problem with Ronnie, off riding his Honda over the desert hills; you couldn't get him unplugged. You couldn't break into his world, whatever gunk he was pouring into his head, no matter what you did. The earplugs could damage hearing, she knew, but between that and her sanity, there was little choice. Her kids would be deaf with all the rest.

It was hot, but different from L.A. hot. No lid of smog, of course. But there had been another invisible lid pressing her down all year, and now Mt. St. Helens blowing up, and all these strange earthquakes. This anti-nuclear business again, just when you'd forgotten about it. Leroy didn't want to hear about it. His job, she understood that. But those horrible stories by the Hiroshima survivors. You watched their faces and listened to their voices, and you knew they had been there when they told how survivors had walked from the blast, horribly burned, pieces of their bodies hanging from them, but in absolute silence. Even the children. A long line of people making not a sound. It became obsessive, you couldn't get it out of your mind after awhile. You felt so trapped and helpless in the city. She'd needed to get away.

Leroy poked his head out of the trailer, said, "Hell, you can't get the damn Dodgers in this canyon, even with the extension. I knew we should have kept going."

"We didn't come to watch TV," she said. "Why don't we take the kids for a swim?"

"Swim? Where the hell are you going to swim? That was a mudhole down there."

"There were people down there. Go get Ronnie."

"Jesus," he grumbled, but she knew he'd do it. He always felt guilty on vacation; he knew it was time for the family to do things together. She waved her hand in front of her daughter's face, who gave her The Look, and went on bobbing her body to whatever was coming over the earphones. She waited, and finally Sharon raised one earphone. "We're going swimming," Adele said. Sharon stared at her. "And leave that thing here." Again, The Look, but she'd do it. Now if they could get Ronnie off his motorcycle.

Leroy came out of the trailer wearing his bermudas and sandals, looking very hairy and white in the brilliant light. "We'll have a picnic dinner," she said.

"In this heat?"

"Why not? Take the umbrella."

He grumbled but went off after Ronnie. You could hear the Honda screaming, wide open out in the sagebrush, and see a tower of dust. After awhile, as she made tuna and liverwurst sandwiches, and mixed lemonade, she saw Leroy trudging back out of the sagebrush. Ronnie passed him, sprayed a cloud of dust over his father, looped the trailer, and skidded to a stop in front. His face and clothes were covered with dust below the goggles and helmet. He took off the helmet, put the goggles inside, and sat there with the Walkman plugged into his ears, grinning like an idiot in the bright sun and waiting for her to tell him to quit making so much noise and dirt around the trailer, so he could pretend not to hear.

His dad came up behind him, punched him on the arm, a good sign. Leroy had decided to be goodnatured about the dust episode. Ronnie followed him into the trailer, still plugged into the Walkman. "We're going swimming," she mouthed at him and made a breaststroke motion, but her son, dazed from the vibration of the bike, and the dry air and dust and the music in his head, just stared at her. She reached over to his belt, punched the "off," and waited. He continued to stare at her, his version of The Look, and then unplugged his ears. She told him to get cleaned up and put on his suit.

"I'd just as soon stay here," he said.

"You're going," his father said. "We're on vacation."

By the time they were ready, she had the ice chest packed, Leroy had pulled down the blanket and pillows and umbrella, and she had filled the big thermos with lemonade and ice. Ronnie wore his cutoffs and thongs, Sharon her new suit that she didn't like because her bottom was too big. But the suit also made her breasts look big, and she liked that okay. She'd be bigger even than Adele, if she only knew the curse *that* would be.

"I'll drive," Ronnie said. He wasn't old enough, but they let him practice away from town.

"We're walking," she said. "It's only a little way."

He still wanted to drive, but Leroy had had enough of his obstructionism. He picked up the ice chest and walked out the door. Sharon followed with the umbrella. Ronnie pouted a moment, considered the alternatives, and then carried the pillows and blanket out the door. She shut the trailer and started down the empty two-lane road they had driven into the campsite; the area seemed very deserted, only the scrub trees and waterfaucets, a couple of other trailers, and the bare country all around. But it was halfway to Tahoe. And it was so good to get out of the city. She felt springy, light in the high altitude air. The family was strung out, plodding toward the strange creek they'd seen driving in—barren and treeless, without grass, but there had been people in bathing suits walking toward it.

When the family had bunched up, Ronnie said, "What's that smell?"

They could all smell it, sulphurous vapor, and saw steam rising along the distant creek bed. "Just what I need on a day like this," Leroy said, "A hot bath."

Sharon wanted to know what made it hot, and her father explained how the molten core of the earth was almost exposed at places like this. Now Ronnie was looking with interest toward the distant creek. Where the road curved, a path led in that direction, and a large sign faced them.

DANGEROUS AREA: Scalding Water
Unpredictable Eruptions
Unstable Ground
Sporadic High Pollution
Sudden Temperature Changes
Broken Glass
Arsenic in the Water

We recommend that you remain on paved and wood paths and do not enter the water.

"Jesus," Leroy said. "You can't even go in the water."

But his son was walking quickly ahead. "Sure you can," he said. "You can hear people in the water."

It was true, there were distinct splashing and shouting sounds coming from the invisible creek. Leroy and Sharon followed Ronnie. She watched her family vanish from view, as if they had walked off the edge of the earth, and then she re-read the sign. It did not seem possible that so many hazards could exist in one place. And yet her family had hastened in that direction, almost excited at the prospect.

She stood alone. The empty, hot paved road stretched in both directions. Toward the west, scrub pine, the bare and now poisonous looking rock, the deserted looking trailers. To the east rose stark and barren hills, very symmetrical, that she now recognized as volcanic cones. At last the reality of the place struck her: it was a region of great upheaval. She

remembered the enormous explosion of St. Helens, that it had been greater even than a hydrogen bomb. Smoke had towered to the outer edge of the atmosphere, ash covered the land, weather was altered all across the country. She could not believe they camped right in the middle of such danger. But the evidence surrounded her, dazed her, and feeling helpless, she followed her family toward the lethal creek.

Wood stairs descended the bank, splintery planks bleached by the sun and poisonous fumes, and she looked down. A wooden walkway, edged by iron railings, flanked the water. There were many people in the water, but she noticed first an old grandmother, hanging onto a lifepreserver and kicking her way through the smoking water, wearing her bi-focals and smiling into the bright sunlight. Several smaller children floated in life rings; a man floated on his back; people waded among the boulders. Her own son had dropped his pillows and blanket and slid off the platform onto a boulder. His sister hung from the railing above him. Leroy stood in back of them, as if he'd been hit over the head or had heat stroke. He certainly hadn't expected anything like this.

The people in the water seemed cheerful enough, looked cool. She watched as her son lowered his legs into the water.

"Isn't it hot?" Sharon asked him.

"No. That sign was full of shit."

Leroy said nothing. What about the arsenic, the eruptions, the unstable ground, she wondered. But Leroy was setting down the ice chest, slipping off his sandals. She watched him move toward the water. Ronnie was swimming already, and Sharon was in up to her waist. Adele sat down on the stairs above the creek. She watched her husband enter the water. There were bubbles in the water, and sometimes big balloons of gas burst to the surface with a sound she could hear over the voices. Children squealed when the gas erupted beside them. On the hill above the creek, some great violence had torn rock slabs from the earth, scattered them like flakes. Some had fallen into the water. The sky, a bleached blue, clamped down over them all. It was late afternoon.

She heard her name. It startled her. Leroy was standing in the water to his chest, grinning, waving up to her. "It's just warm," he said. "Come on."

She waved back, but did not get up. She felt as though she had forgotten something absolutely essential to her life, and she should remember it before she descended to the hot creek. But the longer she remained, watching people frolicking in that hostile place, the less she was able to think at all. Finally, she, too, moved down beside the creek, put down her thermos, and slipped off her sandals. The wood was hot and splintery underfoot. At the water's edge, she sat down, careful to keep her feet away from the water. Leroy was talking to the man next to him, gesturing at her. "Guess where he works?" he shouted at her.

She lifted her head, indicating she'd heard the question.

"New Mexico. He makes the warheads."

She smiled at the man. Leroy had always wondered who made the business end of the missiles. Just the way the two men stood together, she could tell they'd be drinking beer together this evening, playing horseshoes. Leroy had entered his vacation. He'd certainly have a good start on his sunburn.

She saw one of the great, violent slabs of rock submerged just below her feet. It was flat, big as their kingsized bed. She stretched her toes toward it, felt the greasy warm water. The stone was solid, and she eased out onto it, sat down. The water just covered her bottom. Again she looked at the grandmother, still pushing herself around with the life-preserver. The kids, maybe the old woman's grandchildren, floated in their life rings. Her own children plunged like porpoises at the far end of the pool. Around her was the sulphur odor, and something more sour—the arsenic, she wondered? Downstream, she could see the dead volcanos.

Then she felt it. The huge stone under her had moved, a distinct vibration, like distant thunder. She sat very still. Yes, the stone moved beneath her, as if it were breathing, a living thing instead of dead rock. She continued to hold her breath, to wait, but nothing else happened. The splashes and shouts of children continued, the gas bubbled up, and then Leroy was wading toward her.

"Twelve people have died here since sixty-eight," he said. His voice had an edge of excitement. "He has a book at the trailer."

"Only twelve," she said.

"Some others were injured."

Again the stone moved under her, an almost audible rumble, but she said nothing.

"We'll go up to their place to eat," he said. "They have the Airstream."

"Fine," she said.

He moved away toward his friend, and she had a bizarre desire to stretch out on the stone. She felt oddly relaxed, almost numb, in the warm water and sun. She lay back. The warm water supported her like a hand, half floating, half lying on the stone. Her mind closed down, the voices around her faded, her eyes closed. She couldn't believe how relaxed she felt, as though she were floating in her own backyard, waiting for the evening news to come on.

All these people, together despite the danger, even excited by it. Their voices comforted her. And when she felt another tremor, so distant it might have come from the other side of the earth, she let herself go completely, drowsing under the sun.

The Green Marble Pedestal

Jean Fausett Atthowe

NOW the big silver moving van rolls out of sight down the street with a whoosh of air that fans the dusty August leaves on the Norway maples. It moves with the contents of their home, here, for seven years—the longest Rose has ever lived anywhere. She stands behind the closed front door and listens to the silence before she begins the last house cleaning.

Leaves of the mountain ash tremble in the unheard wind and throw lacework shadows against the walls above the bannister. Somewhere water runs in a toilet. In the quiet house it sounds like a mountain stream sifting over pebbles. She sees sunlight flicker for a moment on its waters buried below fallen aspen. She feels spray from the falls below rise to cool her face.

Before she raises the damp rag in her hand to begin wiping fingerprints from the molding in this hall for the last time, she leans against the door and closes her eyes. From the falls she sees the town—in the valley below, circled by mountains—her town; and just across the river under the trees, the house, her house. She sees thc blue spruce by the bedroom window and beside the kitchen door the crabapple. It seems to shine white with spring blossoms like a bride covered in lace even though it is late summer. With her closed eyes she is sure she can see next door her old Norwegian neighbor reach across her dining table and pour coffee for her widow friends with a steady arm for all her eighty years. Its bitter fragrance tickles Rose's nose.

Down the street Flash, the old English setter, lies stretched in the sun with his head propped against the fire hydrant in front of his house. In the

school yard, sunlight mines diamonds out of the spray of water the children create at the water fountain with their thumbs pressed down on the spout. Roy Oldquist, behind the counter of his Quick-Check store, sets out a carton of milk and two lemons for an old lady and psychedelic-colored popsicles for children with dusty feet who wait behind her.

Rose hears the heavy rumble of a loaded logging truck moving through the edge of town and a train by the river being shunted to a new track. She senses the thud of each car that hits the big pot hole left by winter in the Fourth Street bridge that feeds into the main street. She feels in her hand the cool brass railing and the velvet ropes that grace the grand interior of the old Intermountain Bank in the center of the town that is fast crumbling because now the action is out at the shopping malls.

Beyond, at the foot of a mountain, the town park lies innocent that hosts the high school crowd at night who have no place else to entertain—who laugh and wrestle and smoke pot. On the mountain above sumac and scrub maple will flame out in reds and purples this fall. There are wild plum bushes there and chokecherries that are dusted with white blossoms in spring. They shine for a brief spell like Indian brides coming down from the hills after a long winter. Everywhere are the smells of spruce, of white pine and hemlock and tamarack that drift out of the mountains.

The rag in Rose's hand is soaked with ammonia that permeates the hall. She shakes her head, blinks her staring eyes. The rag tracks down and devours grey fingerprints that Billy, their youngest child, and his friends left on the walls in the stairwell; so many, it seems, that fifty fingers must sprout from each boy's hands.

Billy, who has been dangling on a neighbor boy's swing most of the morning alone, calls from the empty kitchen, "Where's a glass for water?" "Cup you hands under the tap—like the Indians," Rose shouts. His friends are gone to the mountains hiking with their families, or to the rivers canoeing on this summer Saturday—without him because he's moving. In the basement William scratches about. From the front hall Rose hears his footsteps resound, each as distinct as a drop of water on a cave floor.

Suddenly, for no apparent reason, Rose thinks of the defeated Indians whose ponies had probably kicked up the dust under this very house as they left their mountain home to escape the white settlers a century ago. Confined to a flat Missouri reservation, they wailed, "We cannot hear the wind in the pines." Rose hears their cries in the soft rustle of the pine boughs beyond this quiet house where her last cleaning efforts move silently on, up the window frames, along the baseboards. Shadows of the leaves outside—or of Indian Ghosts, or of her grandmother, who had herself moved many times—flicker across the floor. Grandmother, who had followed Grandfather in search of a perfect site for his business, seems near now; just beside a window, just at the top of the stairs.

Rose wrings the cleaning rag in her bucket of water by the front door. A small cry from behind the bathroom door floats down the stairs like a feather. "Better lock that cat up, lady," one of the loaders had said when it pranced down the walk to meet the moving van at seven this morning.

"Why? What would he do?" Billy asked then. He held the big orange cat close to his chest.

The man waved at the black hole in the side of his van. "They get loaded on the truck unnoticed." His white T-shirt was already damp with sweat over his bloated stomach. "They wander inside—attracted to the family goods. It's days, sometimes weeks, before we open the door and find 'em."

Billy didn't ask their condition when they were found. He just looked with large eyes at the hole in the truck, then up at the loader. The cat's back paws dangled about the boy's knees like mittens on a clothesline.

"Put him somewhere safe," the man said, "till you leave."

So Rose wonders, as she cleans the front hall for the new owners, where the cat would have settled had it been trapped in that big van. Near the pink hand-blown glasses that had been in her grandmother's family? They might carry the scent of family gods for the cat.

They were not supposed to be moving again. This house was to be the last, Rose kept thinking these past weeks, still not believing they were going to leave it, that the company's offer was too big for William to turn down.

"I gotta pee," Billy shouts. "Can I use the bathroom?"

"Go ahead," his father answers. "The water hasn't been turned off yet."

By now the van must be pulling east, perhaps has topped the first grade beyond the "Last Chance for Gas" sign and past the wild tansy along the ditch that ripples in its wake. Now all the gears are shifted; the engine no longer seethes, and it is a patient tortoise ready for the long haul east across the plains. Rose imagines the household goods packed inside, taking each bump: the chairs and sofa on their sides; those pink glasses with the tiny bubbles that she will worry about all across country muffled in bath towels. She had always packed them that way when William was moved from bridge to dam to highway that his company was constructing and they lived in trailers and temporary towns—until they came here to this Idaho lumber town where William stayed at home base as regional manager. Here the older children would finally have a place. And Billy would not even remember a move.

Near the stairs Rose thinks she hears short little breaths like the flutter of sparrows' wings. Grandmother's heart was bad in later years, they said; especially for going up stairs. She kept her bottle of digitalis by the Dutch cleanser can near the kitchen sink.

Cars passing on the street and the grosbeaks in the barberry bushes under the hall windows seem far away. The paint around the front door is

smooth, but Rose can feel the almost invisible ridges that track the brush she had carefully guided. She has already wiped away the smudges around the doorplate where Billy's fingerprints always accumulated into a blur like game-tracks around a water hole.

"Come help me carry this stuff," William shouts to Billy from the top of the basement stairs. Rose hears Billy let the screen door slam on his way down to get a load of old newspapers. There is no one else to help. The oldest boy is off planting trees in a Montana forest this summer. Their daughter is cook's helper on a ranch for haying season. They will come later to the new home at a Canadian dam site that William will supervise—completely. "A big honor," the neighbors say. "Of course you'll have to move." "Too big to turn down," William keeps saying, shaking his head and rubbing his hands together as if they hurt. "Afterwards we'll settle down."

