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Alfonso Quijada Urías

TO TELL THE STORY

Translated by Elizabeth Gamble Miller



The shadow from the pilaster supporting the southwest corner of the roof of the house in front developed later than usual. Only now the sun was beginning to shoot out weak, fleeting rays. Through the banister's heavy railings, discolored by time and by the rains, paraded other shadows beyond the now familiar ones. To those familiar silhouettes were added others, distinguished by their novel apparel. Extraordinary—you may say—considering the usual. Especially for someone who for many months has been observing at that hour the first movements of the day. For the substance of dream becomes fragile and frightening as the years advance. So dawn and the calm offered by the first light are anxiously anticipated. Light

which uncovers spaces: walkways, a succession of portals, grated windows, rooms, columns, little puddles, movie billboards like black stripes projected against the daylight of the street.

In confusion they mill about. A ruckus is brewing on the corner with people who begin to run and yell, waving their hands and charging about the vendor's empty cold drink stands. From the center of the square the crowd sometimes shifts to the middle of the thoroughfare to see close up, to satisfy their curiosity. Only a few minutes before, the first

The photograph of Alfonso Quijada Urías was taken in Havana in 1984 by Chino Lopez.

mortar shells were heard. One at the police station. Another at the guard house. The "kids" had come down, cautious silent shadows of a night that was disappearing with the dawn's first light and crowing cocks. Stationed in key places, the majority of them waited until the commandos in charge of assaulting the police and guard stations fulfilled their missions. Apparently there was little resistance. The Commander of the Guard was out whoring. The attack surprised him at Juana Puñales's brothel. And there right in the middle of the street, displayed in his underwear, was the little man standing along with the rest of the prisoners.

People didn't know what the explosions were at that early hour, whether it was the work of God, the Devil, or the "kids." The bang, bang, bang of guerrilla shots scattered in all directions. People later ran pell-mell, but at first they slipped along stealthily, like dancers. Tiptoeing on the pavement. The sidewalks. In front of the posters advertising the movie. Under the lighted letters. Beside the line of newspapers. Crossing the streets. In the same direction. Through a narrow street with tall houses. Until reaching a passageway between two tall buildings with faded, wrinkled walls, covered with greasy stains and the remains of political tracts, that had been glued on and torn off. The water and the sun plus the children's scribbles made a mural with a wrinkled surface thick with scraps of letters. Numbers. Yellowed candidates' faces. Grotesque. Phallic drawings. Phrases. They finally came to a major esplanade where there were more people. Children playing. Behind them a string of mountains like udders. Bloated. Another blob of people in the patio at the mayor's house. And another below the church atrium. Everywhere. "The kids have taken over the town," they were saying. Always in an impersonal tone.

There were many young people (girls among them) looking too young to have ever shot a gun. But you had to see them. They had undoubtedly crossed the river, judging by their shoes covered with mud and gravel. Townspeople began to emerge much later. Responding to the noise and to the silence itself that had preceded the uproar. Some came from necessity. Others spurred by curiosity. So the tumult gradually grew. Finally they were in full view from head to foot. From head to foot. All their garb. Not noteworthy for being exotic, but for its lamentable state: shoes worn out, pants "larger than the deceased," and especially the

weapons, old, repaired or patched up with some truck part appropriated by an ingenious mechanic. People were coming out of all the corners—more and more people. The whole town became a party. The "demoted" were the target for sarcastic jibes. Ogres and wolves under the power of tom thumbs and little red riding hoods. "The kids have taken over the town," they are saying.

People coming from the market brought bread, flowers, empanadas, coffee, sweets, for the "kids." "Terrorists' *La Prensa* says," said the bus dispatcher. "And who believes *La Prensa* at this stage," he answered himself. The students came, wreaking havoc as always, producing turmoil. Girls—like at a party—made up, dressed up. "It looks like a carnival," said the Berlin Bar's fat man.

In a matter of hours—that seemed centuries—love pacts were sealed. New dreams devised. New alliances. Many woke up from a long stupor. Others died, when they looked in the mirror. However, it was well understood that "that" couldn't last. There was a sense of danger. A nauseous (although distant) odor hung in the air. It clung to the houses and the streets. There were rumors. Warnings. Sounds like stones being pummeled down a rampaging river. The "kids" sensed that the town was in danger of becoming a trap. And taking precautions they undertook (with provisions and hostages) their return. While they were so engaged, the bells of the Church of Our Lady rang out and the echo was lost in the hubbub of the people. "They say the kids have taken over the town," everyone is saying.

Then, they looked up. And burst into confusion. Running down the street. Looking for a place to hide. Thousands of people like ants trying to find an anthill.

"The Germans are coming," one little boy told another while they were running down the street.

"Don't be a dummy," the other said, as if playing at war, "those aren't Germans; they're Americans and now you're gonna see they're gonna drop the atom bomb on us."

Just then the helicopters (three of them) flew over the city. Dropping gradually lower and lower, almost scraping the roofs, the treetops. Disappearing between the towers and appearing by surprise at the height of the palm trees.

The bombs began to fall, one after the other. One after the other. Another. There was a tremendous roar. A bomb fell on the bell tower.

The vibration traveled from house to house. In one fell swoop the windows slammed shut, dropping out pieces of glass; inside, no plate, glass, mirror, or frame was left intact. Roaring along its twisted path: chairs, balconies, rubble, walls, posts, antennas, refrigerators, chests. Another bomb broke the plumbing's black framework; disconnected fragments still sticking to the walls emptied out a grimy, rusty liquid. A dirty mixture into the streets.

Inside the houses people continued running, surrounded by voices, screams, and crying children. Stunned by the bombing they ran between smoldering clothing and cadavers.

Between medicinal salves, bottles of oil, juices, sauces, macaroni, clams. Each one as if fleeing its container. People were still running. They would squat under the eaves, in a corner, then continue, senselessly, running on top of broken glass, pieces of iron, bricks.

Not a stone was left atop another.

Through the banister's heavy railings were silhouettes of other shadows. Images ripped open. Dead, wounded, rubble. The dead. Difficult to count. There were so many. And there would have been more if "the kids" hadn't gotten fired up. If I am alive, it's by pure miracle. Perhaps. Possibly. To tell the story. □

Jerome Pryor, S.J.

DUEL IN THE SUN, A CLASSICAL SYMPHONY

Duel in the Sun, 1946, produced by David O. Selznick, directed by King Vidor, with Jennifer Jones, Gregory Peck, Joseph Cotten, Lillian Gish, Lionel Barrymore, Herbert Marshall, Walter Huston, Butterfly McQueen, Tilly Losch, Harry Carey, Tim Holt, narrated by Orson Welles.

It has been called a bad film, it has been called a great film, the "greatest outdoor film of the '40s," but no one has said exactly why. After listing a succession of the film's brilliant, dynamic scenes, Charles Higham concludes that the film is "a vast mural of which Delacroix would not be ashamed."¹ This intensity is doubtless a contributing factor to David Thompson's designation of the film as "the greatest primitive film in the history of the American cinema."² Ed Lowry comes closest to suggesting that the energetic fervor of the film is organized by a coherent pattern when he points out that it shows the cultural conflict of the North versus the South, with the West shown as the South's last cultural stand. He ends his article saying that *Duel in the Sun* comes close to high tragedy, although he does not say why.³

It will be the purpose of this paper to show that the film is indeed tragedy, and tragedy of a sort of which the Greeks would have approved, since it balances the emotionally expressive with logical order. The former is present in the film's expressionism and romanticism, which will be considered separately, while the latter is present in the various Greek patterns, such as Aristotle's prescription for tragedy, and also in the fertility rite, and in sex roles and their reversals.

It is understandable that the film did not receive a sober evaluation when it was released in 1947, since this event was attended by shock

and controversy occasioned by the film's bold representation of sex. What is less comprehensible is how, as recently as 1980, David O. Selznick's *Hollywood*, an expensive, pretentious treatment of the producer's career, should refer to the film as "kitsch," and "quintessential Hollywood neurotic romanticism."⁴

The prologue of the film uses a classical form for classical purposes: an exposition of the major themes to come, as well as a succinct, ritualized, condensation of the action of the film. As the sound track begins with the sound of a rifle shot, the viewer sees the sun blazing in a yellow sky. Across this sea of burning yellow, letters shaped like flame carry the title of the film. This is classical in its simplicity and directness: fire, as manifested in both sun and gunfire, is the chief symbol of the film. Not only is fire the dominant image, but the entire film exudes a scorching heat: "The film's electric vitality shrivels the eye: from beginning to end, it blazes ferociously with life" (Higham 22). The voice of the narrator accompanies the viewer into a lonely desert sunset dominated by a massive rock which resembles an Indian woman's face, and is designated in the film as Squaw's Head Rock. The narrator tells us that this rock is the site of the death of Pearl Chavez, a half-breed, and her outlaw lover. As the camera moves in for a close-up of a blossoming cactus, he tells us that, according to legend, this flower, which grows only at the scene of the lovers' death, is like Pearl in that it blossoms quickly, and just as quickly dies. The use of the flower is an example of *aition*, a classical device which uses a rite, monument, or natural feature to commemorate an event.⁵ It is used throughout classical literature to insure the veracity of a story, and here it is used to lend credibility to a story of extravagant contrasts. The use of the narrator

¹Charles Higham, "King Vidor," *Film Heritage* 1.4 (Summer 1966): 22.