Rose searches the walls for more fingerprints. "Leave a clean camp for those who come behind," William tells the children out in the woods. Moving day is always cleaning day. Each move is an exercise in self-erasing. "You don't want the new people to know your secrets, so clean them up," her grandmother would say, every time they moved. Rose can see her now in the hall on Ash Street. In a blur of many moves, the first day there stands still in Rose's memory like the sun over Jericho. That day Grandmother stopped and finally took time to open her boxes and the cedar chest that always rested in the attic jumble of small treasures like a satiated whale full of secrets instead of food. Even Grandmother had forgotten what was in it. First she removed a Spanish shawl, fringed and intricately woven. Grandmother shakes it out, drapes it over her grey head and the smell of mothballs floats through the years—right into this front hall that Rose will vacate today. Then, Grandmother holds the corners at her waist and bows and smiles and waves to her audience—to Rose and all those people they both imagined in tiers of seats behind her. She visits again each corner of the Ash Street dining room in a little dance. Her arms, set akimbo, display the fringe and the pattern across her shoulders as she speaks to crates of china and smiles at invisible opera boxes. She was going to be a singer, she often told Rose; would break into fits of arias along with the Saturday afternoon opera over the radio—but not for long because of the bridgework they couldn't afford to pay a dentist to repair. Rose and her mother ducked their heads to keep from laughing at the awful sound. Now Rose senses her white hands reaching out to steady herself on the bannister. She had been laughed at and she knew it.

Rose feels the soft wool of the shawl along her arms as if Grandmother were still wrapping her in it and giving her a hug. Grandmother had rarely sought such intimacy, bending so near that Rose could see the fine red lines in the whites of her eyes, the yellow in the corners. Tears had welled up in them when she saw the moth holes gaping in the shawl that day on

Ash Street. But there was so little time on moving days to dwell on those possessions. Grandmother was too busy, too disorganized, stepping over boxes, half unpacking one, then drifting to another as she spread glasses and towels like a wind scattering things at a picnic. So the treasures stayed hidden. Only the green marble pedestal was ever out where she could see it, even though Rose and her mother did their best to hide it. They hated its ugliness, laughed at it and at Grandmother.

"Who knows what you'll grow up to be Rose. Something grand; and you'll have a place for them. Then you can get out all those things; use them," she said before they were taken to the attic that day. At other times, Grandmother insisted there would be a place for them one day—and for the green marble pedestal—someplace grand where the family could stay.

Billy sighs when he comes in from stacking old bottles and newspapers outside the back fence. Salt from dried sweat crusts the hairline at his temples. "Can I take this old rabbit Dad left on the pile out there?"

"That's just trash now," his father says as he follows him into the hall.

"Oh, take it, Billy," she says. "If there's room in the car."

"You always find things when you move," William says and shakes his head at the stuffed rabbit under Billy's arm. "I found the deed to Park Place from our monopoly set under my shoe rack in the closet." He rests his hand against the door jamb.

"Don't leave any more fingerprints. I've cleaned enough already," Rose says.

"I'm exhausted," he says. "Remind me never to move again."

"I have," Rose says. Then she laughs. "At least you don't have to haul Grandmother's green marble pedestal up from that basement."

William drags a dirty hand down over his face and groans.

"What pedestal?" Billy asks.

"It's a family joke," Rose says.

Rose taps the top of Billy's head where the hair never lies flat. "Maybe one day you'll be a star for the Boston Celtics. Now you can bring up more trash for your father."

"Billy, that rabbit is dirty and old," William says. "Why don't you chuck it?"

The cat calls again from behind the door of the upstairs bathroom, a high, reedy wail.

Grandmother's skirt seems to brush Rose's shoulder as she bends to pick up her cleaning bucket.

"I'd rather play for Los Angeles," Billy calls back from the basement stairs.

"William," Rose says, but he has gone. She was going to say, "Let him keep the rabbit, William."

"William who?" Grandmother seems to say again just as she did so many years ago when Rose first called to say, yes, she was now married.

To William. Not really an elopement, though, even if it was a justice of the peace wedding. But instead of asking about the ceremony, who was the minister, why Rose didn't want a family affair, Grandmother only said, "Now certainly *you* should have the green marble pedestal."

"Oh, Mom. What does she want with *that* old thing," Rose's mother said in the background. But Grandmother just went on, asking when Rose would bring him home, would the pedestal fit in the back of his car.

Rose can still hear the sarcasm in her mother's voice over the phone when she said to Grandmother, "Better ask where they'll be living. The floor had better be sturdy to hold that big piece of stone up."

But Grandmother kept right on. "And when you come we can have Mrs. Macateer over," she said, "and Auntie Corrina and . . . ." Then her voice drifted off. She knew there was no one else. They had moved too much. There were no friends there when Rose and William were married.

"But what is a pedestal," Billy says after bringing up another load.

William, back again, too, scratches his head that looks like he has walked through a cobweb. "It's something . . . . It holds something up."

"It was supposed to be grand, Billy . . . holding a bowl of roses, or something. My mother and I used to laugh at her and her awful pedestal. We wanted to hide it each time we moved, but we never had the chance. Grandmother always remembered that thing."

Billy listens, holding the rabbit to his chest.

Grandmother holds her breath next to Billy. Rose thinks she has a small, blue-veined hand on the rabbit's head.

When Rose dialed home from her little apartment the day they were married, she had turned to William for support about the justice of the peace. He stood right where her sofa bed stood at night when it was opened. The suit jacket he wore for the ceremony was dropped on her only chair. She liked the way his shoulders hung forward just a little—a sign of seriousness and intellectual pursuits. For two years, since soon after they met in a cafeteria on Peachtree Street one lunch hour, she had often imagined being settled with him in some medium-sized town surrounded by hills—he liked the west, too—following some necessary moves after college. At night William would be home wrestling at his desk with water drainage problems for his engineering journals; her seedlings would be sprouting in every window, pushing their roots deep. So, just a week before, she had decided the vision was worth giving up her own telephone and her own money from illustrating medical books.

When Grandmother offered the pedestal, Rose made a face at him. Trying to stifle a laugh, she looked toward the tiny bathroom and her minute kitchen. The opposite wall was taken up by closet doors; not an inch for the pedestal there. Behind William, carriages with red-coated coachmen traveled through lush woods printed on the material across the back of the sofa. The wooden arms were ringed from the coffee cups of legions of tenants who hadn't seemed to mind leaving traces of their

occupancy behind. Might the pedestal fit in the corner and still leave room for the sofabed at night? She couldn't remember its size.

"What did it look like?" Billy says.

"Big." William holds his arms out to indicate its girth. "And green. And ugly."

Rose whisks a cobweb out of a window corner. "It was this high," she says holding out her hand. Heavy marble. Mottled green. Bumpy—like an old toad—with a lot of carving on it. It all came apart—into four pieces, Grandmother told us when we came home for visits. She'd take your father to the basement. 'See how easily it would pack into your car,' she'd say."

Billy stands by the door picking threads out of the old rabbit. "But if it was so ugly, why did Grandmother want it?"

"A good question," William says, straightening up to leave for the basement again.

"Well, you like that dirty rabbit. You like to pin fishing lures to your old hat."

Billy opens his eyes wide as if to see the inside of his own head.

"Tie your shoe laces. Go help your father."

"But I always had some excuse not to take it." William laughs. He puts a hand on Billy's shoulder to guide him out of the hall. "No room for it in our trailer this time, I'd say. No time to add it to the van this trip, I'd tell her another time."

"And then Grandmother would look up proudly at her grandson-in-law with such a future," Rose says. Then she let her voice crackle with laughter. "Poor Grandmother. She had such hopes. We were going to be successful, settled one day at last with a long walkway up to the house and the pedestal sitting out in a big hall, clean and polished, and everyone seeing and admiring it."

"And you were going to live out west where there were still Indians," Grandmother tells Rose from a corner of the living room. "You were going to know everyone in town, live in an old house with gingerbread in the eaves, and fill it with children and potted plants. Outside, fruit trees and grapes and berries that you yourself planted would fill up the land. You were going to bring home your own Christmas tree every year from the hill. That was before you decided to be a medical illustrator, make money instead of great art and have control of your life." Grandmother sniffed. She knew they had been laughing at her.

"Why didn't she have a house for the pedestal?" Billy asks.

Rose looks at William. "They kept moving—to get ahead, to find a better place for Grandfather's business," she says. "But things just got worse."

When William looks at Rose, even though his eyes are in the shadow of the leaves blowing outside, she can see his troubled forehead—drawn for a moment into deep lines.

"Did I know her?" Billy asks.

"No. You were too little," Rose says.

This time the cat's howls are more desperate—an alley cat's in unfamiliar territory—with wave on wave of warning notes.

Billy twists the glass eye in the rabbit's head. "You should have stayed where you were then."

"Finally Grandmother stopped mentioning the pedestal," Rose says.

"And certainly no one else did if she didn't," William says.

Something happened to her memory. Age probably, Rose thinks. Or perhaps because she saw them less. Maybe she just stopped hoping.

Billy looks up at his father. "No," he says. "I'll take this rabbit with me." Rose cannot hear his feet echo his father's back down the basement stairs.

Now the sun is gone from the narrow windows by the front door; and from the horizon of mountains Rose moved to see tipped with the white morning sunlight when Billy left for school each day. She can barely see them in the background between two houses turning darker, ready to dress in pinks and purples if the sunset is just right this evening.

With most of the neighbors and Billy's friends gone—to the hills, downtown is deserted certainly. She imagines the sun on the old brick mercantile building; the parking meters in a wash of gold. She smells the sharp odor of the tipi burners at the sawmills. She feels the roughness of the chipped paint on the bridge railings over the river on the way home from downtown, hears the ring of the air pumps at the Husky station. This sweep of unconscious knowing that comes only from long occupancy is worth giving up the opera circuit for, or illustrating medical journals, playing for Los Angeles, getting ahead.

The cat's cry is even deeper now. Louder. Each wail longer.

Rose is hurrying now. There are still the bathrooms to clean. She remembers moving days long ago that Billy has never known. "Where is the green marble pedestal?" Grandmother would say as she stood in the new quarters among half unpacked boxes and bundles of curtains. As she picked through the boxes with her hair hanging in straggles, Rose and her mother would look at each other and grimace. "Oh, Lord," Rose's mother always said to some puffing truck driver. "Hide it for goodness sake!" And she would run ahead to attic or cellar. "Quick," she'd say, "in here," and point to the darkest, most remote corner. Once it was hidden, there would never be enough hands to move it out, they hoped.

"Jesus," the man would mutter. "Hey, Mike. C'mover here and give me a hand with this. . . ." He didn't say son-of-a-bitch out loud because in those days, well, Grandmother had never seen or heard the words. But Grandmother always caught them and it was set somewhere in a hall, by a stair, squeezed beside a sofa where no one could miss it with its one silk rose in a bud vase on top. It was the first thing Grandmother bought with

the envelopes of money she counted out on her wedding day, remembering it in the window of a store; the height of fashion. It must have seemed grand to her in some imaginary hallway or front parlor while Grandfather launched his business.

Out back William grunts trying to ease a box of rattling bottles out the back door and Billy whines. Rose stands for a moment looking at the distant mountains now in shadow. When the family moved from Clifton Street where she and her mother joined them after her father left, she had to say goodbye to the little girl next door. She sees her now, no bigger than Billy, standing on her green porch in her muddied Sunday dress squinting into the sun as Mother turned the key in the ignition and drove off with the last load surrounding them in the car. They would not tour the neighborhood again for pop bottles to return for the deposit. On Ash Street she had said goodbye to the lady next door whose windows were clouded with ferns. China painting materials were usually spread over her oak dining table. Sometimes she had pushed them all aside to read the tea leaves in Rose's cup. Rose never again saw the boy next door on Arbor Street with his bucket of tadpoles from the creek behind. Grandmother and Mother never said goodbye to anyone, and soon Rose herself stopped talking to the neighbors.

Grandmother, in each new house—first bought ones, then rented ones—would first settle on a place to arrange her cut glass and lament at seeing how dull it looked when she had to display it in dark corners. She would lock the cats in the bathroom for a week until they passed through the shock of the move. Sometimes she would sidle up to a window to wonder about the neighbors as if she were on a train passing through. And Rose's mother, when she was home from the office, would keep an eye out for any men in her neighborhood while she rummaged among unfamiliar shelves for coffeepots and cups.

Grandfather died in the fourth rented house. Then, in the small house Rose's mother finally financed, the cut glass stood out on the side board, but the green marble pedestal was stored in the basement. So it was up to Rose finally to have that place for it that Grandmother had held only in her visions—big enough, permanent enough, grand enough.

Upstairs, the long, drawn-out yowl of the cat is no longer muffled. He must be right at the door, sniffing the edges.

There are no cobwebs here now. Today the front hall stands pristine for the Gastons tomorrow. The spiders will barely have time to move out from where they might be watching. She knows where each lives. One in the upstairs shower. Another over the light bulb in the hall closet. New colors will be on the walls—apple green upstairs, Marie Gaston says, cinnamon in the study.

Rose straightens and makes a full turn in the hall. The fingerprints are almost gone from this house of Rose's and William's. The goldfinch will no longer share his domain with her, singing in the early mornings from

the blue spruce's branches. His yellow flash was always brief, rarely seen in the shadows of its branches—like a thought from some great religion. Houses flash before her mind's eye, streets, towns, company trailer camps. Only here does she know what the trashman will whistle on Friday mornings at six. Only here does she know that along the street and up the hill, precisely two and a half miles on foot, a big white pine right now is dropping a cone into a ravine. It rolls past a tamarack and comes to rest in rocks above a deep, dark pool in a stream that dogwood violets surround in spring.

Suddenly Rose envies the children of Israel who hauled by day along with their tents and pots and goats the ark of the covenant across strange deserts. She remembers that a cloud filled the tabernacle—the minister's voice reporting from the pulpit their tribe's progress, Grandfather's hands folded in his lap next to her. It told them where to go, where to abide—who they were in the wilderness, when the skyline was faint at sunrise and at dusk in the dust clouds they raised. And now it is that Grandfather, who has been dead these six years, seems to slip right through the door and into the kitchen; she is there, looking for the table from which to gather crumbs to eat one by one like raisins.

From the front hall windows Rose sees the street, the neighbors' houses as if they were stage sets—distant now, no longer a part of her life. Old Mr. Gutman glides past on his bike, the basket over the back wheel packed with greens from his garden. Though his spindly legs push the pedals, she cannot hear, with her windows closed for washing, the steady click like castanets that accompanies his passage. Her old neighbor goes forward with lettuce blooming against his black trousers and disappears down the street without looking once for her or Billy as he passes.

"Yes, they've pulled out by now," he'll tell his wife at supper. "A nice family. Out to save the parks, restore the riverbanks. And that Billy—crazy about the red-tailed hawks up on the mountain."

Now all Rose can see is the old lady across the street shuffling, since her stroke, with her walker up and down her front path.

Rose shakes her dustcloth out the front door. Almost everything has been swept away—the India ink on the rug under the telephone table which Billy spilled when he was charting Father Escalante's search for El Dorado for a history report. The little girl Rose played with on Clifton Street. The lady on Ash Street who read her tea leaves. But still some traces of her life remain. Toothpaste spatters the wall in the bathroom. Hairs lie in the basin. What if she left those hairs; the toothpaste marks? What if she said "no" to this move. Rose takes hold of the bathroom door handle. She can see in a vivid image the white spots on the mirror above the sink even after she pulls the door shut with a sharp bang. Leave them there; the hairs, the streaks Billy left in the tub, a voice inside her says as she thinks of leaning against the closed door so they won't escape. Grandmother is there beside her.

Now the sweeping stops and William's heavy boots tramp up from the basement at a tired pace; another box of refuse out to the pile he has created this week in the alley.

The cat's howl is long and loud in the bathroom.

"Get that cat down to the car," Rose shouts at Billy. "We'll be going soon."

"And the rabbit, too?" he calls.

This territory will soon be left to the spiders, the goldfinch, the Gastons tomorrow. But wait. There by the door handle, like the track of a night visitor, a long dark smudge from Billy's thumb and palm is spread across the white enamel; a much larger palm . . . not so easily erased now . . . than his was as a toddler when his hair was so fair and he slept by the window that the blue spruce shades.

Rose looks around for the bucket and wash rag. And it is now . . . precisely now that she suddenly sees how well Grandmother's green marble pedestal would have looked just here in the hall. How had she missed seeing this perfect spot between door and window? Right here the Corinthian fluting of its base could have risen magnificently; exactly here in the cool of the empty hall it could have been as graceful as a giant fern. Its elegance could have filled the house—seems to now, even as she imagines it, as the pedestal assumes its spot just under the shadows of leaves on the wall that recall the fringe on Grandmother's Spanish shawl.

And now Rose imagines—then hopes—and finally almost believes—that deep in the midsection of the silver van that toils somewhere east the pedestal is lying, carefully broken into parts, ready to be reassembled in the next place.

William pats her shoulder and sighs before his footsteps resound for the last time on the cellar stairs. Billy carries the basket with the now silent cat through the door to the car. Rose raises a wet cloth to erase his last fingerprints. A bowl of roses on the pedestal certainly for this time of year she decides. Then there might be a center that held.