²David Thompson, *A Biographical Dictionary of Film* (New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks, 1979) 582.

³Ed Lowry, "Duel in the Sun," *Cinema Texas Program Notes* 1.2 (Spring 1976): 55-56.

⁴Ronald Have, *David O. Selznick's Hollywood* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980) 368.

⁵H.D.F. Kotto, *Greek Tragedy: A Literary Study* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1955) 302.

itself distances us from the world of literal reality, and he tells us twice that what we are to watch is a legend, which in the course of the film means that it has a larger-than-life quality: a large ranch is one million acres, the good are very good, and the bad are very bad. Dance, and its ritual associations, is very important in the film, and even invades the world of ordinary movement, as we will see, just as music, apart from the explicit use of singing, heightens the expressivity of the spoken word, until reality is transformed into a spectacular world where living, loving, and dying take their place in a cyclical pattern of extraordinary drama. Clearly, we are in the world of myth and ritual.⁶

The described scene at Squaw's Head Rock is set in mythic time, an immutable present which is universal. Its vastness, like other scenes in the film, reveal an imaginary world that is nowhere and everywhere.

Ritual drama creates its own present which annuls duration, a 'now' that encompasses and so transcends time's continuum. . . . Ritual time allows vast stretches of history to be concentrated in a moment. The action takes place in its own universal situation. . . . Thus all time is one time, and space is universal; the action occurs in an immutable 'now' and in a universal 'everywhere.'⁷

The entire film is a flashback from this vantage point, to which we have been led by an unseen, omniscient narrator who closely resembles the leader of the Greek chorus who delivered the classical play's prologue. It is this leader, the coryphaeus, who defined the universe in which the play's action occurred, like the Stage Manager in *Our Town*, as well as the narrator in *Duel*.

The narrator starts the action of the flashback, which constitutes the body of the film as the prologue continues. The flower which is compared to Pearl fades out as Pearl herself fades in, dancing to the music of the *Mexican Hat Dance* outside a Texas presidio, while inside her Indian mother is dancing a very different kind of dance: the *Orizaba*. To the pulsing of tom-toms, the folk color of the xylophone, and

the shrieking, insolent glissandi of trumpets, Mrs. Chavez whirls in an abandoned dance that many critics found the most effective scene in the film. Her lover, who had noted the similarities between Pearl and her mother, outside the presidio, had said, "Like mother, like daughter," as he notes each woman's appreciative audience: the little boys who clutch at Pearl's skirt, the cowboys watching her mother's dance, who shoot off their guns at the dance's climax. The music reaches a second climax, the dance subtly blends with reality, as Mrs. Chavez's lover pulls her down on the bar and kisses her. Scott Chavez, the Indian's white, aristocratic husband, is taunted by his gambling companions about his wife, as everyone watches the woman's promiscuity. The husband follows the illicit lovers across the street and shoots them in the act of adultery, as Pearl screams her protests. Scott is next seen before a jury, before whom he admits his guilt and suggests the manner of his execution. In his farewell to his devastated daughter before he is hung, Scott expresses confidence in Pearl's high integrity. He tells her to emulate Laura Belle, with whom he had long ago been in love, and to whom he is sending Pearl. He gives her a scarf, a memento that will be seen again at the end of the film. The prologue ends as Scott quotes a stanza (LXVI) from the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam in which he bemoans the proximity of death, and reminds us that Pearl is a flower "that once blown, forever dies." This is another reminder that the heroine will have a tragic end. The prologue, the first eleven minutes of the film, has been described in some detail, because, in true classical fashion, it contains the seeds of the entire film. There is no doubt about tragic inevitability, so emphasized by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, once we have seen the film's prologue; there is simply no other way it can end.

Since we have been told the story is a legend, we expect the many stylizations that occur: the dignified aristocrat, his brazenly wanton wife, the vast presidio, a talented dancer executing a symbolic dance in a very unlikely environment, the shattering effect of guns as their fire joins the music, the yelling, aroused cowboys at the climax of the dance, Pearl's white eyes and teeth glittering against her dusky skin, looking like Michelangelo's Damned Soul from his Sistine Chapel *Last Judgement* as she protests her mother's murder, and Scott's dignified self-accusation and sentencing. All of these are departures from literal reality, all emphasize the

⁶Myth is here used to refer to the interpretation a community places on important events in life, while ritual is myth in action.

⁷Thomas E. Porter, *Myth and Modern American Drama* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1969) 207-8.

mythic, larger-than-life aspects of the film while at the same time affording the stylization that is absolutely necessary for both classical art and classical tragedy. Aristotle emphasizes the necessity of stylization in order to achieve the universality so important to his concepts, and directs the playwright to create his characters as either better or worse than the average.⁸

Classical drama achieves its powerful tension by means of a balance between opposites. Two polarities are firmly integral to Greek tragedy by the very fact that Greek theatre began by the combination of the rituals involved in the worship of Dionysus and those involved in the worship of Apollo.⁹ Dionysus, the god of wine, is associated with the emotions, intuition, imagination, dynamism, togetherness, sexual license, and intoxication. Apollo is associated with reason, law, light, immutability, and personal isolation. The Dionesian in the extreme is insane, while the Apollonian is proud and rigid. The Greeks believed in the Golden Mean: a balance of the two, where both aspects exist in harmony within the individual. Characters in Greek drama like Hippolytus and Pentheus who do not develop both sides of their nature pay dearly for the imbalance.

The contrast and conflict of the Apollonian and Dionesiac are stated with great clarity in the prologue of *Duel in the Sun*. Apollonians are usually lawyers and judges, and we see Scott Chavez, with his elegant manners and dignified aloofness, judging, sentencing, and executing his Dionesiac wife and her lover. He later judges himself and suggests his own manner of execution. His wife's Dionesiac abandon is suggested almost entirely by a brilliantly conceived and executed dance. Wearing a dress brightly striped in red and green, the favorite color combination of the German Expressionist painters (the film has a strongly expressionist character, which will be considered later), the dancer whirls in circles on a circular bar. (The stripes on her dress also appear circular when shot from above.) Gestures, directed to her lover, and suggestive of magical enchantment (there is an undercurrent of magic in the film), are succeeded by the dancer's raising her skirts, then shooting borrowed guns in the air, an

action that is promptly emulated by the excited all-male audience. Like the dances of India, where the harmony of the dance represents the sexual harmony that exists between man and woman, with the climax of the dance symbolizing the climax of the sex act, the dance in *Duel in the Sun* is a ritualized representation of sex. Dance, so very important in Greek theatre, is also important in *Duel*. For instance, the gestures of Mrs. Chavez in her dance are later emulated by Pearl when she dances at the desert oasis (the sump) for Lewt while he accompanies her on his guitar. The parallel gestures are clearly intended to remind us of Mrs. Chavez's dance and her lover's words, "like mother, like daughter." (Unfortunately, the scene was cut from the film by the censors and no longer exists except in still photographs.)

The parallels between the *Orizaba* (choreographed and danced by Tilly Losch) and the Indian *Dance of Shiva* are striking. Hinduism explains the dualities of creation and destruction by the Dance of Shiva, who dances both, the drum in one hand symbolizing creation, and fire in the other, destruction, both of which are present in the *Orizaba*. Both the *Dance of Shiva* and the dance in the film are manifestations of primal rhythmic energy.¹⁰ Shiva dances on an open lotus, symbol of rebirth, or transmigration of soul, and this supports the fiery orb of the sun, which surrounds the god. This emphasizes the cyclical nature of Shiva's dance. This cyclical quality is also present in Tilly Losch's dance because of the repeated emphasis on the circular that has already been alluded to.

Fire is present in the prologue in the waning red light of the setting sun, but also in the phallic image of the guns that erupt at the climax of the dance. Moments later, the dancer and her lover are shot to death with a gun. Just as fire can be used to symbolize passion (eros) and death (thanatos), so the gun is an ambivalent symbol in the film, symbolizing creation and destruction, just as the fox in D. H. Lawrence's novella *The Fox* has both phallic and destructive significance.

The *Orizaba* takes its name from the highest mountain of Mexico, which is also a volcano, where rain dances have been performed. The magical gestures present in the dance take on an additional significance when it is seen as a fertility ritual (later it will be seen that the whole

⁸Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Gerald E. Else (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1973) 17.

⁹Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956) 21-24.

¹⁰Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Shiva* (New York: Noonday Press, 1957) 66.

film can be looked on as a fertility rite), especially when the dancer's attention and invitational gestures are directed toward her lover, who shows growing fascination for her as the dance proceeds, and commits adultery with her after the conclusion of the dance. It is tantalizing to conjecture that possibly the magic that arouses her lover to an act that has parallels with agricultural fertility also causes her death. In Pasolini's *Medea* a long and bloody human sacrifice is performed to ensure the fertility of the crops. We are never told if the crops grew, but Jason arrives, and Medea's life is completely changed: the prayers for fertility were answered in a different way than had been anticipated.