Rose stands back. Billy's prints are large and dark. "Leave them," she says to herself. She drops the wet cloth and as she reaches to shake her dust rag over the front step outside, Grandmother slips by in her lacy shawl with the moth holes beginning to show and trudges down the walk toward her next house; before Rose can reach out to her, she's gone—before she can catch her hand, before she can promise she will take the old lady up the hill the two and a half miles precisely to the deep pool, the yellow dogtooth violets and the pine cone among the rocks. At the entrance to this now empty house, Rose is not laughing anymore. A slight wind picks up the particles from Rose's dust rag and wafts them into a little cloud before dispersing them down wind over the hedge by the blue spruce tree.

Lapses

Patricia Lynn Hunt

THE social worker never liked what he saw when he stopped at 528 East West Avenue. The entire street was a reproach to him: the unemployed men his age who eyed his car; the welfare babies; the edgy women; the asphalt itself that emptied abruptly onto a glass-splattered, dirt lot. The street was a dead end, but there was no sign to warn the unsuspecting. The sign had come down years ago to make way for a basketball hoop. No, no, no, no. He never liked what he saw here, but there was no other place for her. She was better off here than in a hospital, the social worker thought as he rolled up the car windows. He checked and rechecked the locks on the doors. It was a smoldering day and loosening his tie didn't change it. The social worker nodded to the steps-full of neighbors on either side of 528. He followed the directions tacked to the door: DOORBELL DON'T WORK. BANG HARD—ON THE WOOD, NOT ON WINDOW. You'd think they would fix the bell one of these years, he thought.

With a fork in her hand, Betty came to the door, opened it, and retreated to the kitchen without speaking to the social worker.

"I assume I should enter, Betty?" the social worker said as he shut the door. The house was faintly smoky because Betty was frying something—again. All the furniture, curtains, and the family's clothes always smelled of grease. The social worker followed the smoke to the kitchen where Betty was devouring a chicken leg.

"Well, how is she?" the social worker rested his folder on a chair and remained standing.

"I keep telling you she gets better every day," Betty said between bites. "I doubt if she'll ever get back to what she was, but the world has enough dried-up schoolteachers anyway."

The social worker surveyed the kitchen's unchanging clutter. He dropped into a chair suddenly tired. He hated this case because it reminded him of how fragile human strengths are. Lose a child, and snap.

"Why don't you buy a screen door with the money we send you? It would help in here in the summer."

Betty kept her eyes and mouth on the chicken leg.

"All right, where is she?" the social worker asked.

"She's probably around the corner."

"Probably! Probably. But you don't *know* do you? And, *which* corner anyway?" He slapped the folder on his knee.

Because Crystal Jennings was harmless and there was no room at the mental hospital, she was assigned to her aunt's care. Some people have all the luck: Aunt Betty was Crystal's only living relative. There were days when the social worker believed that a dead relative could take better care of her. Betty came to get Crystal as soon as she heard that she would receive $109 a month for keeping her. Betty arrived in a red coat and a taxi; she hid most of her curlers under a greasy scarf. In the open air she didn't smell at all, but in the cab her coat reeked of the fried fish that she cooked at Lake Trout Carry-Out.

Aunt Betty and Uncle Harry were poor but not ruined.

Uncle Harry was the funny one. He drank King Solomon whisky from one end of the weekend to the other. He called it "rotgut shit," but then he affectionately called Aunt Betty and his brokendown dog "rotgut shit," too. Harry always wore a dirty green jumpsuit with his name on it. He worked on cars or something.

"Well, have you even seen her today?" the social worker asked.

"Oh, yes," Betty lied. She wasn't sure that she had seen Crystal today or yesterday. "I tell you she loves it here."

"I want to see her and I want to see her now." The social worker surprised himself at how angry he had become. "I didn't see her last month because 'she was around the corner.' If I don't see her today, she'll be transferred from here in the morning." The social worker knew it was an idle threat; the mental hospital was filled. Betty didn't know about the SRO at the hospital, but she realized that her gambling fund was being threatened with extinction.

"I'll get her." Betty marched steadfastly out the door in her slippers. She passed Harry coming up the walk. "Your dinner is in the oven," she called. Harry didn't ask where she was going, and she didn't tell him.

"Well, if it's not my favorite poverty pimp," Harry said jovially. He smelled of gasoline and cheap liquor.

"I'm not a poverty pimp . . . ."

"Tell it to that chair," Harry said with a dismissive wave. "All I know is, that if there weren't poor and crazy folks, you college boys wouldn't have jobs. So what's that but a pimp?"

The social worker rose. "I'm waiting to see Crystal. Then, I'll leave."

"I came home to eat, not to argue," Harry said as he moved newspapers from one chair to another and pushed aside the potpourri of litter on the table. He was trying to make room for his supper. He opened the oven.

"Damn. Will you look at that plate? Just look at it." Harry thrust the plate at the social worker. "Do you know that woman has never baked or broiled anything in her life? She would fry Brussel sprouts! Look at that plate! Fried chicken, fried apples, and French fries." Grease had gathered in the little pools in the middle of the plate which Harry had set on the table. "And I do believe the woman has fried a Cornish hen, not a chicken. Look at these drumsticks." Harry held one up by its end for inspection. "This chicken must have had polio 'cause these little legs couldn't have taken him anywhere." The social worker shifted all his weight to his left leg and looked towards the front door; he was trying not to laugh. "I use to marvel at how well Betty fried fish in that carry-out until I discovered that frying was her habit and not her skill." Harry was his own best audience and laughed aloud.

A second wave of anger and impatience washed over the social worker as he remembered why he was waiting. "Your wife will return, won't she? 'Cause if she doesn't, I'll have Crystal transferred immediately."

Harry didn't look up from the fried apples. "Guess I'm supposed to be scared, huh? Mister college boy might take away $109 a month. Like that's a gold mine. $109 a month to feed, house, clothe an adult. In Baltimore. In 1981." Harry peered into the social worker's face. "Shit, boy. You and Betty the onliest ones think you can make money offa this deal. And you know Betty don't know nothin' 'bout money. She plays the damn *state* lottery. And you, you the onliest one jumpin' through hoops for a dollar. If the Man gives you $10 to hassle me today, you hassle me today."

The social worker, who had stood stock-still throughout Harry's soliloquy, pulled himself to his full height. "I'm not going to take any more from you." He pivoted on one heel and strode to the front door.

Harry called after him. "I allow Crystal to stay here 'cause she needs to be here. $109, shit. Do you know that all last week she ran around askin' people to check her fusible parts. She heard me say that to a mechanic and that's the *only* thing she said *all* last week. I guess $109 covers that too."

The social worker had to nudge the sleeping, mangy, one-eyed dog away from the door. As he gained the top step, he noticed the approaching processional. Crystal was being guided down the street by Betty who

walked directly in back of her with her hands on Crystal's shoulders. In the stifling heat, Crystal wore a knit cap over her hair and a jacket. To the neighbors' delight they walked in a lock step; Crystal was oblivious to their mirth. Betty waved at the social worker who did not wave back. Within a few feet of Betty's walkway, a pot-bellied man sitting on the social worker's car shouted, "Hey, Betty, today's number was 528."

Betty halted and dropped her hands from Crystal's shoulders. "Don't tell me that, Reggie. Don't tell me." Betty turned towards the man, dropped to her knees and started moaning, "Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. I played that number all last week. Lord, have mercy."

"And it's your address, too," Reggie pointed out what everyone knew.

The steps-full of neighbors laughed and laughed, at unlucky Betty, at dumb Reggie, at idiotic Crystal, at the impotent social worker who stood in wonder at the entire scene. Hearing the commotion outside, Harry came to the door.

"Woman, get up!" he shouted. "Come and eat, Crystal."

"Harry, our address hit today and I played it all *last* week," Betty said, still on her knees. Crystal had resumed walking towards the house.

"You might as well have missed it by ten years. A near miss is the same as missing by a mile."

"No, it ain't either," a neighbor said. "A near miss takes it out on your nerves."

Amid all the joviality, the social worker hurried down the steps, paused to look at Crystal, who looked through him, and rushed to his automobile. Pot-bellied Reggie slid off of the car just as it pulled away from the curb.

"Damn fool," Harry yelled. No one was sure to whom he was speaking.

Monica Jennings, Crystal's daughter, had been the result of a $25 bet between McCool Wilson and Box Norris. McCool and Box (named after his head) were half of the physical education department at Sudbrook Junior High. They watched Crystal lead her fourth period class past the gymnasium to the cafeteria each day until Box had wondered aloud: "Do you think she has a man?"

"Um-hum . . . Ray Charles," McCool answered. They laughed.

"She might not be bad lookin' without those bullet-proof glasses on," McCool said.

"I don't know . . . That pinched face looks like something crawled up and died in her." Box gave a horse laugh. "Hey, McCool, I'll bet $25 you can't get a date with her."

McCool couldn't resist a challenge. That's why he was McCool. "You're on," he said.

Box shook his big head.

Arranging it was easier than he had suspected. He paid a student $5

not to get caught letting the air out of Jennings' tires. Then, of course, he sauntered out during Crystal's discovery. She was frantic; she couldn't tolerate a change in plans. She had to get her skirt from the cleaners before they closed. She was desperate enough to accept his offer to drive her to the cleaners and change the flat tire. Somewhere between the cleaners and the parking lot, Crystal agreed to go to the movies with him the following night.

"Why did you become a schoolteacher?" McCool was running out of questions. Already there had been a lot of silence filled by his smile.

"When I was growing up, everyone always said I looked like one."

"Do you like teaching kids?"

"I'm immune to them."

Empty of conversation, McCool drove Crystal home.

Regardless of the stories McCool circulated about what happened next, it wasn't rape or seduction on the gym teacher's part. Crystal had lain there impassive, unresisting, punctured by the novelty that she was no longer self-enclosed.

By the second month of her pregnancy, the urge to possess what was within her consumed other thoughts and desires. Her brain bloated with the need to own; her fingers ached to claim the mystery within her belly. This passion for proprietorship was so consuming that by the third month, Crystal had decided against having the baby scraped out of her womb.

Crystal hovered over her daughter's years, guarding them with feline watchfulness. She had never owned anyone before Monica. The mother loved the child's dependency and insatiable need for attention. Crystal became anxious when they were apart.

Many hours were spent reading fairy tales. Monica would study each picture with a five-year-old's intensity.

"Why do the gnomes always carry off people?" Monica sniffed.

"Do you have to blow your nose?"

"No." She had yet to master nose-blowing—she sniffed up instead of snorting down. "Why do the gnomes . . . ."

" 'Cause that's their job," Crystal answered steadily.

"And it's the fairy godmother's job to help the princess escape?"

"Yep."

"How come the princess don't . . ."

"Doesn't."

". . . doesn't fall off the godmother's wings?"

"I don't know . . . . I guess it's magic."

"Maybe she Scotch-taped herself to the wings, huh? Mommie, why can't we ride on airplane wings like that?"

"Sweets, airplanes' wings aren't made of gossamer."

"What's gossamer?"

"What the fairy godmother's wings are . . ."

"Oh." Looking for evidence of the magic that kept the tiny princess aloft on her fairy godmother's wide wings, Monica peered closely at the page.

"C'mon and climb down . . . You're getting heavy," Crystal shifted the chubby girl off her lap and onto the mattress. "Good night, sleep tight, and don't let the bed-bugs bite."

Monica nestled under the covers. "G'night."

Crystal contentedly studied the child's smooth, peanut-colored face with its fat cheeks and puckered mouth.

"Good night, lumpkin," Crystal said and turned out the light.

St. Paul was a three-lane, one-way street that ran through the heart of the downtown shopping district. Traffic congestion mounted in the late afternoon.

"Mommie, aren't we parked down the other way?" The plump child clutched a box with new, patent-leather shoes. Because of her extra wide feet, they had to shop at a special store downtown.

"I've always loved walking up St. Paul Street. . . . The stores are so classy along here."

The sun was setting behind the row of buildings and threw the sidewalk into shadow. The stores contained a cool, uncluttered, studied elegance.

Mother and daughter strolled hand-in-hand. A man walking towards them noticed that both suffered from knock-knees.

"Look at that necklace," Crystal cooed. She pointed and squeezed the child's shoulder.

Nodding absently, Monica said: "I have to go to the bathroom."

"I told you to go before we left home. . . . Let's see if there's one in that office building across the street," Crystal said with mild irritation.

Waiting to cross, Crystal watched an impatient motorcyclist try to pass the car in front of him before the light turned red. Just as he cut into the middle lane, he wobbled and the front wheel came off the ground as he hit the street. Crystal thought the bike rolled toward them in slow motion, yet she couldn't move. The lane immediately in front of them was empty. Monica was looking, in the other direction; she wondered why her mother squeezed her hand so hard. The cycle grazed Crystal's left arm and leg before slamming Monica into a wall. The shriek started in the pit of Crystal's abdomen and took several seconds to work its way up and through her gaping mouth.

The overstuffed room tried to force patients into comfort. The chairs and carpet and music were too soft, and the plants, too tame. It irritated more than calmed Crystal. The psychiatrist was translucent in appearance and behavior: the gray eyes clear to emptiness, the facial skin shadowed by hair growing beneath it, plump fingers playing, picking, roaming over trifles. He had introduced himself as Dr. Bill.

"Do you feel responsible for your daughter's death, Mrs. Jennings?"

"Miss. I'm *Miss* Jennings."

"Oh . . . I'm sorry."

"For what?"

"For not having your correct marital designation," Dr. Bill's slightly pink face smiled. He knew that she knew that he had been thrown off balance by her sudden loquacity. During their first three meetings, Crystal hadn't spoken. "Would you like some coffee?"

They sat in silence for a while. She hated this jackass.

"The only thing I have to tell you about my baby is: one night—she was five—I asked her if she knew the Lord's Prayer. We had been over it many times. She said she knew it and began, 'Our Father, Who art in heaven, how do you know my name?' I laughed till I cried. I couldn't even correct her. . . . But I see you don't think it's funny."

"Why do *you* think it's funny," Dr. Bill's hands were wandering over the desk top and his thinning hair.

"I'm leaving now," Crystal said as she rose.

"O.K., Miss Jennings, I'll see you tomorrow?"

Uncle Harry slowly played "Stormy Monday" on the ill-tuned piano. The Friday night recital of "Stormy Monday" marked with ceremonial flourish the official start of his weekend binges. "They call it stormy Monday, but Tuesday's just as bad," Harry sang. He had gotten drunk every weekend since he was thirty-two, whenever that was. Harry always looked thirty-two, even when he was seventeen. ("Never had to show an I. D. in a bar in my life," Harry bragged.) Now that he was forty-eight, he still looked thirty-two.

Although Betty usually left the house to play bingo on Friday, Crystal would return from her wanderings to listen to Uncle Harry play and warble. One time he leaned back too far and fell off the stool. He laughed and she laughed but the brokendown dog got hit and ran out of the room. Another time Crystal had asked him why he didn't have children.

"That's one thing Betty didn't want to gamble on. And me, shoot, I had my hands full of me." He launched into: "Ain't it funny how time slips away," then stopped and took a sip of King Solomon.

"Since you're in a talkative mood, I been meanin' to ask you: why do you walk the streets day and night?"

"I love it, you know. When I'm walking, I'm doing opposites at the same time. I'm walking away from something. I'm walking towards something. With the same steps, at the same time. I want to find out how it's possible in this world with these feet. . . ."

Harry swayed on the stool. "I knew better. Somethin' tole me not to ask. Better off not knowin'." "Stormy Monday" was hammered out with a vengeance.

Crystal rocked to the music. In the middle of the third rendition, she broke in: "That's just like I was saying, Uncle Harry . . . sometimes I forget what I'm thinking . . . oh, I remember now . . . I'm safe 'cause I know there's not enough music or dogs or guns or karate to protect us from God."

Uncle Harry stopped playing. "Ya know, Crys, how long you plannin' to stay crazy? I mean I don't understand y'all. I see crazy peoples all ober ev'rywhere. There's this ole broad comes aroun' the shop on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Never fails. Picks junk outta the trash can! Puts it in her shoppin' bag and moves on! She crazy too. Y'all act like crazy's the end. Like crazy stops chickens from layin' eggs. Crazy don' change a damn thing. If I thought it would, I'd been the firse one crazy." He clapped his hands, flung his head back and laughed. Crystal rocked in time with the song in her head. She hadn't heard Uncle Harry.

"Ah, Ole King Sol is a merry ole soul," Uncle Harry said as he finished the fifth. He looked at Crystal. "Honey, I knows you miss your chile. But you was gonna miss her sooner or later anyway. She was gonna leave you when she growed up. She was gonna die—you knew that when she was born. Crazy don' stop that . . . You gotta move on. You gotta realize, you can't own nobody like you wanna. Whatcha say, Crys?"

She kept rocking to "Stormy Monday" in her head.