The dramatic juxtaposition of the love and death polarities in the prologue encapsulates the meaning of the entire film, much as the overture to Wagner's opera *The Flying Dutchman* summarizes the work it precedes. Wagner was, in fact, trying to recreate classical melodrama (drama with music) in its true, original sense when he invented his music drama. Although it is not the purpose of this paper to analyze the detailed, ambitious musical score of the film, the fact is that the music is so carefully wedded to the drama that sound effects become percussive instruments, and lines spoken by the actors take on musical phrasing and intonation.

The film's director, King Vidor, has said that he wanted to obliterate the divisions between painting and photography (some scenes in *Duel* are painted), and those between sound effects and music.¹¹ In other words, he is striving to achieve the union of the arts that ancient Greek theatre achieved. And it was in attempted emulation of Greek drama that opera was invented by the Camerata in Florence, was reformed by Gluck in the eighteenth century, and it was also in emulation of classical drama that Wagner invented his music drama. It is for reasons other than simply derogatory ones that *Duel in the Sun* is called operatic, and that it has been called a "baroque" Western. It was, after all, during the Baroque Period that opera achieved its first great period, and the Baroque was interested in the integration of all the arts, which is what opera is.

The themes stated in the prologue develop and reverberate throughout the film, climaxing at the film's end. In like manner, the pulsing of the *Orizaba's* tom-toms continue insistently

through the rhythms of the film, whether it is in the sensual strumming of Lewt's guitar, or the ominous thudding of horses' hooves, and these rhythms contribute to the film's feverish intoxication.

The film proper begins with Pearl's departure for the Spanish Bit Ranch, and we see the tiny image of a coach and horses at the lower left of the screen, and a very low horizon line, which gives an effect of great space and freedom after the constricted darkness of the jail. The open visual composition is appropriate for a scene which marks the beginning of Pearl's new life, and its attendant high hopes.

Laura Belle's son, Jesse, questions Pearl—who is waiting at the Paradise Flats coach stop—as to her identity, but she responds, "I don't talk to strangers." Later, Pearl realizes the identity of Jesse and starts to question him. Her questions are identical to his earlier ones, and he responds to her with her own previous answers. The scene is not simply comic relief, but an enactment of sex roles and their reversals that will occur throughout the entire film. Like the plays of Euripides, the film questions the traditional roles of the sexes, and condemns male chauvinism in its many forms. (It is amazing to read books on women's liberation in film, which dismiss Pearl Chavez as the "usual femme fatale." Nothing could be further from the truth, as we shall see.) The scene described above is the beginning of the film's criticism of unrealistic societal expectations of women. Pearl refuses to talk to a stranger, like a "good girl," and neither she nor Jesse gets the information they need.

Pearl is warmly greeted at the Spanish Bit Ranch by Laura Belle, but is ridiculed by her husband, the crippled Senator McCandles, who resents Pearl's Indian heritage, as well as the fact that Laura Belle was once in love with Pearl's father. Jesse's kind consideration toward Pearl contrasts with the lecherous interest of his brother, Lewt, who traps the girl in her room for a brutal kiss.

The Apollonian-Dionesiac polarities described earlier are reaffirmed in the film's characters: Jesse, a lawyer who is often called "judge" derisively by his brother, and Laura Belle, his mother, are Apollonians, while the Senator and Lewt are Dionesiacs. Pearl is clearly a combination of both her father's Apollonian and her mother's Dionesiac qualities: one part of her is attracted to the idealistic Jesse, while her emotional side is fascinated by Lewt. In fact, the

¹¹Lewis Jacobs, "Contemporary Film Directors," *One Act Play Magazine* Feb. 1939: 765.

two men can be seen as extensions of the two sides of her nature. Just as the great classical musical form the sonata is a drama between two contrasting musical themes, so the rest of the film is a struggle between the two sides of Pearl Chavez.

The remainder of the film contrasts the dark, claustrophobic McCanles mansion interior with the freedom of vast space outside it. Pearl is lured away from the dark confinement of a pantry and attendant duties for which she is not equipped, by Lewt's performance of tricks with his horse, Dice. The startling contrast of great space after narrow, confined space vividly illustrates the Baroque principle of closure used by Baroque painters and architects, especially Bernini.

Lewt taunts Pearl into a bareback ride on Dice, which she is just as ill-prepared for as the pantry inventory, especially since Lewt scares the horse just after Pearl mounts it. The ride ends as Dice throws Pearl. This journey symbolizes the whole relationship of Pearl and Lewt in much the same way as another journey, this one up a flight of stairs, symbolizes the relationship of Jean Gaussin and Fanny Legrand in Daudet's novel *Sappho*. At the beginning of their relationship, Jean carries Fanny up a flight of stairs. What is an intoxicating experience for Fanny is an oppressive, back-breaking one for Jean, and the author concludes: "Their whole history, this ascent of the staircase in the sad gray light of morning."¹² Here the author informs the reader that the incipient romance will end badly, and in *Duel* the viewer has one more indication of approaching tragedy.

Lewt asks Pearl if she would like Jesse to get her a tamer horse, and she says, "No, I want this one." Here she makes her choice once and for all, one which has inevitably tragic consequences, since she is obviously not picking horses, but men, and she picks the wrong one. The literature in which horse and rider symbolize sexual partners is too vast to more than briefly summarize here, but D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* comes to mind, as does Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, where Vronsky's mare, Frou-Frou, symbolizes Anna. Vronsky's breaking the horse's back by his careless riding technique during a race which Anna watches indicates to the reader that Anna is doomed, since the author has given the reader many

sexual parallels in describing Vronsky's relationship with the horse, which will be repeated in Vronsky's approaching affair with Anna.

Jesse inadvertently foils Lewt's attempt to seduce Pearl. Jesse opposes his father publicly when the Senator and his crew threaten violence to prevent the government laying railroad tracks through the Spanish Bit Ranch. As Jesse prepares to cut the barbed wire himself, the U. S. Cavalry appears on the scene, and the Senator withdraws his opposition. Enraged at Jesse's disloyalty, he disowns his son, and the already crippled Senator is then thrown from his horse, which symbolizes his loss of power. After the Cavalry and their rousing march have disappeared, the percussive twang of the severed fence wires punctuates the sound track.

The emphasis on the cutting of the wires is appropriate, since it occurs in the very middle of the film, and begins the Aristotelian falling action of the film, in which "good fortune turns to bad." This is reflected in the storm clouds that are first seen hanging over the confrontational scene just mentioned. A storm erupts and becomes a symbol of physical passion, as in Virgil's *Aeneid*, and it accompanies Lewt's seduction of Pearl. The departing Jesse, intending to say goodbye to Pearl, walks in on the lovers. The brothers' mutual jealousy over Pearl is heightened, and Lewt taunts Jesse for his disloyalty at the confrontation. Jesse strikes Lewt and leaves, after making it clear to Pearl that, in typically Apollonian fashion, he understands her transgression but will not forget it.

Lewt tames a wild horse, and, again, the parallels between animal and human are obvious. Stung by Jesse's judgmental attitude toward her at the time of his departure, she accepts Lewt as her lover. Lewt playfully shoots his gun for target practice, while Pearl tries to wrest the gun away from him, telling him she shoots very well. The scene underlines the sexual significance of the gun, as well as the power struggle that is an important part of the relationship of the two. Some idea as to the thoughtless criticism that has plagued the film can be seen in Fenin and Everson's *The Western*, where on one page the Pearl Chavez-Lewt McCanles passion is called trite, while, two pages later, the author "could believe and understand the desperate affair" of Pearl and Lewt.¹³

The romance blossoms at the sump, a pond in

¹²Alphonse Daudet, *Sappho* (New York: Avon Publishing Company, 1950) 9-10.

a desert oasis, underlining the fertility symbolism of the water, which was present in the rain accompanying the seduction scene earlier, and which will be discussed later. It will be remembered that this location is the scene of Pearl's dance, which was censored and never seen in the final cut of the film. In the complete script, the dance is seen as the instrument that Pearl uses to effect Lewt's promise to announce their betrothal at the coming barbecue.

The barbecue scene continues the dance pattern of the film in that it is composed of a series of dances: in the first square dance, Lewt teaches Pearl to dance, thereby bringing her into the "closed circle of society" symbolized by the dance circle. The Senator, however, prejudiced against Pearl, makes Lewt promise that nothing serious will ever come of his relationship with Pearl. Lewt rejects Pearl, and she leaves in tears. Sam Pierce, the middle-aged but kindly straw boss, finds and consoles Pearl. Sex role reversal is dictated in the next dance, which is "Ladies' Choice," and women get to choose their partners. Pearl snubs the expectant and assured Lewt and chooses Sam, teaching him the dance steps she has just learned from Lewt. Woman the student becomes woman the teacher, and the dance's sex role reversal is effected, as Pearl tries to reintegrate herself into society. The scene ends with Lewt's menacing expression in close-up.

Although Sam knows of Pearl's relationship with Lewt, and that Pearl does not love Sam, he proposes to her and she accepts. Lewt, enraged, kills the unarmed Sam in a bar. Lewt leaves home, a wanted man with a price on his head. The Senator tells Laura Belle to throw Pearl out. Uncharacteristically, Laura Belle defies the Senator and tells him that Pearl will stay as long as she does. Lewt blows up trains out of loyalty to his father, who is secretly financing his exile.

The scene where Lewt meets the Senator captures the legendary timelessness of myth: on a barren stretch of desert, silhouetted at the bottom of the screen, in front of an eerie setting sun, the horse and rider meet the horse and carriage, surrounded by mysterious, limitless space. After the Senator gives Lewt money, the plotters disperse, as the horse kicks up sand that seems to ignite before the sun.

Laura Belle's health fails, and this occasions a visit from the Senator to her room. Their conversation reveals that this is the first time

that the Senator has been in her room since the night many years ago when she left him. He believes she was leaving him to go to Scott Chavez, but she denies this. What is certain is that the Senator suffered his incapacitating accident when he went to bring her back. He confesses that, although he willed to hate her all these years, he really loved her, and that it was his jealousy, not any fault of hers, which really crippled him. Laura Belle, her long hair falling loose to her waist, crawls dying to the foot of her bed to wipe away the Senator's tears, as the camera shoots through the window onto the porch where her rocking chair moves back and forth in the pouring rain.

Spectacular as this scene is, in its juxtaposition of love and death, it is a preparation for the even more spectacular final scene. The idea of water, present in the rain, emphasizes the idea of rebirth and fertility represented in Shiva's lotus, which turns up continually throughout the film. Death is followed by rebirth, the goal of the fertility rite; Laura Belle dies as the Senator admits his failings and that he has really loved her all these years.

Jesse returns to Spanish Bit, too late to see Laura Belle alive, but finds a disheveled, disconsolate Pearl sleeping in the stable with Dice, her horse. Promising her a better life with him and his fiancée, Helen, Jesse takes Pearl from the stable and the Spanish Bit Ranch. This scene balances the scene in the first part of the film where Lewt lures Pearl out of the dark pantry for a bareback ride that begins all her troubles. The parallelism between the scenes indicates a relationship between the two just as the two parts of Emily Jane Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* relate to each other: the second parallel structure in each case is meant to effect a healing after the disruption of the first. (The fact that Jesse's name means Jesus permits an interpretation of the saviour idea here.) The above scene closes as the grateful Pearl tells Jesse that she wishes she could die for him, one more indication of the classic inevitability of the film.

Lewt, enraged at Jesse's appropriation of Pearl, wounds the unarmed Jesse seriously during a scheduled shoot-out. Another scene with mythic reverberations occurs as the Senator sits alone contemplating the setting sun, which bathes the vast landscape with deep red color. A visitor tells the Senator that the red sky reminds him of Indian legends where bonfires are lit in the sky to signal the death of the chieftain's son.

¹³George N. Fenin and William K. Everson, *The Western* (New York: Orion Press, 1962) 268, 270.

The Senator is quick to associate the latter with Jesse, about whom he is privately worried. The visitor relieves the Senator by telling him that Jesse is going to live, and the scene closes as the camera pans horizontally over the vast Spanish Bit Ranch as the Senator contemplates the avarice that motivated him to acquire it.

Pearl, worn from nursing Jesse, receives word that Lewt wants to see her before he crosses over the border. The messenger, a sycophant of Lewt's, regrets that Jesse is going to live after all, but says that Lewt will "get him next time." As Pearl contemplates this prediction, she is given directions to Squaw's Head Rock, a few days ride, and is asked if she has a good horse. She replies, "Sure, I got my pinto. You know—the one Lewt gave me, before I was his girl." Wearing the scarf her father had given her, Pearl rides out in the desert under a scorching sun. (The film's director said he got the idea for the "sun-motif" from the operatic scenes in *Citizen Kane*, in which the inept singer feels oppressed by the glare of the stage lights.) Vidor said that by showing the sun repeatedly he was trying to show what torment Pearl was going through. This is a use of environment to reflect the emotional state of a character, typical of German Expressionist cinema, which Vidor had studied in Europe.

Pearl shoots Lewt, whom she sees at the top of the mountain waving to her. Lewt shoots Pearl, and this begins the long and bloody duel after which the film is named. Another duel is fought within Pearl, who is torn between her love for Lewt and her desire to save Jesse's life by killing Lewt. Realizing that he has been mortally wounded, Lewt begs for Pearl to come to him so that he can tell her that he understands why she had to kill him and that he loves her. The lovers die in a final embrace. The prediction of the "bonfires in the sky" was accurate.

Like the entire film, the above scene is fraught with ritualistic resonances: Pearl, the high priestess, is purified by the blazing heat of the sun in the preparation for the sacrifice. Shiva dances here, also:

Shiva is destroyer and loves the burning ground. But what does he destroy? Not merely the heavens and earth at the close of a world-cycle, but the fetters that bind each separate soul. Where and what is the burning ground? It is not the place where our earthly bodies are cremated, but the hearts of His lovers, laid waste and

desolate. The place where the ego is destroyed signifies the state where illusion and deeds are burnt away: that is the crematorium, the burning-ground where Shri Nataraja dances, and whence He is named Sudalaiyadi, Dancer of the burning-ground.

(Coomaraswamy 73)

Her vestment is the scarf that her father had given her before his death, when he voiced his confidence in her basic goodness. The sacrifice takes place on a mountain, a place sacred to the gods, and a place that figures prominently in the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses, the attempted sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, the crucifixion of Christ, and the human sacrifices of the Aztecs and the Mayans on man-made mountains called pyramids. Pearl sacrifices herself with Lewt to protect those she loves, thus becoming the real Christ figure of the film, "laying down her life for her friends." In doing so, she effects the final capitulation of Lewt to her. She also effects the joining of her Apollonian side, which, aspiring to moral greatness, dictated that she save Jesse, with her Dionysiac side, which still loves Lewt. It is not that one side triumphs over the other so much as that the two finally coexist in harmony.

The tension between the Apollonian and Dionysiac not only exists in the characters and their interrelationships, but in the way the entire film is conceived: plot and structure, since they deal with order and organization, are associated with the Apollonian, and these balance the romantic and expressionist qualities which are Dionysiac, since they involve the emotions, imagination, and intuition.

Expressionism, the distortion of reality for heightened emotional expression, turns up in many ways in the film: the recurrent references to Indian culture, with its barbaric colors and rhythms qualify as Expressionistic because of their intensity. (Expressionist art, music, literature, and film are shot through with an enthusiasm for the primitive cultures that is understandable because of the uninhibited boldness and directness that characterize the primitive, as well as the already mentioned intensity.) Dissonance, a staple of Expressionist music, turns up frequently in the musical score: the *Orizaba*, the Indian revenge theme which appears after the murder of Sam Pierce, and in the use of sound effects and voices which become part of the music, just as the gun shots

that kill Dr. Schön in Alban Berg's expressionist opera *Lulu*, or the sound of the dropping guillotine at the end of Poulenc's gentler opera *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. That modern composers are aware of the expressive power of sound effects can be seen in the operas of Krzysztof Penderecki, and in the sound track of the recent film *Scarface*, where gunshots are combined subliminally with music for lethal effect. It is this brutal harshness that visually empowers many of the scenes in *Duel*: the already-mentioned, blazing, *Orizaba*, the sun and wind-blasted desert with its awesome sun-motif (the sun, because of its heat and intensity, turns up often in Expressionist art), and the great close-ups of the hate-driven Pearl Chavez, which invite comparison with Expressionist portraits such as the *Woman of Arles* by Vincent Van Gogh.

Expressionism is always stylized, and it departs from literal reality in order to expose a more pungently expressive emotional world. One of the ways stylization is achieved in *Duel* is by the very telling body language. The *Theatre Arts* review of the just-released *Duel* praised the actors' movements, which "told worlds about them." The film is certainly a textbook of body language, and gives much evidence of attention to physical movement. The director, realizing that Gregory Peck (Lewt) was having difficulty playing a part so disparate from himself, played for him Sporting Life's music from *Porgy and Bess*, and this suggested appropriate bodily movements that helped the actor identify with the part. This is just another example of how the film uses music in relation to body language, apart from explicit dancing. The script actually prescribes dance-like movements at times. For example, the previously mentioned scene where Pearl, despondent over Jesse's departure and stung by his rejection of her, writhes in his bed clutching his pajamas while Lewt serenades her outside. The script designates "dance-like movements" as she walks over to the window in capitulation to Lewt, and this reminds the viewer of Pearl's mother, and emphasizes the symbolic importance of such an act in a way realism could never do. (Critics, not understanding the stylization so important in this scene, said it was too theatrical.) Pauline Kael criticized the long and visually spectacular film *Ryan's Daughter* for not having the larger-than-life quality necessary to sustain its epic length and visual grandeur. *Duel in the Sun* has this larger-than-life quality, partly because of the

weight given its gestures by the stylization employed.