When Uncle Harry fell asleep on the piano keys, Crystal went out on the back porch. It was her favorite place because, there, she was as high as the tree across the alley. She could see the full sky unencumbered by the city. The night mirrored her mood: inlaid with silver freckles, the cobalt sky hung as blue as her mourning.

The social worker did not like what he saw but there was no other place for her. As unkempt and uncared for as Crystal was, she was better off there than in a hospital. Nevertheless, he threatened cut-offs, transfers. Aunt Betty promised to do better, but how was she to manage with a job and a lazy, drunken husband? Betty hated the social worker; she saw her horse-race money walk out the door every time he came in. She appeased him, but still, he didn't like what he saw: Crystal wandering the streets day and night. Walking, talking to herself. He never liked what he saw.

ARTICLES

A View from the Rialto: Two Psychologies in *The Merchant of Venice*

Harvey Birenbaum

The right relationship between the ideal and the real is that the ideal should die into the real, in order that in the end the ideal may be realized. E. Graham Howe

SHAKESPEARE'S comic vision is sometimes farcical, particularly in *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. It is sometimes satirical, as in *Love's Labor's Lost*. However, it is always romantic, as a comparison between *The Comedy of Errors* and its source, Plautus' *Menaechmi*, will bear out. It is essential, therefore, to approach Shakespeare's comedy through romance. In speaking of romance we should think not only of a kind of story or a kind of writing, however, but also of a mode of perception, one which stylizes the world into patterns that fulfill a sense of potentiality. As we see it in Shakespeare, it is basically a medieval vision that evolved further through the Renaissance, combining the Christian ideal of purity with a pagan love of

natural feelings. The fulfillment it projects is a vision at once sociological, metaphysical, psychological, moral, cosmological, and esthetic. In fact, a primary characteristic of the romance mode is that it charts a thorough unity among all these levels of life; in its vision they are all known most profoundly by the same laws, by the mystery especially that unifies love, reason, and the harmony of music. Romance makes the assumption, not unfounded, that life is most real when it is most fluent and most coherent. The essence of life is grace itself: the grace of the courtier, the grace of the poet, the grace of lovers' communion, the grace of birds, planets, and all natural things being natural, the grace of the man or the woman at home in the human body whether riding, fighting, or dancing, and the grace of God. Grace is the fullness of life. In romance, fullness is the norm, and grace is simply truth. Delight is the perception of truth. The meaning of romance is nothing more—and nothing less—than the realization of such delight and the achievement, at least tentatively, of its well-being.[1]

Whatever the implications of feudalism, Ptolemaic astronomy, and Scholasticism in the history of society, science, and metaphysics, in the myth of romance these particular forms of the culture express an absolute sense of human experience. In learning to read this old language of Shakespeare's art, therefore, we do far more than recover archaic hieroglyphs, charming though such may be with the flair of antiquity. Something more happens in the process of reading or seeing the romantic plays, something that is immediate and personal. Coming to them from "real life," we become more alive to ourselves in the present with a fluency of pleasure that is as real as we let it be.

As a romance unfolds its narrative pattern, therefore, it justifies its vision of the world. *The Merchant of Venice* provides an interesting demonstration of this process. The romance heart of the play is the idyllic scene upon which Portia and Nerissa return after their foray into the world of malign pettiness. Lorenzo, having sent word that the house is about to regain its mistress, listens to music and celebrates the harmony of the universe. Unlike the better known *locus classicus* on Elizabethan cosmology, Ulysses' lecture in *Troilus and Cressida*, Lorenzo's speech is appropriately lyrical, singing its joy in music:

> How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
> Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
> Creep in our ear—soft stillness and the night
> Become the touches of sweet harmony . . .
>
> (V, i, 54-7)

The mixing of the senses is both delicate and pungent. The moonlight lies sleeping on the bank and (as it breathes across the evening air, illuminating it) smells sweetly, while the music creeps almost bodily into

our ears. We become one with the music as we submit to it. In the passivity of soft stillness, our own harmonious nature is evoked. Then we are ready to read the symbolism of the heavens.

> Sit Jessica,—look how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold,
> There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins;
> Such harmony is in immortal souls,
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it . . .
>
> (58-65)

By being told we cannot hear the music of the spheres, we seem to hear it, the harmony of our spirits rejoicing in the flow and check of the verse, spirit rebelling against the limitations of body and mind. Our sense of space is dislocated as we look up not at the roof but the floor of heaven in which the stars become the gold of communion plates (the ecclesiastical "patens") perceived as jewels. The orbs are alive with their angelic song while the "cherubins" listen in a communion with them which is what, perhaps, keeps them young in eyes that see all they can hear. Thus the harmony in immortal souls is established for us as a confluence of being on many levels, a free-floating gesture of life rich in its own reality. The moment of this speech is a basic constituent of the play and the characterization of Lorenzo, who speaks it on the play's behalf. Whatever we conclude about Lorenzo or the play as a romance must accommodate very basically the feeling of rightness that this speech establishes.

The plot of romance is a clear-cut structure, like a dance. The lovers split apart and then unite in society's celebration of their marriage. The anti-social villain or the surly father (Shylock is both) sunders the world and then it coalesces stronger than it had been before, expelling or converting him (both are done to Shylock, his conversion simply being more literal than usual). A paradigm for the formal reality of Belmont and for the logic of romance is provided by Bassanio's rationale for a return to Portia.

> In my school-days, when I had lost one shaft,
> I shot his fellow of the self-same flight
> The self-same way, with more advised watch
> To find the other forth, and by adventuring both,
> I oft found both . . .
>
> (I, i, 140-4)

He prevents our worldly skepticism by acknowledging himself that this "childhood proof" is "pure innocence." Though we might well think twice before lending such a man money in real life, we are to realize, as Antonio does, that his logic is an appropriate entree to romance, for it is a qualitative logic, assuming that form will follow form.[2] It is a charm, therefore, which establishes a world discontinuous from ours, following laws of its own physics and its own chemistry, following geometry, in fact, when we would expect psychology. The structure that it enunciates, however, is not empty or arbitrary. Although romantic comedy is based largely on the pleasure of pretending to believe the preposterous, still, such structures express more directly than ordinary logic an important kind of meaning.

The arrow logic provides Bassanio with an innocent eagerness to reenter life, where he longs to be. It outlines a coherent structure which *has* to be valid. The parallel must hold good just as the arrow rising must fall according to the arc with which it rose. The logic is not one of cause-and-effect but of coherent, self-sufficient form—nonlogical but self-fulfilling, like the natural organic tendencies of life taken directly, without the intervention of a purposeful and analytic brain. The magic of analogy is concrete and tangible, a way of knowing life through the connection of feelings.

Similarly, the casket routine by which Bassanio chooses Portia and the ring game by which their love is confirmed are both folkloric motives that are drafted into the play as self-contained structures.[3] One does not ask patently naturalistic questions: What if the second prince happened to choose lead? or why couldn't he also have chosen gold? We know what the logic is. One, two, three: gold, silver, lead. Three suitors, down the line to happiness. It cannot and it should not work any other way. There is no surprise, only fulfillment. There is no luck either. Spiritual qualities *will* manifest themselves directly. The fool takes gold or silver, the wise man takes lead and wins the wise young lady. Wisdom is love, it is loveable, and it is successful against any odds. So with the ring trick. Like the disguises also, it is a lark, it is a dance, to be taken innocently in good faith. It can prove nothing at all but the integrity of love and the delight that lovers can take in one another.

The romance world, then, takes as the norm of reality a projection of personal and communal fulfillment. Ordinarily, I live in a world that is grey with ambiguity and compromise, fixed to the past, anxious about the future, cautious of others, protective of my own vulnerability. If my anxieties dissolved, however, if I lived within my own skin; then I would be myself. I would be free in the present, at home with nature and with most other people. Life would flow, even through sorrow. It would feel appropriate to be the self I find I am, a creature of mind, body, and spirit born to thrive.

What we are comparing are two possibilities of consciousness. We can speak of them philosophically as "idealism" and "realism," but they are not suppositions or belief systems. William Blake calls them Innocence and Experience, "contrary states of the human soul." It is the symbolic function of *The Merchant of Venice* to throw the two against each other (as Blake does his two sets of songs), allowing each to define the other, and drawing out of the collision a dramatic definition of human life from the romance perspective.

Set against Belmont, of course, is the Rialto of Venice. Its implicit values are carried to a logical extreme by Shylock, who deals only in money. Others trade more casually there, like Antonio himself, but Shylock commits himself completely to the implications of its life style. In this way, he takes a special responsibility for what all of them are doing. Of course the world of business is pre-eminently pragmatic and manipulative. It is a channel for drives of power. Here the individual is set against his compatriots to exploit their vulnerabilities in open competition. Shylock, therefore, hates music and keeps his windows barred against the sound of reckless pleasure. If the norm of Belmont is a projection out of time and place and frustrated passion, the Rialto is bound in the world. The real contrast in the play is not, therefore, between Christians and Jews, but between romance grace and worldly frustration, which Shylock epitomizes. The Venetian Christians are in the problematic middle, a fallen world that requires redemption.

The play contrasts two patterns of fatherhood: Portia's father, in the background, who has known mystically (the good man dying) how to lead his child to the fulfillment of love: through folkloric structure to an inevitable miracle; and, of course, Shylock, who is not sure whether his daughter is more precious than his ducats. Each man sponsors a human bond which symbolizes the mode of relationship in his world: The casket device to which Portia is bound by her father's will protects money and child with equal beneficence in the wisdom of love. The blood-money bond of Shylock is, of course, exploitive, hateful and destructive. Each world has, therefore, its own conception of order: the spiritual order of Belmont in which society is held together implicitly through love, music, and bounty towards a timeless fulfillment; and the contractual order of the Rialto, which is designed to protect man from man in a precarious recess of time.[4] During this artificial time, men can use each other to their mutual advantage, then they will return to the natural, uncontracted state in which they are at each other's mercy. The first bond presupposes the absolute reality of love. Frail mortals must be guided to their own nature through an initiation process by the blessing of the wise, who speak from a world beyond time with benevolent objectivity. They provide the structure by which we can be ourselves. The second bond assumes the reality of frustration and hence of hate: Life is bitter, our own nature is repulsive and therefore turns sour everything around us, especially the

freer pleasures of others. The way of the Rialto is, therefore, the dread nay-saying, the negation of life, and the romance way of Belmont is the yea of basic affirmation.

We will confuse ourselves and resist the tenor of the play, if we take Shylock's Judaism either theologically or sociologically. We have to take it primarily in terms of the dramatic and poetic symbolism that the play develops in its own right. In the medium of Christian romance, Judaism and the old Testament lend themselves naturally to a negative meaning. Without Christ the Jew is without Grace—not by prejudice but by definition. By the definition of Christian romance, Grace and grace are one, so the graceless man resists his own nature and the fellowship of his natural world.

It is the nature of myth to pretend that we can sail in a ship from such a Venice to such a Belmont, but this is a logical pretense. The two places that the play projects are not really geographic at all. Their relation is similar to that between Dante's Florence and the worlds he enters from the middle of the forest. We have a sacred order of being that completes the profane, but secularized in the language of romance. Though natives of Venice and Belmont travel back and forth (Christian natives, that is), Belmont retains a sense of that supernal world beyond the veil which the hero penetrates in all successful mythic quests. Portia's father resides beyond a further veil in the ultimate sanctum, and after his mystery is joined at the casket table, Belmont can shed its radiance on the earth-dwellers caught in Venice, caught by traps of their own confusion, by their perfectly human efforts to prevail in a world that is inherently self-defeating.

ii.

The Merchant of Venice would be a fairly simple play if we could read it with complete ease in the way I have outlined so far, but Shylock does raise a troubling question and the answer is meaningful only because we must make an effort to achieve it. One cannot help but object that Shylock is portrayed with more depth and power than the Christians with whom he is locked in combat. It is easy, however, to miss the point of this. If Belmont and the Rialto exist in different ways, it is appropriate and inevitable that they should be different stylistically and that Shylock and Bassanio should differ not merely as people but as *characters;* they are characterized, they are stylized, through different modes of projection. We cannot compare Shylock and Bassanio directly as men because, though they talk to each other as characters (or rather, talk past each other), they do not exist in the same way.

Romance characters as such are essentially flat. They have no real potentiality of change (We should not be able to visualize the young lovers of romance as matrons and burghers; they are to live and love

happily ever after, no more, no less) and they are focussed on one basic characteristic, their function in the romance game. Shakespeare plays many variations on the theme and usually sensitizes his conventional figures with subtleties of consciousness and richness of feeling. He extends the flatness, we can say, into an oval, with a substantial impression of roundness; yet it is often important for his purpose to retain the sense of flatness, for as Dickens showed most emphatically, flat characters can achieve something that round ones cannot.[5] As a rule, in character, plot and sentiment, Shakespeare constructs his sense of reality on a romance base. In the greatest characters, like Lear, Hamlet, Falstaff, Cleopatra, it may be *almost* impertinent to emphasize their conventionalistic dimension, yet it is there and has a residual effect, if for no other reason because they are controlled by their genre and the stylization of the drama they live in.

The case with Shylock *is* fairly complex. We have to see him, as we do some of Shakespeare's other troublesome characters, simultaneously in different ways. The result is the subtle but profound impact beyond logic and consistency that Norman Rabkin calls, after the physicists, complementarity.[6] From the perspective of Belmont, Shylock is the villain of romance, typically grotesque, sinister and absurd, a killjoy, an enemy of life, brooding and divisive. (One might try reading him with Tolkien's Gollum in mind.) He is heavily stylized within this framework, with his moneybags, his innuendoes, and *what is stylized as* his eccentric religion. In the game of romantic comedy, Shylock plays the part of scapegoat, and a scapegoat is a symbolic figure who is not endowed with a selfhood. He is object only, not subject, and we can do with him what we need to do for our own ends. In social divisiveness and in ritual, unfortunately, this projection is imposed upon real people, but since the literary scapegoat exists essentially as figment—and even as figment of other figments—he can be used, without being exploited, as an instrument for one's own self-clarification. One thing that this type of Christian romance needs to do to its scapegoat is to forgive him.

But in creating this scapegoat Shakespeare also dramatizes *to some extent* what it feels like to be a scapegoat. This point hardly needs demonstration any more. He superimposes a subjectivity upon his objectivity, yet it is a mistake, I think, to allow either one to cancel out the other. They produce a whole greater than their sum, or their difference. From one point of view, it seems that Shakespeare overindulged himself in creating Shylock, breaking his romance mold with his sympathy for a sacrifice more interesting in himself than any of the communicants. Of course, from one point of view, he simply wasted his time with the lot of them, the Christians. Now current, as with all of Shakespeare's more stylized plays, is the ironical line of interpretation: Shakespeare could not have meant us to admire his Christians; they are simply superficial people, justly exposed by the man they destroy. But, again, it seems to

me important that such a comparison cannot mean anything. Flat characters are something radically different from superficial people.

Shylock is not only the most complex character in the play psychologically. We can say of him, unlike the others, that he possesses psychology. At the same time that he is the flat victim of the piece, he does convey a consciousness of what it feels like to be himself. He does project a sense of having a past ridden with drives that press him into the present through a continuity of moving time. We can grasp his motivation for revenge growing inevitably out of the state of his emotions like a nightmare needing to erupt, and we realize the pressures he has had to live with in a world that makes impossible demands on him. But Shylock is the only character in the play with psychology precisely because what he expresses and therefore represents *is* the psychological immediacy of our daily existence. "The Shylock factor," which he presents, is the fact that our ideals and visions for ourselves are continually being thwarted by irrational forces of discontent, visions that should be so simple "if only," as we say, "we could behave like human beings to one another." What is particularly dramatic is the realization Shylock presents us with that these negative forces *are,* importantly, passions that underlie our consciousness near the heart of our identities. We are challenged to accept a responsibility for them without yielding to the despair of tragedy. Shylock's real enemies are not the Christians but his own passions—which is to say, the complexities of human nature.

Shylock is, to reapply Marianne Moore's definition of poetry, "the real toad in an imaginary garden." This phrase occurs, of course, in a poem, which has a reality of its own *as a poem,* and one of the functions of the real toad is to help define that kind of special reality which belongs to his garden. If we call the one "real" and the other "ideal," what use is the ideal? The effect of Shakespeare's dual vision is to set us between two mirrors, which reflect our reality in an "infinite regression" beyond logic or morality or any other linear conception of values. The result is an implicitly dramatic sense of truth, which Shakespeare conveys *by dramatizing it.* Northrop Frye writes of Blake's Innocence and Experience: "The actual makes the ideal look helpless and the ideal makes the actual look absurd."[7] The respective worlds of Belmont and the Rialto, each self-contained in its stylization but each projecting a stylized view of the other, face one another and accuse. Seen from the perspective of the Rialto's naturalism, the idealism of Belmont lacks substance. From Belmont we see a "real" world that is sick, repulsively self-denying. When the ideal and the real test each other in this way, however, the conclusion cannot be that either is wrong. Merely, one is real, one is ideal. In fact, the ideal works only because it *is* removed from casual reality, so that it can show us where we are in relation to our values and our desires.

iii.

Shylock's challenge of psychological immediacy is presented rather precisely in the course of the trial scene, a trial being itself a clear method of evaluating alternative positions. Bassanio asks, on behalf of the Establishment and its ethics:

Do all men kill the things they do not love?

and Shylock answers:

Hates any man the thing he would not kill?

And we sense, with or without Freud I should think, that civilization is in a vulnerable position. We cannot live together earnestly and creatively on Shylock's truth. If we all would kill whatever we do not love, we would court continual Armageddon and society in the meantime must be a mingling of solitaries. Indeed, we cannot trust each other without the bond of contract; we can hardly trust ourselves. But then, why else do we have laws? Why do we need the marriage contracts? Why do we have divorces? Why don't we all live in Belmont, happily ever after? Hatred *is* a passion to destroy, and our feelings are too dangerous to flourish without artificial and arbitrary restraints. Yet hatred is common and immediate, following a natural logic of the emotions.

On one level, Shylock presents what has turned out to be the devastating modern challenge to the medieval world order, a challenge erupting, of course, in the Renaissance, richly alive in the nerves of the times. Shylock the Jew and the financier asks: How can there be a Christian state? You must choose heaven or the world. You must either choose mercy and prove the integrity of your faith by sacrificing all expedience or you must choose justice and the laws, abandoning the hypocrisy of your spiritual superiority. You will be a Christian or a businessman, a saint or a lawyer, but not both. You will look for meaning in life and grace, or power and gratification. The challenge echoes a crisis in civilization, not just the civilization of the Renaissance, but the possibility of civilization at all. Can we go on with any dignity, can we plan any future, knowing the ugliness of our acquisitiveness, the chasm of our isolation and the cost of our violence?

Shylock issues his challenge in terms of the legal integrity of the state:

> If you deny me, fie upon your law!
> There is no force in the decrees of Venice:
> I stand for judgment,—answer, shall I have it?
>
> (IV, i, 101-3)

Antonio is himself businessman enough to know the practical economic basis of the law. Foreign traders must be able to trust the city's contracts (III, iii, 26-31). However, Shylock observes that the Venetians' proud freedom depends upon their legal structure (IV, i, 38f.). Fundamentally,

he is addressing the commonwealth thus: The law provides your state with authority and your citizens with ways of living together. You pride yourselves that your justice has a genuine moral basis, that it administers right and not only power. Can such a mechanism really be adequate to deal with human life? Can it have meaning? Can it protect one of your own worthy citizens against an outsider who will not play by your unwritten rules, who will not support your self-complacency? Even though it is clear that what he calls reason is a mask for hatred, Portia knows that it is important to take Shylock's challenge in the terms that he sets. He is in one way right and has struck a nerve. The state must defend itself against something more than Shylock. When Bassanio urges:

> Wrest once the law to your authority,—
> To do a great right, do a little wrong,—
>
> (211f.)

Portia responds firmly:

> It must not be, . . .
> 'Twill be recorded for a precedent,
> And many an error by the same example
> Will rush into the state,—it cannot be.
>
> (214, 216-18)

From the Venetian point of view, then, the question is: How can we live meaningfully, once we have recognized the Shylock factor, with hate in our nature always ready to tear us apart? How can we hope to hear the music of the spheres? How can poetic drama be real to us? It is of some significance, I think, that Shakespeare opens the play with Antonio's melancholy and introduces us to Belmont in the second scene with Portia's: "By my troth Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world." There is, appropriately, no depth of tragic foreboding here, but a curious tone is set, curious especially for a comedy.

Why is Antonio depressed?

> In sooth I know not why I am so sad,
> It wearies me, you say it wearies you;
> But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
> What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
> I am to learn:
> And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,
> That I have much ado to know myself.
>
> (I, i, 1-7)

We hear the casual voice of a consciousness probing its own nature, perplexed but curious, self-deprecating but almost self-mocking. Structurally, of course, the play opens in a state of ignorance and the function of the play is to teach us. We are all "to learn." There is never given any specific reason for Antonio's melancholy. Possibilities are eliminated. He is not sad out of anxiety for his ships at sea. Nor is he (nor is Hamlet) fashionably in love. His melancholy is, like Hamlet's in fact, precisely a not-knowing, a feeling that there should be a reason when there is not one. Antonio is sad not for any naturalistic reason of anything that has happened but because of what is going to happen. His sadness expresses the present condition of life in an unstable balance, but it also strikes a tone that remains to be developed. Antonio might be saying: "If only I did not have to be in a play with this Shylock." His sadness is an emotional bridge from the romance world to the environment of pain.

Some of Shakespeare's romantic comedies interpret the culture's assumptions by running simple human facts up against them. *Love's Labor's Lost* is one clear example. The King and his courtiers pursue unimpeachable goals of refinement, but their love of ideals must dissolve merrily before the play of their own desires. In *Two Gentlemen of Verona,* Proteus finds that a man in love can fall in love with someone else, that one's fresh impulses can override the loyalties one has sworn with best intentions in more sanguine times. We see him first a model lover in the standard mode, and at the end—although he has betrayed both the mistress he has professed to adore and his intimate friend—we see him again an acceptable romantic lover and steadfast friend, ready to be true to his first lady forever. The concept and the experience of romantic love do not come in question, and Proteus himself is not disgraced as soundly as we might expect. He blames the inconstancy of men, and though this may sound to us too easy a way out, we might see that he has been victim of some facts of life. He has been caught, for one thing, in a trap between the feeling of love as a simple, absolute and fulfilling passion and the fact that this same feeling can repeat itself and so cancel out its own revelation. When at the end the possibilities of love and friendship are reaffirmed, the resolution is abrupt and awkward but its implications center on this problem of how we can interpret our experience. The society's values may be perfectly appropriate, but when they are accepted and taken for granted because they only *seem* valuable, they have to be turned inside out before they become real. Life, as it happens, has a way of helping us perform that operation.

In *Two Gentlemen,* the comedy's testing out has neither validated nor rejected the basic values of society or of romance. What it has done is to humanize them by requiring that they grow again from the conflicts of problematic experience. In *The Merchant of Venice,* the situation is similar with a difference. The romance world stands up to the challenge of reality, but on the one hand it has from the start, as we have seen, an

absolute validity and magnetism of its own, while on the other hand the psychological consciousness that resists it becomes deeply disturbing. It is no wonder that Antonio is melancholy! It is he, the titular hero, who is central to the testing-out process. It is he who would live in both worlds, the Christian merchant, and who is therefore caught most poignantly between them. His Venetian ducats secure the golden treasure of Belmont through the humility of his open-handedness. He does not register the implications of his ordeal consciously and explicitly, and he does not undergo any real change of character as a result of it. His flat stylization adapts him to his context in the play flatly, yet about him the play effects its integration, accepting his perplexity and his magnanimity both at face value and celebrating at the end the results of his good works. In the process of the play, Antonio's melancholy premonition deepens into an ordeal through which he registers the impact of life's violence.

Antonio, therefore, shares with Shylock the situation of scapegoat, but his side of the sacrifice is willing and leads to responsibility. By fostering the romance plot, sponsoring his friend's bride quest, Antonio has tried to make life possible; then he pays the price of optimism: the need to face life as it is. He suffers Shylock to exert his gracelessness upon him. But the sacrifice is Abraham and Isaac rather than Christ, a comic pattern of symbolic substitution (the way of drama, in fact, rather than ritual). The Old Testament does win in a way: in comedy it is enough that we are willing to make the sacrifice. As for Shylock, he remains in the end a scapegoat, though he is not slain. In the Christian symbolism of the play he is, in fact, saved, albeit against his will. His challenge is met as the society he would have demolished extends itself to integrate him. If we think it harsh that the gesture is forced upon him, we must remember that his life *is* forfeit for a malicious crime and, though his life is spared, he is not likely to remain grateful for the favor.

Perhaps it is best to see such schemes as we have laid out as provisional and suggestive rather than architectural and solidly fixed. One could see Portia, instead of Antonio, as a mediating figure, since she reaches out from Belmont to give Venice a viable coherence. But in doing so, Portia is more like the Duke in *Measure for Measure* and Prospero in *The Tempest.* She manifests the restorative wisdom of her transcendent sphere. As the bride to be attained by heroic magic,[8] she is also, as in many folk-tales and myths (like the Brynhild of the *Volsungasaga*) an oracular figure; as woman, as fortune, and as wisdom, she presents interchangeable aspects of the hero's absolute achievement. Bassanio, Gratiano, Lorenzo, and Jessica all help to fill out the function of mediation in the play's action, but it seems to me most suggestive to see them as extensions of Antonio and as agents, as it were, of his basic dilemma. The marriage of Lorenzo and Jessica charts out a pattern of union between the worlds in a different manner than that of the main love plot.

Bassanio (seconded by Gratiano), is, of course, the important hero of the quest, and as such he records at the end the impact of what takes place, rounding off the circle. He does not actually change; he is too fine and too flat to need to change, but he is chastened in the token process of the ring-game.

The ring-game presents compactly a central motif of Shakespearean comedy, a structure that opposes (masculine) will to (feminine) nature in the unity of art. In *The Winter's Tale,* the famous little debate on crossbred flowers (IV, iv, ll.79-103) resolves the conflict in the richly human art of the play itself, a paradox symbolized at the end by the living statue of Hermione. Typically, as in *The Merchant,* the structure of will opposed to nature plays out a process by which the menfolk are humbled a bit by their ladies, deprived of their civilized dignities. The ego, which functions pridefully in the world, is made to experience a more natural sense of self.[9] The ring-game shows the conflict clearly to be a mischievous double-bind that the men cannot possibly handle logically, yet they are required to accept a responsibility for it, which they very willingly do. The illogic of love is their own desire, their commitment and their salvation, for in their submission to it, they flower spontaneously into a natural simplicity. In the romantic comedies, the most important effects of warmth and joy depend upon this process. All the mistresses in disguise lead toward this end.

At any rate, *The Merchant of Venice* is not ultimately Shylock's play; there are only moments when we think it might be, and there is a good deal going on in the play aside from him. It is a romantic comedy and it must substantiate the values of romance. It asserts still that life is beautiful, that harmony is real, that our deepest nature is generous and joyous. Shylock's challenge is met finally. How *shall* we live with hate? With love, of course, and a clarity of mind. The reality of the toad in the imaginary garden is itself an illusion, a trick of the poetry which is itself more real. It is the reality of the artist's powers that has given us Shylock at all. And the impractical presence of bountiful feelings needs no defense, for hatred is an illusion too, a perverse state in which life turns back against itself. The rational dualism that splits the spirit against the body, the heavens against the earth, is a bad dream from which we gladly awaken.

Portia the girl-sage performs the miracle through a simple stage trick. We are so distracted by the bizarre folkloric situation (as are the personae themselves) that we cannot expect mere common sense. When it comes, it seems miraculous. That is the essence of romance as it should be. What is most natural fills us most with delight and opens vistas of freedom.

Shylock has said, "I stand for judgment," declaring himself ready for the judgment of the court (IV, i, 103), and "I stand here for law" (142). Portia says, "I stand for sacrifice," picturing herself a virgin abandoned

to a sea monster, awaiting rescue by Bassanio in the role of Hercules (III, ii, 57). But also, beyond the specific contexts, the remarkably symmetrical assertions point up the deeper theme, which is not very obscure. Shylock "stands for" justice and for condemnation, representing "judgment" as his cause. Portia "stands for" sacrifice, representing the giving of self for love, which is what an individual must contribute in order to further grace.

Bassanio has made the sacrifice of leaving his new bride, Portia has made the sacrifice of her trip, her disguise, and her legal efforts. The state has made its sacrifice by sparing Shylock's life. And Shylock has thrust upon him the sacrifice of conversion. All to confirm the willing sacrifice of Antonio for his friend. The rhythm of sacrifice binds the world together in an implicit consciousness of mortality. The timelessness of romance has taken in the impact of time, so that the ideal has been confirmed as a human phenomenon. In Blake's aphorism, "Eternity is in love with the productions of time." The love celebrated by romance has extended itself from sexual love and the godlike amity of merry gentlemen. On the level of the plot, it has made only an official gesture of forgiveness to Shylock, but through the dramatic substance of the play, granting the degree of sympathy we have felt for the man, it has taken him quite seriously. His challenge has certainly deepened the tone of consciousness. When we return to Belmont, Antonio is still aloof and melancholy, for what is learned is not to be forgotten. Nevertheless, we have a long last scene of celebration. The music is heard in the moonlight on the bank, and the dance of the ring game is playfully danced out. The characters and the action are still flat and stylized, but there lingers a solemnity in the air.

Notes

*Quotations are from the Arden Shakespeare: *The Merchant of Venice*, edited by John Russell Brown (Cambridge, Mass., 1955).

[1] Grace has been defined in a different context as the integration of "diverse parts of the mind," in particular consciousness and the unconscious, or thought and feeling (reason and the heart). Gregory Bateson, "Style, Grace, and Information in Primitive Art," in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York, 1972), p. 129.

[2] I should qualify my interpretation by pointing out that Bassanio intends a "more advised watch" on the second flight of his arrow. He will be more conscious and, therefore, more responsible this time around.

[3] Richmond Lattimore writes of *The Merchant's* casket game in order to discuss Greek tragedy: "The story has a logic proper to good storytelling, rather than a fidelity to the probabilities of real life. . . . When the details of the story do so cohere, we feel a sense of necessity, of must-be-so: one could almost call it fate." *Story Patterns in Greek Tragedy* (London, 1964), pp. 6f. In folklore and romance, plot consists of structure of activity, and these motifs of action "motivate" the characters' will. For a folkloric description, see the structuralist V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin, 1968): "Motivations," p. 75ff.

[4] See W. H. Auden's essay, "Brothers and Others," in *The Dyer's Hand* (New York, 1962). Auden's interpretation of such observations is the opposite of mine.

[5] See E. M. Forster's discussion of "flat" and "round" characters in *Aspects of the Novel* (New York, 1927), pp. 103ff.

[6] *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding* (New York, 1967).

[7] *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton, 1947), p. 237.

[8] The money Shylock lends Antonio becomes "charmed" by generosity, which is one reason Shylock cannot get it back securely. It must confirm his daughter's fulfillment in romance.

[9] Most of the world's great comedies seem to be about women making fools of men—or showing them up for the fools they are. The men, attuned to the world of role-playing, used to impressing each other in order to impress themselves, are relieved of the burden of their egoism through sympathetic feminine mockery. While comedy is essentially feminine, tragedy is essentially masculine. The tragic heroes' hybris, their attachment to ego, is allowed full scope and seriousness. Ophelia, Cordelia, Desdemona cannot reach them in their self-absorbed passion—although Emilia, at the very end, is finally able to get through to Othello. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the comic pattern is reversed. The basic joke, responsible for the general tone of farce, *is* that a man now humbles a lady. She has been caught in the usually masculine ego (in Jung's terms, caught in her *animus*), but she is freed to become more naturally human, just as the men are freed in the other comedies.

Rhetorical Stance: The Epideictic Mode as a Principle of Decorum in the English Renaissance Lyric

J. R. Brink and L. M. Pailet

IN the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth claims that "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and that "it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility."[1] While modern critics would qualify Wordsworth's insistence on emotion, we still frequently associate the lyric with personal voice and emotional sincerity. This legacy from the Romantics has colored our assessment of those Renaissance lyrics which aim at literary formality or which function within a well-defined convention. Acrostics, anagrams, and pattern poems may seem to us impersonal and contrived; likewise, conventional poems written in reaction to other poems, lyrics such as Christopher Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd to His Love," Sir Walter Ralegh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," and John Donne's "The Baite," may seem to us stylized and artificial.[2] Further, these poems are susceptible to misinterpretation, as well as neglect, if approached only from the vantage point of modern techniques of close reading and formal criticism. Through an analysis of the rhetorical stance of these poems, especially as it relates to

the epideictic or ceremonial mode, it is possible to understand how decorum, rather than personal voice, influences these Renaissance lyrics.

The uncertainty which modern critics experience in classifying these poems was also experienced by Renaissance theorists.[3] In *Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*, Joel Spingarn observes that, although critics commented extensively on the epic or narrative poem and on the drama, the Renaissance did not develop a systematic lyric theory.[4] Since the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* had popularized the view that poetry is an imitation of an action, poetry was frequently understood as plot or fable.[5] Because the lyric frequently lacked a plot or fable, its classification was ambiguous.[6]

Francis Bacon, who tried to reconcile Aristotle with contemporary poetic practice, supplies historical justification for examining the Renaissance lyric from the perspective of rhetorical stance. Like Sir Philip Sidney, Bacon defined poetry as a fiction. He identified the kinds of poetry as narrative, relating a fiction; dramatic, representing a fiction; and parabolic or typological, illustrating ideas with images. Excluding satires, elegies, odes and epigrams from his discussion of poetry, he classified all short lyric forms under rhetoric.[7]

In spite of the historical connection between the lyric and rhetoric, it would be a mistake to assume that the three stances, epideictic (praising or blaming as in a funeral oration), deliberative (recommending a future course of action), and forensic (accusing or defending something that has occurred), supply a satisfactory means of classifying all Renaissance lyrics.[8] Through an examination of the epideictic mode, however, it is possible to understand certain characteristics of acrostics, anagrams, and pattern poems. In addition, the rhetorical principles governing these highly stylized poems supply a new perspective from which to approach the aesthetics of lyrics written within a well-defined convention, such as, for example, the pastoral singing match or the persuasion to love.