Animals figure often in *Duel*, as they usually do in Expressionistic art, music, and literature. At the beginning of Frank Wedekind's play *Earth Spirit*, the Animal Tamer introduces his menagerie to the audience, and each one of them represents one of the human characters in the play. Animals like the panther appear in the glowing paintings of Emil Nolde and other Expressionist painters because they reveal what humans too often hide: the emotions that so fascinate the Expressionists. In the prologue to *Duel*, there is the dog that barks furtively in the shabby street as Mrs. Chavez and her lover leave the presidio, emphasizing the tawdriness of the illicit coupling. Lewt continually refers to Pearl as "bob-cat," "bob-tailed half-breed," "tiger-cat," etc. When Pearl tries to detain the departing Lewt, who refuses to take her to Mexico, she clings to his legs as he pulls her across the floor, until he kicks her in the face, much as he would an animal. In the scene already discussed, Pearl writhes in bed while calling Lewt a "dirty skunk." In addition to the use of the horse already discussed, Lewt is associated with Dice, the fiery pinto, while Jesse with the gentler strawberry roan. Lewt rides the horse, while Jesse is seen in a horse-and-carriage. The howl of the coyote seen silhouetted against the night sky adds its dissonance to the already harsh wilderness of the desert toward the end of the film. Pearl drinks at the same water hole as Dice on her final journey. Lizards crawl in the desert, just as, moments later, Pearl crawls up the mountain on her stomach at the film's end.

Duel is closely related to German Expressionist film, since King Vidor had studied this. There are two types of German Expressionist film: the "instinct" film, and the "tyrant" film. The *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* sparked an interest in a particular situation, that of the individual faced with tyranny or chaos, and between 1920 and 1924 many German films used this theme, among them *Nosferatu* and *Vanina* (both 1922). The second type of film, the "instinct" film, also emanating from *Caligari*, emphasizes the surge of disorderly impulses in a chaotic world. Carl Mayer's films after *Genuine*, which exemplify the "instinct" film, are populated by stunned, oppressed creatures who are unable to sublimate their instincts, and therefore destroy themselves and those around them. Examples of this type of German film are *Backstairs* and *Shattered* (both 1921), both made from Mayer's scripts.¹⁴ *Duel in*

the *Sun*, it should be obvious, combines both patterns. The debt to *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* can be seen, in *Duel*, in the death of Mrs. Chavez and her lover, which is seen entirely in shadows, and is very similar to the shadow-murder of the student in *Caligari*. The use of shadows in *Duel* is frequent and often ominous and frightening, as it is in German Expressionist films. Another similarity with Expressionist films is in the use of an inanimate object after a scene of great intensity in order to diminish the latter, bringing the scene to a conclusion, and preparing the viewer for the next scene. In *Duel*, this occurs when Sam Pierce is shot: as he falls, he drops the ring he intended for Pearl, and it rolls noisily into a crack in the floor. Another occurs after Laura Belle's death, where the camera leaves the sobbing Senator and focuses on her rocker, moving on the porch outside. Both images end their scenes effectively and afford a "tapering off" which is satisfying after the preceding intensity. Both constitute a kind of visual synecdoche, in which parts substitute for the whole. Finally, the use of a physical impairment to suggest a spiritual shortcoming is seen in German Expressionist film (the scientist in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*), and in *Duel* it is seen in the Senator, who admits that it was his jealousy that crippled him.

Duel not only uses Expressionist form, but Expressionist content as well. The plight of woman in a man's world is present in Berg's *Lulu* (as well as in the two Wedekind plays that were Berg's source for his opera) and in *Duel*. Like *Lulu*, *Duel* shows woman used and then discarded by man. Max Klinger's proto-expressionist graphic series *A Woman's Life* deals with this subject using the same body language present in many of *Duel*'s scenes. One of the prints, *Into the Gutter*, showing the used woman's rejection, employs the same angular contrapposto that Pearl Chavez does as she writhes on Jesse's bed.

Unpleasant aspects of sex, glossed over in Romanticism, are thrust upon the audience in Expressionist art, music, literature, and film, and in *Duel*. (Perhaps it is this honesty which shocks censors. The leering, stereotypical treatment of sex in *What Price Glory*? doesn't seem to have disturbed anyone.)

Expressionism often criticizes society by exalting the social outcast. The only noble

character in *Lulu* is the lesbian Countess Geschwitz, who dies trying to save Lulu from Jack the Ripper. In *Duel*, it is the social outcast who protects society at the expense of her life.

Finally, Expressionists not only espouse the emotions, they glorify them. It is as if they are saying, "I feel, therefore I am." (Since women are associated with the emotions more than men, women are usually central in Expressionist humanities.) The tempestuous romance of Pearl and Lewt, destructive but vivid, is exalted above the pallid union of Jesse and Helen, his sexless (by comparison with Pearl Chavez, anyway) fiancée. (In his recent autobiography, *Vanity Will Get You Somewhere*, Joseph Cotten says that the part of Jesse appealed to him so little that David Selznick had to bribe him to do the part.) The film's preference for Lewt and Pearl over Jesse and Helen is similar to the romantic *Wuthering Heights*, where the gypsy orphan Heathcliff obviously has more author approval than the tame Edgar Linton.

Romanticism is present in the film, also, softening the harshness of the Expressionist elements, and combining with them to weigh on the Dionysiac side of the scale: romanticism expands the aesthetic scope of the film to include magnificent landscapes with their vast space (shot in Arizona) which testify to natural beauty; the naturally good man, Sam Pierce, who is close to nature, the deep sympathy engendered by the film for Pearl, the social reject, the delicate Laura Belle, pining for her lost love, the exotic beauty of the dark-skinned Pearl, contrasting erotically with the lighter-skinned Jesse and Lewt (like the paintings of Delacroix and his major influence, Rubens), the vast cattle roundups and action shots of animals which recall both Géricault and Delacroix, the redemption of man by the love of a good woman (a pattern used by Goethe in his *Faust*, and Wagner in his opera *The Flying Dutchman*), and, last of all, the final union of the lovers in the smoldering *Liebestod* (like Tristan and Isolde in Wagner's opera, and like Catherine Earnshaw Linton and Heathcliff in the already-mentioned *Wuthering Heights*).

The film owes its power, however, to the fact that the above Expressionist/Romantic elements are in tension with a powerful ordering structure. Aristotle emphasizes plot very strongly in his *Poetics*, since plot provides the organization. The film begins and ends at Squaw's Head Rock. In a way, the film observes Aristotelian place and time unities, since the

¹Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1947) 77-79.

whole film is a flashback from Squaw's Head Rock and exists, like any legend, in the time it takes to tell it. Even if the above are disputed, however, the film achieves some formal unity by the very fact that it begins and ends in the same place. The very center of the film marks the beginning of the falling action—the Senator's losing battle with the railroad—and gives the film a symmetry like that of Hermann Hesse's novel *Siddhartha*, where people and events in the first half are repeated in the second half. The scene where Lewt lures Pearl away from the dark pantry in the first half of the film and the balancing one in the second half where Jesse leads her out of her self-imprisonment in the stable have already been mentioned. The Senator's rejection of Jesse in the first half is balanced by his acceptance of him in the second half. Laura Belle's capitulation to the Senator in the first half is balanced by her defiance of him in the second, etc.

The tension of opposites that provides drama is seen in the sex role reversals which also structure the film. Certainly the Greeks were always interested in the harmony that results from the tension of opposing forces. A man hunts and shoots a woman at the beginning of the film; a woman hunts and shoots a man at the end. Jesse asks Pearl for information, is rejected in the scene mentioned earlier, and moments later hears himself respond with her lines to her questions which are the same as the ones he had just asked her. Lewt teaches Pearl to dance, and minutes later, rejected by Lewt, Pearl teaches Sam Pierce. Lewt shoots Sam Pierce, and Jesse, and is finally shot by Pearl, whose expert marksmanship is never suspected, at Squaw's Head Rock, which name designates it as woman's territory. The irony of the film is inescapable: the unwanted social outcast brings the whole McCanles house down about her. (Pearl's relationships are always in groups of three: with her father, there is likewise her mother; with Jesse, there is also Laura Belle; with Lewt, there is likewise the Senator. At the end there is only Lewt and her, and the situation is resolved between the two of them.)

Long before women's liberation, the film vividly shows the plight of a woman in a man's world, as do the plays of Euripides. Aristotle, reflecting the chauvinist attitudes of the Athenian nobility, for whom he was writing, did not think women capable of being tragic heroes, since they do not have the stature. This is one part of the film that is non-Aristotelian. Pearl

fulfills other qualifications for the tragic hero because she is basically a fine person, who made one tragic mistake due to a character flaw, for which she pays with her life.

For the anti-chauvinist Euripides, being a woman was no impediment to greatness, as he showed in the courageous *Alceste*, who dies in place of her cowardly husband; and in *Hippolytus* he created a great tragic character, Phaedra, noble, yet destroyed by a character flaw. In this aspect, therefore, the film is closer to Euripides than Aristotle, and is certainly a criticism of the double standard: Lewt can do anything he wants, but Pearl is permanently disgraced by one sexual experience.