In the epideictic mode the speaker praises or blames a person, thing, or deed. Although his object is to persuade an audience of the appropriateness of his position, the requirements of his subject matter and of the occasion will also affect his stance. The same decorum will govern the efforts of an orator praising the achievements of Queen Elizabeth's reign and a poet celebrating her Accession Day: the orator or poet's object is less to persuade an already appreciative audience than to do justice to the occasion. The stance of the epideictic poet will be determined by the decorum appropriate to the occasion. It is precisely this concern with social circumstances requiring decoration and artifice that characterizes the acrostics, anagrams, and figure poems, popular in the Renaissance, but largely ignored in modern criticism.

The greatest number of acrostics, anagrams, and pattern poems appear as dedications or commendations, but can be loosely classified

according to function and occasion as encomiastic, elegiac, and religious. The dedicatory and commendatory poems are most frequently used to praise the poet's patron, the poet himself, or sometimes a favored mistress. In *The Arbour of Amorous Devises* (1597) Nicholas Breton uses an acrostic framework to enumerate those qualities and virtues which inspired his devotion to the women he names.[9] In a sonnet to Robert Nicholson, Joshua Sylvester varies the convention by using his patron's name as the initial letters of each line and by using his own name as the end letters.[10] Telestichon, the device of using end letters to spell out a second acrostic, enables Sylvester to identify himself as the devoted servant of his patron.

Sir John Davies' *Hymnes of Astraea*, acrostic lyrics addressed to Queen Elizabeth as an Accession Day tribute, illustrates the way in which form becomes an end in itself. The audience is asked to admire the ingenuity of the poet's voice rather than to respond to his argument. In Hymn XI, "To the Sunne," Davies cleverly compliments Elizabeth with the hyperbole of suggesting that the sun has changed its course and now rises on one side of Elizabeth's face and sets on the other:

> Eye of the world, fountaine of light,
> Life of day, and death of night,
> I humbly seeke thy kindnesse:
> Sweet, dazle not my feeble sight,
> And strike me not with blindnesse.
>
> Behold me mildly from that face,
> Even where thou now dost runne thy race,
> The Spheare where now thou turnest;
> Having like *Phaeton* chang'd thy place,
> And yet hearts onely burnest.
>
> Red in her right cheeke thou dost rise;
> Exalted after in her eyes,
> Great glorie there thou shewest:
> In thother cheeke when thou descendest,
> New rednesse unto it thou lendest,
> And so thy Round thou goest.[11]

Davies cites a precedent for the sun's changing its sphere in the myth of Phaeton, who drove the Sun's chariot so close to earth that the land was singed. This myth was frequently used in Renaissance emblem books and dictionaries to allegorize the inability of a ruler to control his subjects.[12]

Treating the solar disaster as an historical fact, Davies skillfully elaborates the allusion and compliments Elizabeth by pointing out that

this time the sun has changed its place less disastrously: "And yet hearts onely burnest." If we keep in mind the traditional allegory of Phaeton's ride, the orderly procedure of the third stanza emphasizes that Elizabeth has the ability to guide the sun and thus by extension control unruly elements in her kindgom. Instead of being asked to respond with patriotic admiration of the queen, the actual interest of the poem is inspired by the cleverness of the poet. The self-conscious wit of his suggestion that this new "round" of the sun leads to catastrophes of the heart, not to natural or political disorder, enhances the extravagance of the entire conceit.

Acrostic or figure poems, however clever or ingenious, seem to the modern reader to lack sincerity. When a poet exercises the ingenuity required to shape a poem as an obelisk or as a circle, we recognize that the requirements of the figure have operated as a more immediate constraint upon his art than the presence of the audience, a constraint at odds with present-day poetic practice. In addition, whatever the poet's personal feelings about his subject, the poem itself has been shaped by art rather than the poet's emotions or his interest in influencing the emotions of his audience. When we read a poem of this kind, we are placed at a distance from the poet and poem and asked to admire the poet's artifice, his skill in manipulating a form.

That the Elizabethans regarded these verbal puzzles and exercises in ingenuity with genuine respect is suggested by George Puttenham's appreciative comments on such devices:

> [T] hough the termes be divers, the use and intent is but one whether they rest in colour or figure or both, or in word or in muet shew, and that is to insinuate some secret, wittie, morall and brave purpose presented to the beholder, either to recreate his eye, or please his phantasie, or examine his judgement, or occupie his braine or to manage his will either by hope or by dread, every of which respectes be of no little moment to the interest and ornament of the civill life.[13]

Puttenham's defense of these artful poems significantly links them to the social world; they will give "interest and ornament" to "civill life." They reveal the poet as civilized, that is, as capable of using the civilized artifices of poetry to stress that both the speaker and the one complimented belong to the courtly world. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates, in the seventeenth century "civil" had the connotations of belonging to the "proper public or social order."

The qualities of wit and ornament are aptly illustrated by the poetry of Joshua Sylvester, an extremely popular poet in the seventeenth century. In his double dedication of *Job Triumphant* to Charles Stuart, prince of Wales, and to George Abbot, archbishop of Canterbury, Sylvester signifies the prince by his use of anagrams, "Arthur's Castle," "Art's

Chast Lure," and "Heart's Last Cure," anagrams which he had previously used in dedicating *The Maiden Blush* (p. 144). By identifying Charles with Arthur, legendary king of Britain and symbol of her past greatness, Sylvester pays a compliment to the Prince of Wales, the future king. By linking the present hope to the past glory by means of the dedicatee's own name, Sylvester infers that within Charles himself is Charles' greatness:

* *
To *My*
AR- *Hope*
THUR'S *Heere*
CASTLE *Hastneth,*
(call'd by *For My*
ART'S CHAST LURE) HEART'S LAST CURE.
****************** ********************
Sir, You A SWEET A REAL In My S[t].
have seen, IDEA ACT of LEWIS
In my Pa- Of—Our that—Ideal Roy—All-
NARETUS, hopes in You: VIEVVE, Vertuous.
Here (more HEROIK, and more HOLY-True)
I bring Your Highness *(Past all the Patterns*
Yet a Higher Peece *of old Rome & Greece)*
Faith's PATIENT Champion, in His Triumph due.
Farre be His Crosses *Neer be His Courses*
From my Prince, *I pray:* *(As the most complete*
In sacred GRACES that beseem The GREAT)
Tow'rds God & Man; in cleer or cloudy Day;
So much more needfull *By how much Satan*
In This Sin-full Age, *(neer his end) doth rage:*
With Whom and His, the better Aye to wrastle,
Great *Michael* gard & strengthen ARTHUR'S CASTLE;

Praies

Prostrate

JOSUAH SYLVESTER.

To &
the *Ho-*
Right *norable*
Reverend FATHER
GEORGE ABBOT,
Lord ARCH-Bishop
OF CANTERBURY.
****
IN Grate-full HONOR
Of your MANY *Giftes*
Of GRACE & NATURE
(Apted to your Place)
This DORIKE *Pillar*
My DEVOTION *liftes;*
To shew Here——After
What Wee owe your Grace;
Both, for your Prudence,
And your Pious Zeale;
Learning *And* Labour
In your Double Charge,
Swaying the CHURCH,
Staying the Common-Weale;
Most STUDIOUS *Ever*
EITHER to Enlarge:
And Last (not least) of all,
For CONSTANT *standing*
On Right's *weak Side,*
Against the Tide of wrong;
When PHILISTINES,
And Daliladies *banding,*
With Armes or Charmes
Would binde or blinde the Strong:
In Honour of these Honours, this I bring
To Reverend ABBOT, & his Second; KING.
VESTER—SYL—VESTER
Deditissimus.

To further the compliment, Sylvester shapes the dedication as a pattern poem in the form of a double altar, a double spire for Charles and a Doric pillar with double triangular caps for Abbot. The double spire builds on anagrams for Charles; the separate columns become interwoven as distiches. To emphasize the religious subject matter of the poem and the "holy" nature of the occasion, Sylvester uses both anagrams and puns; he asks God to protect the Prince and praises the Archbishop's zeal. By using the pattern to make visible these compliments, Sylvester sets the mood for these altar-shaped poems.

Sylvester's hybrid dedication demonstrates the close relationship which exists among the acrostic, anagram, and pattern poem. The anagram builds a compliment from within the honored person's name. Similarly, the acrostic takes the name of the honored person and spins out from the letters of the name the formal pattern of the poem, often emphasizing the honor by establishing the key terms of praise from the name's separate letters. The pattern poem builds a compliment but in a more elaborate way: the entire structure of the poem is shaped for the compliment. Whether Sylvester himself believed what he wrote is as unimportant as whether his audience would have accepted the compliments as sincere and justified. The occasion of the dedication required elaborate ornament, and Sylvester, conscious of decorum, responds not with personal feeling, but with civility and wit.

While it is easy to see the relationship between the epideictic mode and George Puttenham's roundel in praise of Elizabeth or Davies' acrostic hymns, there are other Renaissance poems of widely acknowledged literary merit which also belong to this mode. Lyrics written within a well-defined convention, even if they are addressed to a fictional listener, presuppose that the informed reader will concentrate, not upon the argument, but upon the poet's wit or artifice. The "persuasion to love" motif in three lyrics by Christopher Marlowe, Sir Walter Ralegh, and John Donne illustrates how poems, ostensibly persuasive in character, also belong to the epideictic mode.

Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd to His Love" begins with the speaker inviting his beloved to enter a pastoral world of romance:

> Come live with me and be my love,
> And we will all the pleasures prove
> That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
> Woods, or steepy mountain yields.

He describes in detail the pleasure of listening to the "melodious birds sing madrigals" and promises everything from "a bed of roses" to a pair of slippers with "buckles of the purest gold." The poem concludes with two stanzas which echo the first invitation:

> A belt of straw and ivy buds,
> With coral clasps and amber studs:
> And if these pleasures may thee move,
> Come live with me, and be my love.
>
> The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing
> For thy delight each May morning:

If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

The poet's fictional audience, his love, never speaks, but the reader or listener is conscious that the poem is directed to someone.

Sir Walter Ralegh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" responds to Marlowe's poem by pointing out that the "pretty pleasures" are transient and susceptible to decay:

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Ralegh inverts Marlowe's ideal pastoral world by pointing out that time changes all things. The innocent and romantic shepherd is answered by a worldly-wise nymph who realizes that "joys" have a "date." Read in succession, the two poems represent a question and answer sequence, antiphonal in quality. The reader is alerted to the convention and does not fall into the trap of identifying either voice with that of the personal voice of the poet.

Donne's "The Baite," begins conventionally enough: "Come live with me and be my love"; however, the second line clearly announces Donne's intention to prove "new pleasures." Moving from pastoral to piscatoral conventions, Donne concentrates on demonstrating the discomforts and dangers of fishing rather than elaborating pleasures or pleasures gone awry. Donne develops his conceit to pay a witty compliment to the lady whom he implies is herself excellent bait.

Each of these poems read by itself will have a different effect than if all three are read together. If only Marlowe's poem is read, the reader may identify too closely with the fictional audience; at the opposite extreme, if only Ralegh's "Nymph's Reply" is read, the reader may respond to the disillusioned tone and feel that he is hearing the poet's personal voice. Taken by itself, Donne's "The Baite" will seem either bizarre or brilliant.

In addition, the order, or sequence, in which the poems are read is important. If the reader is exposed first to "The Baite," and then to "The Nymph's Reply," and finally to "Passionate Shepherd," he will perceive the relationship among the poems and realize that they are written within the same convention, but the effect on the reader or listener will not be the same. The relationship among the three poems roughly parallels that of the confirmation and confutation in a traditional oration; logical disposition requires that the confirmation or proof be presented before the confutation or rebuttal.

The ordering or sequential requirements essential for understanding

highly conventional poems of this kind parallels the verbal and spatial constraints of acrostic and pattern poetry. The reader who likes an acrostic poem in spite of the acrostics will probably not like the poem very much; likewise, the reader who considers each of these poems in isolation or out of order will miss an important element of the poet's artifice. More significantly, these three lyrics also illustrate how poems, ostensibly persuasive or forensic in mode, are actually self-contained artefacts requiring the audience to stand at a distance and admire the poet's ingenious manipulation of stance to generate wit. In this kind of poetry, no voice is personal in the modern sense because the sound or tone changes as stance and theme are varied.

Of the various efforts to describe the effect of poems written in a well-defined convention, two of the most influential have been Hallet Smith's discussion of convention as a kernel idea and J. V. Cunningham's suggestion that this kind of poetry can be understood as a game in which the poet accepts certain rules or conventions. Neither approach, however, successfully explains the interest of the audience in this kind of poetry. Approaching the pastoral as a kernel idea, Smith says that it involves the rejection of the aspiring mind.[14] This would allow the reader to examine any pastoral poem in relation to a central idea, but the pastoral convention, like the persuasion to love, involves far more than saying yes or no to the golden world. The voice of the speaker is as much determined by the decorum of what has gone before as it is by the immediate object of the poem, to reject or to espouse the aspiring mind.

On the other hand, Cunningham's metaphor of a game, while clearly applicable to the poet's experience, does not explain why it is a different experience for the reader to begin with Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd" than it is to start with Ralegh's "Nymph's Reply."[15] Moreover, it presupposes that the last player, aware of previous moves or strategies, will either surpass or render unnecessary what has gone before. Too much attention is called to the skill of the player and too little to the decorum of the situation, a decorum which controls the speaker's voice.

Certain kinds of Renaissance lyrics, like the acrostic, anagram, or figure poem, presuppose a knowledge of the decorum of the occasion. The spatial and verbal constraints determine the speaker's stance. In addition, the more pattern poems, pastoral singing matches, love sonnets, and persuasions to love the reader knows, the more he will appreciate any single effort within the convention. The effect of these poems on the audience is much like that of listening to different orchestras perform the same symphony; the orchestra must play the same notes, but may vary tempo or tone. The occasion may be either social or literary, but it controls the poet, guiding him in speaking, not freely, but within the circumference of an evolving discourse.

Notes

[1] *Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth,* ed. Paul M. Zall (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 19, 27.

[2] For an outdated, but useful, checklist for anagrams and acrostics, see W. Carew Hazlitt, "Materials For A History of Anagrams and Acrostics," *The Bibliographer,* 5 (1884), 174-75. Discussions of pattern poems focus on the historical tradition, the emblematic tradition and Herbert; see, for instance, Charles Boultenhouse, "Poems in the Shapes of Things," *Art News Annual,* 28 (1959), 64-83, 178; Margaret Church, "The First English Pattern Poems," *PMLA,* 61 (1946), 636-50; Peter M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem: Structural Parallels between the Emblem and Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1979); John Hollander, *Vision and Resonance: Two Senses of Poetic Form* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 245-87; Kenneth B. Newell, *Pattern Poetry: A Historical Critique From the Alexandrian Greeks to Dylan Thomas* (Boston: Marlborough House, 1976). The poems by Marlowe, Ralegh and Donne have been conveniently reprinted in the *Norton Anthology of English Literature,* ed. M. H. Abrams et al., 4th ed. (New York: Norton, 1979); all references will be to the texts as they appear in the *Norton Anthology.* See also Frederick W. Sternfeld, "Come Live With Me and Be My Love," in *The Hidden Harmony: Essays in Honor of Philip Wheelwright,* ed. Oliver Johnson et al. (New York: Odyssey Press, 1966), pp. 173-92; Bruce W. Wardropper, "The Religious Conversion of Profane Poetry," in *Studies in the Continental Background of Renaissance English Literature: Essays Presented to John L. Lievsay,* ed. Dale B. J. Randall and George Walton Williams (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 203-21, especially pp. 206-07.

[3] For a discussion of the plain and ornate styles, see Yvor Winters, "The Sixteenth-Century Lyric in England," *Poetry,* 53-54 (1939), 258-72, 35-71 and Douglas Peterson, *The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne:A History of the Plain and Eloquent Styles* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967); for a discussion of poetry and music, see Jerome Mazzaro, *Transformations in the Renaissance English Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1970). See also the valuable essay by John T. Shawcross, "The Poet as Orator: One Phase of his Judicial Pose," *The Rhetoric of Renaissance Poetry,* ed. Thomas O. Sloan and Raymond Waddington (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1974), pp. 5-36. For a specific discussion of the epideictic mode, see O. B. Hardison, Jr., *The Enduring Monument: A Study of the Idea of Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1962).