The film also shows the three parts of classical drama: *agon* (conflict), *pathos* (suffering), and *epiphany* (revelation). As Cassandra says in the *Oresteia*, "Man must suffer to be wise." There is a fundamental optimism about human nature in this line that is typically classical: man can attain wisdom. Beethoven's music tells us that we can overcome; Pearl Chavez tells us that we can overcome ourselves. The pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, to be discussed later, shows conflict and suffering resolved by the appearance of the god Apollo. The Senator understands himself more fully after conflict and suffering, as do Laura Belle and Jesse, while Pearl shows the self-knowledge which succeeds her self-denigration when she realizes that it "wasn't all Lewt's fault." And Lewt has his epiphany at the archetypal place for it (we have only to mention Mt. Sinai and Mt. Tabor and their epiphanies), which is also the place for human sacrifice, when he realizes that Pearl had to kill him, and that he loves her.

Northrop Frye's associations of the seasons with a ritualized depiction of life also provides another structural level to appreciate in the film. Spring is the season of birth, or rebirth, reinstitution of society. This would parallel the formal beginning of the film, after the prologue, where Pearl goes to begin a new life at the Spanish Bit Ranch to be reintegrated into society. Summer, according to Frye, is the season of romance, and this is easily discernible in the film. Winter is the season of irony, in which the characters behave on a level inferior to that of the writer or the audience. Lewt's disregard of the law and Pearl's emotional vacillation until the very end would be exemplary of this latter category.¹⁵

The film can be viewed, as mentioned before, as an extended fertility rite, like Flaubert's

Salammbô. The fertility-raindance at the beginning, the storm at the seduction scene, the rain at Laura Belle's death, the flower that grows at the site of the lovers' death symbolizing their final union, all of these point to a fertility pattern such as is often seen in the ritual of agricultural communities. One example of this is illustrated on the Warka Ritual Vase from ancient Sumer. The vase is divided into zones: the divine at the top, next, in descending order, human, then animal, then plant life, and finally water. The top zone shows the meeting of the high priest with the goddess. The high priest is the human surrogate for the consort of the goddess, and their impending ritual sex, according to magic transfer, insures non-human fertility as well. In *Duel*, the final union of Lewt and Pearl, whose romance blossomed near the waters of the sump, causes a plant to grow that grows nowhere else, part cactus (Lewt) and part flower (Pearl), and this continues the sub-theme of magic that is in the film.

In the Western pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia is seen enacted a scene that the Greeks liked very much: the wedding of the Lapiths (giants). Centaurs appear and attempt to abduct the Lapithian brides. Apollo appears in the center of the resulting chaos and, with a majestic gesture, establishes order. The triumph of intellectual order over animal disorder is the resulting theme, and the tension between these two polarities conveys the stark drama of the scene, and this tension is at the very heart of the classical aesthetic. Another way to express this is to say that Apollonian discipline combines with Dionysiac fire to establish a powerful tension between opposites. This rarely achieved balance is central to classical drama, and is found in the operas of the classical Gluck, the paintings of Poussin and David, and the symphonies (sonatas for full orchestra) of Beethoven.

The film's abandon seems totally spontaneous yet is carefully calculated and organized in the great tradition of classical craftsmanship. It has the feeling of an all-out explosion, like the eruptions of the Orizaba mountain-volcano. In some ways, it is like *Wuthering Heights*, a very Romantic work, in which intense emotionality is present but concurrent with a structure that is meticulously planned.

Classicism deals with extremes since it is in these extremes that the universal can be most

easily seen: the extreme contains within it all lesser degrees. There is simply nothing beyond Oedipus putting out his eyes when he has learned the devastating truth, or Medea, who kills her children to avenge herself on her faithless husband. Likewise, there is nothing beyond the final moments of *Duel in the Sun* where Pearl shoots her lover, he shoots her, and she crawls back to him for a final embrace.

The content of the film is abundantly classical, as has been mentioned before. Comment should be made of the contrast of the "haves" and the "have nots," a subject dear to Euripides, which reaches its most acute focus in the person of Pearl Chavez. It is not just for comic relief that servants on the McCanles ranch wish their name was McCanles, or dream unrealistically of a bright future. In the film's prologue, Scott Chavez tells Pearl that Laura Belle chose to marry the Senator for material security, which results in her unhappiness, just as Cathy's similar decision in *Wuthering Heights* causes her similar fate. The Senator's avarice, mentioned earlier, is shared by Lewt, as is apparent in the scene where he tells Pearl of his plans for a Mexican ranch much larger than Spanish Bit, a dream from which he excludes her even though he has just made love to her. Central to the film's classical content is the assertion that both the intellectual and the emotional should be joined in harmony; its corollaries are that the emotions, when allowed to run rampant, are destructive (a major theme in the plays of Euripides); that the Socratic maxim "the unexamined life is not worth living" is true; that legalism uninformed by compassion and understanding is a sterile thing; and that suffering can bring strength and wisdom.

The Legion of Decency gave the film a "condemned" rating, partly because they found it "spiritually depressing." A well-known television movie critic called the film emptyheaded. These comments simply show the censors' and critics' ignorance of cultural patterns that have created our civilization. Their ignorance is shared by film historians who designate *Duel* as David Selznick's unsuccessful attempt to equal his success with *Gone with the Wind*, a well-made, well-publicized soap opera. Sergei Eisenstein speaks of good and bad films respectively as "vital" and "lifeless," and would certainly be as aware of *Gone with the Wind's*

¹Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957) 203-4.

²Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, rev. ed., trans. and ed. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975) 213.

flaccid structure and lack of basic conflict as he would of *Duel*'s powerful vitality.¹⁶

The final shot of the film shows the earth, a feminine symbol, and the sky, a masculine symbol, joined together in harmony, while the sun (masculine) blazes triumphantly, a symbol of the resurrection, as it often is in religious art, such as in the paintings of Grünewald and Altdorfer.

Unity and harmony with nature, the result of the fulfillment of the individual within the community, is achieved as Pearl gives her life for

this community.

For those of us who are not put off by the film's larger-than-life statements or its ritualized stylizations, the film is far more than its advertised "one thousand and one memorable moments"; it is one timeless moment in which sight and sound combine in a classically disciplined conflagration of great beauty.□

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CARLOS ERNESTO GARCÍA: POEMS

Translations and Introduction by Elizabeth Gamble Miller



The poetry of the Salvadoran Carlos Ernesto García has not been written in El Salvador but belongs to the body of literature written in exile. Born in 1960 in Santa Tecla, where his grandfather was mayor, García was exiled in December of 1980, a peak year of violence in his native country. He has been writing poetry and literary criticism during the last eight years in Barcelona, Spain, his present residence.

In his poems the experience and emotions of the years both in El Salvador and in his travels in Europe are evoked through carefully selected images projected with linguistic economy. The poetic intent of reduction rather than amplification achieves density without sacrificing clarity and produces poignant poems which are often short. Compression of content taken to its furthest degree may result in the poetic form of the haiku. In two lines with the juxtaposition of two images, García's haiku "The owls have eyes / So do the ants" carries content that might have been expressed with similar ironic tone in an essay on the innate equality of humanity.

The poet's sense of irony, tender humor, and compassion permeates the substance of his poetry, which often carries the burden of the tragic and even the macabre expressed with crafted restraint. He writes a visually and acoustically appealing line that is at the same time natural and unstrained. The selections here are from a first book of poems, published in Barcelona in 1987, *Hasta la cólera se pudre* (*Even Rage Will Rot*), and from manuscripts of a second book, *A quemarropa el amor* (*Love with Powder Burns*).

The photograph of Carlos Ernesto García was taken by Antonio Narvaez.

THE WARRIOR'S REST

Fed-up with all the battles
the warrior took his sword
and drove it into the sand
and he thought:
This is a good place
for death

Indifferent
afternoon came
No one asked about the warrior
No one cared about the place chosen
for his rest

A sandstorm took on the task of burying him
He was not fertilizer for the land
but forage for the wilderness

I HAVE NO HOME

Half of all I have loved is no longer with me
some (almost everyone) stayed behind
and others simply parted.

My brother writes urgently from Mexico:
"Our home is about to collapse;
it must be sold"
and I wonder:
Is it possible we still have a home?

My father passed up the shirt
and trousers he liked so much,
missed the Sunday movie
and the trip to the country he dreamed of
being content to walk in the park
and look at the head of the stone horse
and the general riding him.
All to buy a home for us to live in
a small and modest home
and today just has the notion to collapse.

As for me
let it collapse if it will
If half of all I have loved is no longer with me
if children aren't cuddling beneath my window
if my sister's smile was shattered before the mirror
that terrible night in June
before the storm and the cock's crowing
if the crystalline crying of a child
won't bring a wonderful tenderness
giving birth to a love song within my hands

as for me let it collapse;
let them build one day if they like
but it will be upon ashes.

My voice will not echo more against its walls
Your letters of love Mariana
will not come bringing fragrance to my hands.

Always at Christmas
I will be far away
and lonely rooms will people the home
that as my brother writes in his letter:
has already lost its first window glass.

All right
let it collapse if it will
if it is so
forgetting it will be my vengeance
because for a time
for a long time
I've had no home.

BRIEF LOVE POEM

Ya know me
I go from miserable to miserable
mixin' all the places up
the Zocalo Square and Ula Ula Park
the Danube and the Lempa
Andalusian kids and the kids in Panchimalco
the Tower of Paris
and the high tension towers by my house
there in San Martin
near Suchitoto
yes
truth is I mix everything up
even the color of your hair
and the thick darkness of the coffee grove.