[4] Joel Spingarn, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (1899; New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1924), p. 58.

[5] Cornell March Dowlin, "Plot as an Essential in Poetry," *R.E.S.*, 17 (1941), 166-83.

[6] A section from the *Poetics*, taken out of context and interpreted literally, added to the confusion. Near the end of the *Poetics*, when Aristotle is differentiating epic and tragedy, he praises Homer for knowing when to dramatize: "the poet himself should do as little of the talking as possible; for in those parts he is not being an imitator (Aristotle, *The Poetics*, trans. Gerald F. Else [Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1967], p. 65)." To sixteenth-century commentators, Aristotle's statement seemed to mean that lyric poetry was not really poetry; however, for Aristotle, lyric poetry would probably have been considered as a part of music (Lane Cooper, *The Poetics of Aristotle: Its Meaning and Influence* [1923; rpt. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972] pp. 13-14).

[7] *The Advancement of Learning*, Bk. II, Chapter VIII, in *Works*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Ellis, and Douglas Heath (London: Longman & Co., 1858), I, 315. See p. 518 for the Latin text.

[8] Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. J. H. Freese, Loeb Classical Library (1926; Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 33-35.

[9] *Works of Nicholas Breton*, ed. Alexander Grosart, Chertsey Worthies' Library (1879; New York: AMS Press, 1966), I, 7-8.

[10] Joshua Sylvester, *Works*, ed. Alexander Grosart, Chertsey Worthies' Library (Blackburn: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1880), II, 321-22. All further references will be to this edition; page numbers will be cited in the text in parentheses. See also Henry Colman, *Divine Meditations* (1640), ed. Karen E. Steanson (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979). Colman, like George Herbert, uses religious pattern poems, but he also uses dedicatory acrostics and telestichon.

[11] *The Poems of Sir John Davies*, ed. Robert Krueger (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 77.

[12] DeWitt T. Starnes and Ernest William Talbert, *Classical Myth and Legend in Renaissance Dictionaries* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina, 1955), p. 120.

[13] *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Gladys Willcock and Alice Walker (1936; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 91-112.

[14] Hallett Smith, *Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning, and Expression* (1952; rpt. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1952), p. 10.

[15] J. V. Cunningham, *Tradition and Poetic Structure: Essays in Literary History and Criticism* (1959; rpt. Denver: Univ. of Denver Press, 1951), pp. 11-24.

Root and Branch: Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe in *To The Lighthouse*

Kate Adams

BIOGRAPHY is hard to ignore in any study of *To The Lighthouse.* In writing the book, Virginia Woolf was "making up scenes" about her mother and father in order to know them, just as Lily Briscoe makes up scenes about Paul and Minta Rayley. The biographical basis of the book is confirmed in Woolf's diaries, where she writes that "doing out" the characters, especially her father in Mr. Ramsay, was the primary design of the book:

> . . . to have father's character done complete in it; & mothers; & St Ives; & childhood; & all the usual things I try to put in—life, death &c. But the centre is father's character, sitting in a boat, reciting We perished, each alone, while he crushes a dying mackerel. . . .[1]

We also know, again from her diaries, that writing the novel had an important cathartic effect on Woolf emotionally. Eighteen months after

she had completed *To The Lighthouse,* she wrote this entry on November 28, 1928, her father's birthday:

> He would have been... 96, like other people one has known; but mercifully was not. His life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing, no books;—inconceivable. I used to think of him & mother daily; but writing The Lighthouse, laid them in my mind. And now he comes back sometimes, but differently. (I believe this to be true—that I was obsessed by them both, unhealthily; & writing of them was a necessary act.)[2]

Biography, then, is difficult to ignore, is at the heart of Woolf's relationship to this novel, and from these diary entries it seems that Woolf perceived that her vision of her father and her relationship to him would be the heart of her book. But here biographical reality and the reality of the work must be separated, for the novel's Mr. Ramsay is not the central character of the book, nor is Lily Briscoe's relationship to him the book's central relationship. Although Woolf states that her father's character would be "at the center," she also wrote that "when I begin *To The Lighthouse* I shall enrich it in all sorts of ways; thicken it; give it branches and roots which I do not perceive now."[3] Those "branches and roots" become more important in execution than does the "heartwood," the father character, of Woolf's conception. The root and branch of *To The Lighthouse* are its major narrators, Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe, and the central relationship of the book is the one between the two women.[4] Our comprehension of the book depends most on our understanding of Lily and Mrs. Ramsay, and our perception of their relationship and its effect on Lily's life determines our satisfaction with the novel's conclusion. Through her struggle to come to terms with her perception of Mrs. Ramsay and the kind of life she stands for, Lily defines herself as a woman and an artist, and she claims for herself an identity in the human continuum somewhere to the left of "beak of brass" and somewhere to the right of "fountain of fecundity."

Woolf creates and attempts to resolve two archetypal relationships in the novel—the mother/daughter relationship of Mrs. Ramsay and Lily and the father/son relationship of James and Mr. Ramsay—yet at the center of both there is finally one character: Mrs. Ramsay. In fact, there is no relationship in the entire novel that is not affected (or in some cases, effected) by Mrs. Ramsay. She is omnipresent, for even when hers is not the consciousness through which we are experiencing the novel, Mrs. Ramsay is more often than not the subject of one of our other narrators' interior monologues. Whether we view her from the inside or outside,

Mrs. Ramsay is an awesome and overpowering figure because she is more than a single, female character: she is the female principle, the essence of motherhood, of nurturing, of creation, and often other characters react to her as principle rather than person. She is the bolster to Tansley's ego ("he was walking with a beautiful woman"); the symbol for Bankes's literary imagination ("he saw her at the end of the line very clearly Greek, straight, blue-eyed"); the source of emotional stability for her husband ("without distinguishing either his son or his wife, the sight of them fortified him and satisfied him"). She is the female half of a male and female whole ("into this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself, like a beak of brass, barren and bare"), and for each character save Lily, who succeeds in separating the woman from the myth of woman, Mrs. Ramsay is the embodiment of the feminine ideal.[5]

Mrs. Ramsay is a woman in love with what Tillie Olsen called "that long drunkenness" which is mothering, and she fears any force or condition that could mean the end of her drunkenness. For example, as she sits in the window reading to James, her mind wanders outward, toward projects on the island, a dairy, a hospital, and she considers how "those two things she would have liked to do, herself." But when she stops to consider

> But how? With all these children? When they were older, then perhaps she would have time; when they were all in school. . .

the reality of such a future, with the children grown, filled her immediately with dread:

> Oh, but she never wanted James to grow a day older! or Cam either. These two she would have liked to keep forever just as they were, demons of wickedness, angels of delight, never to see them grow up into long-legged monsters. Nothing made up for the loss. When she read just now to James, 'and there were numbers of soldiers with kettle-drums and trumpets,' and his eyes darkened, she thought, why should they grow up, and lose all that? (p.89)

Mrs. Ramsay mourns the loss of spontaneity and innocence and vitality embodied in her children, but beyond that, she mourns as well the change in her own life that their maturity will bring. Mrs. Ramsay "would have always liked to have had a baby;" Mrs. Ramsay "was

happiest carrying one in her arms." Her children grown means the renunciation of the long drunkenness in which she revels, and this prospect frightens her because it confronts her with the relentlessness of time. Mrs. Ramsay, who is for her children and husband and others around her a strong woman of "strange severity" and "stern beauty" is somewhere in the center of herself mortally afraid of time and its passage. Her first terrror appears early in the novel and is linked metaphorically to the sound of waves crashing on the beach. When the "gruff murmur" of her husband and Tansley talking on the porch ceases for a moment, Mrs. Ramsay becomes conscious of the outer world, of the larger arena of life that her children will move in; she becomes aware of the monotonous fall of the waves" which

> suddenly and unexpectedly, especially when her mind raised itself slightly from the task actually in hand, . . . like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea, and warned her whose day had slipped past in one quick doing after another ephemeral as a rainbow—this sound which had been obscured and concealed under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror. (p. 28)

When she "raises herself from the task at hand"—reading to James or knitting or any of the countless occupations of her days—Mrs. Ramsay becomes aware of time and its terror. When the familiar noises of her world cease—the men's tapping out of their pipes on the porch or the children's cries at a game of cricket—Mrs. Ramsay looks up, startled, frightened. Anything that forces her attention out toward the larger arenas of life beyond her control, anything that moves her away from the domestic world that she has created toward a world not so easily manipulated—anything that forces her toward life in this way, she resists. She is afraid of "the presence of her old antagonist, life," and of the toll it takes on her husband's reputation, on her children's youth, even on her own beauty: "When she looked in the glass and saw her hair grey, her cheek sunk, at fifty, she thought, possibly she might have managed things better—her husband; money; his books."

Mrs. Ramsay's only victory over time is through her creation of "moments," of occasions in which "life stands still" for the participants and each can take away in memory a token of Mrs. Ramsay's art. As a creative artist Mrs. Ramsay succeeds at the dinner party; her canvas is the occasion; her pallette consists of the people present; her colors are the individual and sensitive manipulations she performs upon those people—her serving beef to Bankes, for example, her flattering interest in Tansley, or her recruitment of Lily as assistant to the execution of her

design. In this last, Mrs. Ramsay is not necessarily asking for the assistance of a "fellow artist" per se; she is asking for the assistance of a "fellow woman," for this business of mixing people like paints to create a memorable canvas is in her mind a completely female activity. If the moment is to exist, she must create it:

> There was no beauty anywhere. . . . Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her. Again she felt, as a fact without hostility, the sterility of men, for if she did not do it nobody would do it, and so, giving herself the little shake that one gives a watch that has stopped, the old familiar pulse began beating, as the watch begins ticking—one, two, three, one, two, three. (p. 126)

And so she ticks, one, two, using her favored medium—people and their relationships—to make a canvas, a moment that she hopes will beat back relentless time.

This sort of creation—the taking of disparate elements and making of them a whole—is for Mrs. Ramsay a particularly female activity, an activity quite different from the creations of the male intellect (for example, Mr. Ramsay's thought which is sequential and accretive, like the letters of the alphabet or the keys on a piano). In Mrs. Ramsay's world-view (which is the basis of her marriage), there is a strict "division of labor" between the sexes in all matters. For example, Mrs. Ramsay has "the whole of the other sex under her protection," and she will, as she does instinctively for her husband, give a man sympathy, allow him to "be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house made full of life." Mrs. Ramsay allows the sterile "beak of brass" to be filled at her "fountain of fecundity," and in return she receives from men

> an attitude towards herself which no woman could fail to find agreeable, something trustful, childlike, reverential; which an old woman could take from a young man without loss of dignity, and woe betide the girl—pray Heaven it was none of her daughters!—who did not feel the worth of it, and all that it implied, to the marrow of her bones! (p. 13)

Creating civilization at dinner parties, then, is specifically "women's work" to Mrs. Ramsay, and women's work has "women's rewards" which are just as specific. But in a manner similar to that of Mrs. Ramsay's daughters, who "sport with infidel ideas which they had brewed for

themselves of a life different" from their mother's, "not always taking care of some man or other," Lily Briscoe doubts the worth of those traditional rewards promised her by Mrs. Ramsay's view of the world. At the dinner party, when Mrs. Ramsay lets Lily know that unless "you apply some balm to the anguish of this hour and say something nice to that young man there, life will run upon the rocks," Lily considers an "infidel idea" of her own:

> There is a code of behaviour, she knew, whose seventh article (it may be) says that on occasions of this sort it behoves the woman, whatever her own occupation may be, to go to the help of the young man opposite, so that he may expose and relieve the thigh bones, the ribs, of his vanity, of his urgent desire to assert himself; as indeed it is their duty, she reflected, in her old maidenly fairness, to help us, suppose the Tube were to burst into flames. Then, she thought, I should certainly expect Mr. Tansley to get me out. But how would it be, she thought, if neither of us did either of these things. So she sat there smiling. (p. 137)

But at least for the duration of the dinner party, Lily renounces "the experiment," and for her reward she "felt Mrs. Ramsay's gratitude" for having honored this female bond of creating civilization, for having upheld Mrs. Ramsay's expectations of men and women. Even so, Lily's suggested rebellion against Mrs. Ramsay's expectations is a sign of their weakening and changing as surely as is her daughters' infidel ideas "of a life different" from their mother's.

As the dinner party progresses, Mrs. Ramsay practices her art; she prods here, suggests there, asks a question, balms an ego, serves meat, protects her husband, mentions something about the quality of milk in London, has the candles lit—and makes her moment:

> Nothing need be said; nothing could be said. There it was, all round them. It partook, she felt, carefully helping Mr. Bankes to a specially tender piece, of eternity . . . there is a coherence in things, a stability. Something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby. . . . Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures. (p. 158)

But for Mrs. Ramsay, the moment made endures only so long as it is remembered, only so long as the subjects of her canvas recall that it was she who made them part of something whole. When dinner is over, she thinks of Paul and Minta, for whose imminent marriage she takes credit:

> They would, she thought, going on again, however long they lived, come back to this night; this moon; this wind; this house: and to her too. It flattered her, where she was most susceptible of flattery, to think how, wound about in their hearts, however long they lived she would be woven; and this, and this, and this, she thought, going upstairs, laughing, but affectionately, at the sofa on the landing (her mother's); at the rockingchair (her father's); . . . All that would be revived again in the lives of Paul and Minta, the Rayleys . . . and she felt . . . it was all one stream . . . and Paul and Minta would carry it on when she was dead. (pp. 170-171)

It is not Paul and Minta she really thinks of here; rather, she thinks with anticipation of their remembering her, which is finally the purpose of her making moments. Just as Mr. Ramsay ponders the state of his future reputation as he trills his mind over the letters of the alphabet A through Q, so Mrs. Ramsay, in claiming her ability to make of the relationships between people an enduring canvas, is claiming her hold on future authority through her stature in the eyes of others.

It is in her vanity that Mrs. Ramsay is most chilling, for in spite of her largesse toward people, she is finally incapable of seeing them except in relation to herself. Her reward for living for others, for making sacrifices, is to find her identity in others' perceptions of her. She is completely self-centered in this way—she cannot think of others save in terms of herself. For example, this egoism makes Mrs. Ramsay unable to imagine the Mannings, estranged friends of the family,

> going on living all these years when she had not thought of them more than once all that time. How eventful her own life had been, during those same years. Yet perhaps Carrie Manning had not thought of her either. The thought was strange and distasteful. (p. 133)

That they be remembered for their accomplishments is of great concern to both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, but on this point there are some differences between them. In isolated moments, in the solace of the domestic world that his wife makes for him, Mr. Ramsay does come to terms with the mortality of his reputation, and hence, with the passage of time. He realizes that "he would never reach R," that "his own little light would shine for a year or two, not very brightly, and would then be merged in some bigger light." But Mrs. Ramsay does not come to terms with this as her husband does: she must always be remembered. Although she does acknowledge that her "light" will continue in others

(Paul and Minta), she does not admit that her personality, her light will ever be merged with a larger one, or that she will become indistinguishable from the memory she creates. It is she herself who will continue to shine through Paul and Minta's lives, she thinks, as individual and as recognizable as a rocking chair (her father's) or the sofa on the landing (her mother's).

Lily Briscoe, too, deals with the relentlessness of time and change and the relative importance of personal reputation; she struggles throughout the novel to come to some sort of grips with her identity as an artist. But woven through this struggle and in direct relation to its solution is Lily's struggle to come to grips with Mrs. Ramsay and her effect on her life. Mrs. Ramsay's world-view, and specifically Mrs. Ramsay's vision of Lily's life, are the obstacles to Lily's satisfaction with her own choices concerning marriage and painting. Not until Lily overcomes Mrs. Ramsay's view of her is she free to pursue wholeheartedly her own vision.

Our first glimpse of Lily comes through Mrs. Ramsay's thumb-nail sketch of her near the beginning of the novel:

> With her little Chinese eyes and her puckered-up face, she would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously; she was an independent little creature. . . . (p. 29)

In one stroke Mrs. Ramsay has defined Lily as a woman who has no creative capability: she will not marry, hence she will not have children, and her painting is dismissed as not serious. Although Mrs. Ramsay does like Lily for being "an independent little creature," we can assume that Lily is not much respected by her, for we know that Mrs. Ramsay holds in high regard both marriage and her own "moment-making" creativity. Women without either art are as formidable to Mrs. Ramsay as her male "boobies"—men like Paul who have no dissertations to write and no "masculine intelligence" for her to lean on, nurture, and admire. With the exception of that moment at the dinner party when she calls upon Lily as a creative ally, Mrs. Ramsay sees Lily solely as an unmarried woman with no serious art. Her opinion of Lily is limited and relatively inconsequential to her own life, but to Lily, Mrs. Ramsay's opinion is very important since it posits that ideal womanhood which holds that the creativity of motherhood is primary to female identity. To justify her own life choices, Lily must come to terms with this definition of herself as a woman with no creative art.

The difficulty of her task confronts Lily everytime she picks up her paintbrush, every time she finds herself navigating that "passage from conception to work" which is "as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child." And always, in the act of confronting a canvas, Lily finds herself also confronting Mrs. Ramsay:

> Such she often felt herself—struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: 'But this is what I see; this is what I see,' and so to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck from her. And it was then too, in that chill and windy way, as she began to paint, that there forced themselves upon her other things, her own inadequacy, her insignificance, keeping house for her father off the Brompton Road, and had much ado to control her impulse to fling herself (thank Heaven she had always resisted so far) at Mrs. Ramsay's knee and say to her—but what could one say to her? 'I'm in love with you?' No, that was not true, 'I'm in love with this all,' waving her hand at the hedge, at the house, at the children. It was absurd, it was impossible. (pp. 32-3)

In Yeats's phrase, the choice is between "perfection of the life or of the work," and Lily struggles with this choice in order to define herself. But for Lily, in contrast to Bankes or Tansley, the choice is complicated by the limitations of her role model, Mrs. Ramsay. Tansley, for example, can see in Mr. Ramsay a person who creates both in solitude (his books) and in community (his family). Tansley can identify with Mr. Ramsay by choosing to both write his dissertation *and* marry and raise a family (which he later does). But if Lily tries to identify with Mrs. Ramsay's life, there is no such compromise between solitude and community, between "life and work." In order to justify her identity as an artist, Lily must come to terms with a role model who believes that "an unmarried woman has missed the best of life;" she must "urge her own exemption from the universal law."

Lily's struggle is made all the more difficult by the fact that the novel makes Mrs. Ramsay her only role model; as such, Mrs. Ramsay becomes a "universal law"—she is the living symbol of a world-view that cannot respect a choice such as Lily's, which refuses to make woman's primary identity depend on her performance as wife and mother. Lily, then, is not only defending her life-choice to a single person, Mrs. Ramsay, but to the traditional, a "universal," world-view. Her success in defending herself is finally a measure of how well she is able to separate and define Mrs. Ramsay, the person, and Mrs. Ramsay, the symbolic embodiment of the traditional ideal.

As a painter executing the canvas of James and Mrs. Ramsay in the window, Lily's task is to take the real object and create an image out of it. As a woman seeking to define herself against the model of Mrs. Ramsay,

Lily attempts the opposite—she must isolate the ideal image of Mrs. Ramsay in order to know the real woman:

> . . . she was unquestionably the loveliest of people (bowed over her book); the best perhaps; but also, different too from the perfect shape which one saw there. But why different, and how different? she asked herself, scraping her palette of all those mounds of blue and green which seemed to her like clods with no life in them now, yet she vowed, she would inspire them, force them to move, flow, do her bidding tomorrow. How did she differ? What was the spirit in her . . . by which, had you found a crumpled glove in the corner of a sofa, you would have known it, from its twisted finger, hers indisputably? (p. 76)

Lily begins trying to define Mrs. Ramsay by first thinking what she is like (a bird for speed, an arrow for directness); then by recalling what she does (closes doors, opens windows, cares for a home); then by remembering what she says (her stories about Carmichael and Bankes which she "adroitly shapes" and "maliciously twists"); and finally, by struggling with what Mrs. Ramsay believes:

> . . . [she would] insist that she must, Minta must, they all must marry, since in the whole world whatever laurels might be tossed to her (but Mrs. Ramsay cared not a fig for her painting), or triumphs won by her (probably Mrs. Ramsay had had her share of those), and here she saddened, darkened, and came back to her chair, there could be no disputing this: an unmarried woman (she lightly took her hand for a moment), an unmarried woman has missed the best of life. The house seemed full of children sleeping and Mrs. Ramsay listening; shaded lights and regular breathing. (p. 77)

This leads Lily to plead that "she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for that" and to confront "Mrs Ramsay's simple certainty . . . that her dear Lily, her little Brisk, was a fool." What Mrs. Ramsay believes (unmarried women miss the best of life) excludes the possibility that Lily's choice for herself is a good one, and this belief rests on a "simple certainty" that leaves Lily chilled:

> Then, she remembered, she had laid her head on Mrs. Ramsay's lap and laughed and laughed and laughed, laughed almost hysterically at the thought of Mrs. Ramsay presiding with immutable calm over destinies which she completely

> failed to understand. There she sat, simple, serious. She had recovered her sense of her now—this was the glove's twisted finger. But into what sanctuary had one penetrated? Lily Briscoe had looked up at last, and there was Mrs. Ramsay, unwitting entirely what had caused her laughter, still presiding, but now with every trace of willfulness abolished, and in its stead, something clear as the space which the clouds at last uncover—the little space of sky which sleeps beside the moon. (p. 78)

The intimate knowledge which Lily seeks through her definition of Mrs. Ramsay leads her to conclude that at her center, Mrs. Ramsay is nothing but a "little space of sky," a hollowness filled only with a simple and childlike certainty in the order of things and in her own ability to uphold that order. For Mrs. Ramsay, there is no conflict between "perfection of the life or of the work" because in herself she recognizes only one term of the choice. There is nothing for Mrs. Ramsay to balance, none of the "undeniable, everlasting, contradictory things" to resolve as there is for Lily; and further, Mrs. Ramsay's unquestioning belief in the "solution" of marriage makes it impossible for her to acknowledge the *necessity* of such balancing and resolving in the lives of others. Lily, on the other hand, is not capable of being as simple and certain as Mrs. Ramsay. Lily, like Bankes, asks unanswerable questions of life ("What does it all mean?" "What does one live for?" "How does one think of people?" "How does one explain it all?"). Although Mrs. Ramsay acknowledges the existence of the questions (as she acknowledges the existence of poverty and famine and death), her only answer is that she says to her children "You shall go through it all." Her answers are that Andrew is talented at maths, Rose is good with her hands, Prue is beautiful and shall marry well.

The separation of "ideal image" from Mrs. Ramsay the woman that Lily begins in "The Window" is not completed until after Mrs. Ramsay's death and well into the final section of the novel, "The Lighthouse." Early in the section we are made acutely aware of Mrs. Ramsay's absence through Lily's inability or unwillingness to fill the vacancy left by her death. Lily does not know what to send with the children to the lighthouse; she is angered by Mr. Ramsay's bottomless need for sympathy; she cannot make order out of the chaos of children and guests and domestic problems that surrounds her, and so she sits at the table, hiding behind her empty coffee cup. She still suffers from her inability to imitate the womanhood of Mrs. Ramsay, a problem that is compounded now by her inability to mourn her. However, as she sits there trying to ignore the domestic problems that she knows she cannot solve, she

comes upon a method of ordering for herself the chaos within and around her:

> When she had sat there last ten years ago there had been a little sprig or leaf pattern on the table-cloth, which she had looked at in a moment of revelation. There had been a problem about a foreground of a picture. Move the tree to the middle, she had said. She had never finished that picture. She would paint that picture now. It had been knocking about in her mind all these years. (p. 220)

Painting, rather than the domestic routine of husband and children, is the principle that orders Lily's world. It is "the one thing one did not play at," "the one dependable thing in a world of strife, ruin, chaos." The art form is inseparable from Lily's method of dealing with the world, and it is *while she paints* that she comes to terms with Mrs. Ramsay and her own identity.

The biggest obstacle to this end, however, is Mr. Ramsay and his "enormous need" for the sympathy of "any woman." She is drawn away from painting by the pressure he exerts upon her to fulfill that need ("Why would she look at the sea when I am here?" he wonders). At first Lily tries to avoid him; ultimately she attempts to imitate the nurturing surrender of Mrs. Ramsay, but she finds that "she can't float off instantly upon some wave of sympathetic expansion." She finds that she cannot be, as Mrs. Ramsay was, a "fountain" into which Mr. Ramsay could plunge the "beak of brass" that is his need to be comforted and reassured. She can only be herself, which means "she would give him what she could." Finally, this is sufficient: Lily does not turn coldly away from him, nor does she try to be to him what Mrs. Ramsay was. She simply exchanges a few words with him about his boots, and thus fortified and ministered to, Mr. Ramsay goes off on his journey to the lighthouse. It is as if those few words they do manage to exchange break some spell that had demanded she be the fecund female to his sterile male; they both go off separately, neither having had to submit to the other. In a small way, the incident represents Lily's ability to strike some balance between solitude and community, between "life" and "work."

Lily, finally, is a woman who is drawn to both worlds, to both creation in solitude and in community, just as she is drawn throughout the rest of the novel to the edge of the cliff so that she can watch the progress of the boating party to the lighthouse. As she begins to paint again, Lily muses on the difficulty of her craft and her habitual reluctance when she is first "drawn out of community with people into the presence of this formidable, ancient enemy of hers—this other thing, this truth, this reality (p. 237). It is important to note here that painting is not *the* truth but "this other thing," and that she is habitually "half unwilling, half

reluctant" to be drawn by it out of the circle of human community. "Why not be left in peace to talk to Mr. Carmichael on the lawn?" she asks herself. But it is in this willingness to be drawn out that Lily's strength of character lies. To trade "the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting" always gives her "a few moments of nakedness when she seemed like an unborn soul" exposed "to all the blasts of doubt," and yet she consistently makes that trade. Those doubts which whisper "she couldn't paint, she couldn't create" do not keep her from creating, and she becomes in front of her canvas a "fountain," and "her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and memories and ideas."

Much of what she remembers concerns Mrs. Ramsay, concerns her ability to "make moments" which, Lily admits, "affect one like a work of art" even after the passage of many years. But as Lily continues to paint and remember, we realize that she is engaged in a similar form of creation: she is not making moments out of the relations between people, but she is "making up scenes" about them, which is her way of knowing them. It is through this activity that Lily has her final triumph over Mrs. Ramsay and manages to seperate the real woman from the ideal.

From remembering "a moment" Mrs. Ramsay created on the beach, Lily turns to her own, more recent memories of Paul and Minta Rayley, who had been present also at that moment ten years ago. In her imagination she creates a clear and empathetic picture of the Rayleys' marriage, a picture which makes them out as "friendly" but no longer "in love," a picture that allows Paul a lover and Minta to be relieved, a picture that, in Mrs. Ramsay's definition, would portray a failed marriage. Lily realizes that no matter what opinion Mrs. Ramsay might hold of the marriage she took pride in creating, for Paul and Minta it is comfortable and correct:

> Mrs. Ramsay has faded and gone, she thought. We can override her wishes, improve away her limited, old-fashioned ideas. . . . Mockingly she seemed to see her there at the end of the corridor of years saying, of all incongruous things, 'Marry, marry!' . . . And one would have to say to her, It has all gone against your wishes. They're happy like that; I'm happy like this. Life has changed completely. At that all her being, even her beauty, became for a moment, dusty and out of date. For a moment Lily, standing there, with the sun hot on her back, summing up the Rayleys, triumphed over Mrs. Ramsay, who would never know how Paul went to coffee-houses and had a mistress; how he sat on the ground and Minta handed him his tools; how she stood here painting, had never married, not even William Bankes. (p. 260)

This separation of the woman from the world-view she came to represent is the final step in Lily's understanding of Mrs. Ramsay. Having discarded the world-view that Mrs. Ramsay embodied and that had pressed on Lily "a universal law" that did not apply to her, Lily is able finally to love—and to mourn—the woman who had for so long been hidden from her, veiled in that inhospitable world-view:

> And now slowly the pain of the want, and the bitter anger (to be called back, just as she thought she would never feel sorrow for Mrs. Ramsay again. Had she missed her among the coffee cups at breakfast? not in the least) lessened; and of their anguish left, as antidote, a relief that was balm in itself, and also, but more mysteriously, a sense of some one there, of Mrs. Ramsay, relieved for a moment of the weight that the world had put on her, staying lightly by ber side and then (for this was Mrs. Ramsay in all her beauty) raising to her forehead a wreath of white flowers with which she went. (p. 269)

Lily, then, has her intimacy with Mrs. Ramsay only after Mrs. Ramsay's death—only after she has come to a grateful appreciation of Mrs Ramsay's creativity, isolated the real woman behind the ideal, and excused herelf from the universal law that "an unmarried woman has missed the best life has to offer." Realizing that "love has a thousand shapes," and not just the one Mrs. Ramsay's takes, Lily is able to accept the "shape" of her own choices and relationships and creativity—she is able to have her vision at the end of the novel.

At the root of her novel Virginia Woolf is "making up scenes" about her parents in order to know them, and in the portrait of her mother, Woolf has created an intimacy with her that, like Lily's with Mrs. Ramsay, exists only after the fact of her death. Although to us the portrait may seem impossibly idealized and archetypal, it was for Woolf, at the age of 45, a portrait of a woman who had died when Virginia was only 13, and about whom Virginia had considered herself "unhealthily obsessed." Nevertheless, if we have faith as Virginia did in the opinion of her older sister, Vanessa Bell, the portrait of their mother in *To The Lighthouse* is accurate:

> I suppose I'm the only person in the world who can have these feelings, at any rate to such an extent. . . . Anyhow it seemed to me that in the first part of the book you have given a portrait of mother which is more like her to me than anything I could ever have conceived of as possible. . . . You made one feel the extraordinary beauty of her character. . . . It was like meeting her again with oneself grown up and on equal terms. . . .[6]

Woolf must have been pleased by her sister's calling her a "supreme artist" in her portraits of her parents, Vanessa being a critic with intimate knowledge of the subjects. But in the same letter, Vanessa comments only briefly on the third portrait in the novel of which she could also have been an intimate critic—Virginia's portrait of herself in Lily Briscoe:

> By the way surely Lily Briscoe must have been rather a good painter—before her time perhaps, but with great gifts really? Now, we didn't laugh at the bits about painting—though I'm a little doubtful about covering paints with damp cloths, but it might be done. But how do you make Boeuf en Daube? Does it have to be eaten on the moment after cooking 3 days?[7]

In giving Lily her vision at the end of the novel, surely Woolf was on some level "making up for" Lily's childlessness as well as her own. One wonders whether Woolf was hurt by Vanessa's tremulous assertion, sandwiched between recipes and speculations about storing paint, that Lily *was* an artist, coming as it did from the sister to whom Virginia always compared herself unfavorably in her diaries: Vanessa the "real" woman, both artist and mother. One hopes that in "making up scenes" about Lily, Virginia Woolf was able to at least temporarily confirm her own choices in life, to accept and celebrate her own vision, and to claim her own exclusion from "the universal laws" that made her image of herself so often painful to bear.

Notes

[1] Anne Bell and Andrew McNellie, eds., *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanavich, 1980), III, 18-19.

[2] *Diary*, p. 208.

[3] *Diary*, p. 36.

[4] Mitchell Leaska, in *Virginia Woolf's Lighthouse: A Study in Critical Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), has determined

the percentage of time each character in the novel acts as narrator. The following tables are from Leaska's appendices:

To the Lighthouse
('The Window')

Narrators	*No. Lines*	*Per cent*
Mrs Ramsay	1939.5	42.0
Omniscient	778.5	17.0
Lily Briscoe	587.5	13.0
Mr Ramsay	370.0	8.0
William Bankes	293.0	6.0
Charles Tansley	168.5	4.0
Other	156.0	4.0
Paul Rayley	55.0	1.0
Nancy Ramsay	53.0	1.0
(Indeterminable	170.0	4.0)
	('Time Passes')	
Omniscient	492.0	76.0
Mrs McNab	102.5	16.0
Lily Briscoe	16.5	3.0
Mrs Bast	16.0	2.0
Other	9.0	1.0
(Indeterminable	14.0	2.0)
	('The Lighthouse')	
Lily Briscoe	1483.0	61.0
Cam Ramsay	256.0	11.0
Omniscient	236.5	10.0
James Ramsay	199.0	8.0
Mr Ramsay	125.0	5.0
James and Cam	94.5	4.0
Other	3.0	0.1
(Indeterminable	26.0	0.9)

To the Lighthouse
(Entire Novel)

Narrators	*No. Lines*	*Per cent*
Lily Briscoe	2087.0	27.3
Mrs Ramsay	1949.5	25.5
Omniscient	1507.0	19.7
Mr Ramsay	495.0	6.5
William Bankes	295.0	3.9
Cam Ramsay	256.0	3.3
James Ramsay	241.5	3.2
Charles Tansley	168.5	2.2
Mrs McNab	102.5	1.3
James and Cam	94.5	1.2
Paul Rayley	55.0	0.7
Nancy Ramsay	53.0	0.7
Andrew Ramsay	40.5	0.5
Minta Doyle	34.0	0.4
Prue Ramsay	19.5	0.3
Other	19.0	0.3
Mrs Bast	16.0	0.2
Jasper Ramsay	10.5	0.1
(Indeterminable	210.0	2.7)

[5] Virginia Woolf, *To The Lighthouse* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanavich, 1927), pp. 24, 37, 53, 58. All other references to the novel are cited in the text.

[6] Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, eds., *The Letters of Virginia Woolf* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanavich, 1978), III, 572.

[7] *Letters,* III, 573.

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