FIRST KISS

To a girl whose name I don't remember

When I kissed you that evening
(in the house of your friend
whom I liked)
it was your first kiss

I felt your body tremble against the earth

I never saw you or kissed you again
but when I remember you
I don't know why
I still feel your body tremble against the earth.

POOR COMPANY

To comfort me
it occurred to my shadow to stretch out along side

It was an immense wave curling over half of the bed

I turned out the light
Suddenly I was left
completely alone.

THEY ARE LIKE THE DEW

I have seen tears fall
upon the silk of a pillow
others upon the mud or grass

But there are those
that don't fall anywhere
as if held in reserve
for the rest of life.

LOVE WITH POWDER BURNS

I keep like small stones from the sea
days of snow
regions inhabited by fear
fires of ignited glances devastating the streets
kingdoms of bees and ants
wild flowering of words
nightfalls under darkened groves
memorial stones with dust
 covering personal histories
cafe tables
from where we surveyed the legs
of a woman who paid us no mind

I harbor memories like stones from the sea
and not one succeeds in hurting
 in the palm of my hand
where I squeeze them with indecent hope

They are memories
like those of a cat playing in the garden
 with a bullet between its paws
Or is it someone loading his revolver?
Of a cat crying in the garden
Or is it my mother perhaps
 who hasn't been home since yesterday?
The memory of a man who jumps the fence
and I don't have time
 or the desire to receive him

The bullets rip through the door
while the moon is unreasonably
bored up there
and jumping the wall
I fall into a golden pool
safe from the whale that ravages

WOOLRICH TO TRUFFAUT: *THE BRIDE WORE BLACK*

Released in 1968, Truffaut's *The Bride Wore Black* remains relatively unattended to even by the late director's own hardly negligible constituency. Nor have occasional showings on television led to much critical attention. As an adaptation of Cornell Woolrich's classic crime novel of 1940, it falls into the category of a genre piece, offering Truffaut's salute to a school of "noir" fiction especially favored by him and his generation. Of Truffaut's genre exercises, the great critical success has been *Shoot the Piano Player*, a film which, with its run of visual gags and shifts in tone from farcical to tragic, radically modifies the tenor of film noir. It is the more conservatively treated adaptations like *The Bride Wore Black* or *Fahrenheit 451* that continue to elicit responses somewhat cool or dim.

A consideration of *The Bride Wore Black* in the perspective of roman noir and film noir may serve not only to offer some comparative notes on the film vis-à-vis its literary source but also to bring into focus those features of the film characteristic of Truffaut as auteur. Highlighting such features may serve too in suggesting the nature of the film's interest and appeal in general. Indeed the stylistic means and thematic concerns of any gifted director are likely to be nowhere more prominent than in a form like film noir, a form which presses beyond the dimensions of realism to the visionary and hallucinatory in the pressure it exerts on its material.

Thus the first point of distinction to be observed between Woolrich's novel and Truffaut's adaptation is the flat, unvarnished realism of the former in tone and approach in contrast to the richer more varicolored treatment of the film, a difference determined by rather more than the film's brilliant technicolor or the deft musical score by Bernard Hermann that recalls in particular, further deepening its effect with a reflexive twist, the composer's masterly score for *Vertigo*.

The novel certainly possesses its own power and appeal. Until now it has remained steadily in print. Yet as Francis Nevins points out in his

introduction to the latest edition: "... the style is unusually objective and unemotional for Woolrich and the book lacks the great heart-in-the-throat set pieces of later novels like *Black Alibi* and *Phantom Lady*."¹ An impression of the book's style and tone may be gained by a glance at the dialogue. Here, for example, is how the novel's dread, vengeful protagonist sounds as she replies to a question about where she's going: "... I don't know *even at this very moment*" (italics in this and subsequent quotations are mine). She follows this up with: "... What difference does the name of a place make *when you're gone beyond recall*." On taking her leave, she sounds like this: "... we'll kiss, *as former childhood friends should*." Or we may turn, toward the end of the novel, to an exchange between two men, one of them a detective in pursuit of the bride: "... Hold on, *you're just the man I want to see*." To which the other man responds, "... what brings you around here *at this unearthly hour*?" I am also bound to cite another character who exclaims, "... it bears all the earmarks of truth."

It cannot be said of the phrases I have italicized that they much bear the earmarks of credible dialogue. Such phrasing is flatly explanatory in aim and is typical of the novel's flavorless, functional prose. At the same time the prose suits a set of characters who come across, whether sympathetically drawn or not, as uniformly drab. Insofar as "realism" is identified with the plainest of characters, Woolrich's novel may be labelled "realistic." This is not, of course, the realism of a Balzac or Buñuel, whose most ordinary seeming characters are impelled by their obsessions to the most extraordinary actions and whose temperaments to begin with are anything but low-charged.

Like those of his hero, Balzac, Truffaut's characters prove invariably obsessive in their pursuits and febrile in temperament and demeanor. Woolrich's bride, Julia, is presented

¹Francis M. Nevins, Jr., introduction, *The Bride Wore Black*, by Cornell Woolrich (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984) xii.

throughout as a rather inexpressive shopgirl; but in the film, played by Jeanne Moreau, she is seen from her early appearance at a penthouse wedding party as a figure of grandeur and mystery. So too the characters whom she stalks and destroys comprise a far more bouncy crew than their counterparts in the novel.

We may note, for example, the difference in the book and film treatments of the disposal of the third man on our *femme fatale*'s hit list. This character, Moran, is presented in the novel as entirely given over to the creature comforts of hearth and home. When the avenger appears in the guise of a local schoolteacher, she outdoes Moran's wife in making him comfortable with slippers, newspapers, and a glass of fresh orange juice at his elbow. She also deftly sends his child off to bed. Thus keeping him at his accustomed ease, she steers him by a ruse to a storage closet under a stairway where she locks him in. Poor Moran dies in the most awful discomfiture, victim of a wholly unforeseen and arbitrary force.

In the film version, however, when Jeanne Moreau as the bride enters the household, both scene and action are at once set in a different key from the blandly domestic to-and-fro which sets the tone and pace of the corresponding sequence in the novel. In contrast to the novel's easygoing businessman, the film's Moran is shown as a go-getting, opportunistic suburbanite with political ambitions. As the teacher comes to give junior a make-up lesson while his mother is away, Moreau easily wins over the boy and gets him off to bed, to leave her alone with Dad occupied with preparing his maiden political speech. A second look at teacher causes him to stray over to her from his homework. Like a blue movie bunny, she draws him into a kind of treasure hunt in the course of which he finds his way to the storage closet. Locking the closet door, the bride takes pains to reveal her motive (and identity) to her victim before leaving him to his doom.

In similar manner, each of the other victims is set up through the arousal of his erotic and/or romantic expectations. There is a macabre poetic justice (and feminist edge) in the way the fatal woman exploits her prey according to how each in turn seeks advantage of her in the name of romance. The vengeance of Truffaut's bride thus takes on a general aspect as the vengeance of woman, uptipping in the very process of epitomizing the more exotic of romantic myths.

Of this group of victims, the one whom we

especially hope will be let off the hook is a painter whose scene Moreau enters in the role of a model. Enticed all the more by his new model's glacial reserve the painter struggles to break through, to "reach" her. And we cheer him on, anticipating the relief we will feel when he circumscribes the heroine's sinister and murderous will. But even as we are held in suspense, we find ourselves guiltily hoping that the fatal woman will in fact hold out. We are brought at last into complicity with the protagonist and her passion.²

In discussing the novel, Francis Nevins refers to the film version, citing Graham Petrie's observation on how the film directs our sympathies so that "... we find ourselves drawn into complicity with Julie, into sharing her sense of her victims as pure objects to be manipulated and disposed of at the same time as we are made uncomfortably aware of their reality and humanity. One side of us wishes her to succeed" (3). We remain thus ambivalent up to the moment when the revenger, posed as Diana, goddess of the hunt, lets loose the arrow that spells *finis* for the artist.

The concluding sequence of the film which deals with the heroine's stalking of an imprisoned gangster in his cell is not in the book. In Woolrich's story the last victim is a popular novelist whom the heroine seeks out at his country estate, in the course of which action she is trapped by the police, in particular by one inspector Wanger who had been on her trail throughout. Neither the inspector nor the novelist appears in the film. Yet for the novel, the concluding chapter is essential. It completes the puzzle elements of the story—elements which indeed include a kicker in what is revealed about the original killing of the groom that launched the bride on her own killing spree. The point of the revelation at novel's end is to render the bride's efforts absurdly pointless. The revelation of the pointlessness of the bride's actions serves to drive home, however, the point and purpose of the plot: the delineation of a meaningless universe which mocks us with its lack of purpose. That the heroine is not drawn with enough psychological interest or physical

²Some of the material on the deaths of Moran and the artist, as well as some of the points on Truffaut as *auteur*, draw on an earlier piece of mine on Truffaut, "Wild Lives," in *Literature/Film Quarterly* 1.3 (July 1973). This article deals mainly with *Fahrenheit 451*; the discussion makes scant reference to Woolrich's novel. The main tack is on Truffaut's own passion for, and concern with, literary culture.

specificity to affect us as a person further serves the novel's aim. Wraithlike and impersonal, Julie comes across as little more than a function of the author's intent.

Truffaut dispenses entirely with the detection level of the plot. It is only in the novel's final chapter that we learn of the events which set Julie on her deadly course. In the film we are informed about the cause of her actions by the time she reaches the third man on her list, Clemente Moran; we had been partially filled in by what she told M. Coral, the previous victim, as he lay dying of poison. To Moran, as he listens crouched in the closet, it's all spelled out—and nothing is more frightening in the telling than the remorseless, unmodified passion of the teller. We learn too of the terrible purity of her love for the man slain moments after they had been joined in holy wedlock: he had been her sweetheart from childhood on. Her passion then is for both a lost love and an only love: this too is made more of in the film than in the novel. In the film version, the bride's knowledge of what caused her beloved's death is shown to be accurate. There is no surprise revelation, as we find in the novel, to render her actions senseless. In the film her actions prove—however dementedly—purposeful. As a character swept up and obsessed by a fatal passion, Julie proves indeed a familiar figure in the Truffaut gallery.

In both tragic and comic perspectives, Truffaut invariably sought in his films to trace the course of a passion pursued without limits. Akin to her *femme fatale* in *The Bride* is the character played by Moreau in *Jules and Jim*, whose passion is for a kind of monstrous autonomy and independence. Presented in a rather harsh comic perspective is a similar passion for both survival and independence that motivates the title figure of *Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me*. *The Soft Skin* deals with an adulterous passion that ends tragically. We watch the lead figure of *The Green Room*, played by Truffaut, numbly entomb himself in a destructively idolatrous ritual of mourning. The tragi-comic events of *Shoot the Piano Player* stem from the protagonist's aesthetic passions as performer and composer. And we may cite the *The Story of Adele H.* as the capping instance of a story of romantic passion monomaniacally pursued.

In keeping with the actions of his vengeful bride, Truffaut's film itself represents an amoral triumph of style and as such proves disconcertingly satisfying. In the novel, the heroine fails to destroy the last man on her list.

The whole point of the film, however, is to show the consistency of an action in which each fox is bagged. The completion of this action marks the completion of the film. The film plays down the gruesome effects of the murders—in contrast to the novel the more sensational ingredients of which led Gershom Legman to include it in his once celebrated tract *Love and Death* as a notable instance of a sexless-sadistic literature of the 1940s, dominated by "bitch heroines." Legman describes the killings in the novel as "studiously gruesome." The film offers instead a grim and perhaps more shocking wit. The last death is the most perfunctorily treated; with the other four, the emphasis is on how the avenger each time manipulates the frenzies and calculations of romantic feeling to slay those who had shortcircuited hers.

Truffaut transmutes the despair of Woolrich's novel into a kind of *schadenfreude*; we behold Truffaut's bride—and this is the most chilling thing about her—as a veritable ideologue of passion.

Unlike the dark compositions we associate with *film noir*, much of *The Bride* is shot in bright daylight or the light of an artist's studio or reception hall. Insofar as the film works in complicity with—if not outright celebration of—its heroine's style, it holds her in a sharply lit, hard focus. She is a far more dramatic presence than the phantomlike figure of the novel. In its presentation of the heroine alone, the film is more intellectually complex and more problematic in the issues it raises than its source. In all, the film proves more interesting and substantive in its intellectual and cultural dimensions than the novel. Indeed, despite the critical commonplace that the film image cannot match the written word in intellectual content, what we find generally in *film noir* is greater intellectual sophistication and moral interest than are at play in its literary sources.

An obvious example is the transmutation of Mickey Spillane's *Kiss Me Deadly*, as blunt and gross in format and tone as a comic book, into a film that raises issues ranging from the role of high culture in a mass society to the "decline of the west" to nuclear holocaust. Fritz Lang's *The Big Heat* offers another notable instance of a film whose hero proves a more problematic and complex figure than he is presented as in the novel. Truffaut's film also conforms to *film noir* in its focus on the psychology of the passions, for this proves a major concern of the genre. In a film like *Out of the Past*, of course, this concern is

central. Yet even in films like *The Big Heat* or *Kiss Me Deadly*, where romantic involvements are tangential, they are nonetheless brought vividly into play. Nor are we surprised to find offbeat relationships like that between complete housewife Joan Bennett and seedy blackmailer James Mason in Max Ophul's *The Reckless Moment*, a film that brings the style and mood of *film noir* to the suburbs. It is also the case that romantic relations in *film noir* are usually seen as a no-win set up; for we deal here with the sole Hollywood genre in which the romantic passions are invariably cast in a tragic light. Unlike other film genres, like romantic melodramas or the Western, where the death of the protagonist may take on a redemptive or transcendent aura, in *film noir* nothing is left behind but dust in the air.

If there is any triumph or transcendence in Truffaut's film, it is aesthetic, a matter of style. In her one-note pursuit of her goal, the heroine shows an imposing artistic flair and her style is painstakingly matched by the stylistic flair of the film. The novel in contrast, in rendering the heroine's quest for revenge absurd, introduces a note which distances it and us from her. It is the film's lack of distance from its heroine that raises

troublesome questions concerning Truffaut's own adherence to the aesthetic plane, his refusal to press on moral or social questions. Truffaut's work does not attain to the level of his master, Renoir, falling short precisely in its lack of the latter's moral and social reach.

To be sure, we can remain grateful to Truffaut for an attractive and compelling body of work. He himself was well aware of what he was about and of what he was after. As he stated in *Sight and Sound*: "Aesthetic considerations are what concern me most." And he goes on to say: "The best of the permanent subjects is love and so it's wrong to criticize the young cinema for talking too much about it."³ Given his aims, it is no wonder Truffaut turned to that form of popular art—*film noir*—which allowed for a tragic dimension in the treatment of romantic affairs. □

³Louis Marcorelles, "Interview with Truffaut," *Sight and Sound* 31.1 (Winter 1961-62): 36-37.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE GARRETT

Conducted by Richard Easton



Celebrate the sixty years of author George Garrett, a national treasure. As artist, George Garrett has always had the courage to go beyond mastered skills to explore new genres and techniques. He is novelist, poet, short story writer, essayist, and satirist. With patience and humility he has become the very model of how to cultivate insight and craft throughout a career to achieve master works. In the rich narrative portraits and historical detailing of his critically acclaimed Elizabethan novels *Death of the Fox* (1971) and *The Succession* (1983), Garrett discovered worthy tapestries to display his diverse talents. In the autumn of 1990 he will publish the third of these Elizabethan works, *Entered from the Sun*. This novel centers on the sordid end of playwright Christopher Marlowe.

George Garrett has also been selfless in sharing his knowledge of the traditions and craft of writing. Currently he serves as Henry Hoyns Professor of Creative Writing at The University of Virginia. As a familiar in literary and academic circles, his generous sharing of his wit and wisdom has become legend. In this interview he reveals his astute grasp of the contemporary literary scene as he talks of his own quest to create works worthy of the audience and experience he so loves.

What's the primary work of a successful artist?

Artists, I think, by definition are more explorers than exploiters. The one thing that artists who are still alive and growing are most anxious to do is this: not to recall a series of habitual gestures. Yet it is the habitual gesture in the artist, a familiar if obsessive pattern, that is easiest for the contemporary critic to deal with.

Do you sense a tension now between the successful creative personality and the literary critic?

The critics of contemporary literature are an industry in a sense. They have a vested interest in establishing and maintaining some kind of canon. This is precisely the opposite goal of most writers. Obviously, though, there is a complicated symbiotic relationship. Those writers today who are successful in conventional terms owe a certain amount of their success to having found a niche in the critical hierarchy. They, therefore, are also in cahoots with publishers, critics, everybody working together to maintain an establishment and a canon.

In the development of the present-day American short story certain writers are thrust forward as representative—for instance, Anne Beattie, a fine person and a fine writer, and the late Raymond Carver. But I don't think either one of them is what the critical establishment believes them to be. Raymond Carver published several books of stories. They can be described critically; they are interesting. But the stories are not the only things that Americans are doing with short fiction. Beattie has published three or four books of stories. Her stories have a kind of trademark, but they are not the only exciting things that are happening with the short story. Once critics decided that they were good, they went on record as saying that any story of the eighties is a variation of an Anne Beattie or a Raymond Carver story.

But many writers are going in a wonderful diversity of directions. One of the big things a writer has to fight is the insistence of critical pigeonholes. Probably we would be commercially better off as writers if we developed some obsessive, little gimmicky idea to write a story. Anything that doesn't fit the approved critical patterns ends in a vacuum somewhere. The result is that what in fact is happening on the American scene is not being described by the critical apparatus. There is, then, a serious dichotomy between artistic and

critical activity. But ironically they both feed each other. I think that if a Martian came down to describe what's happening on the American short story scene, he would find an enormous diversity of activity, quite belying the official description of only four or five basic types of stories being written in the 1980s. I think that's basically nonsense. It's gotten quite serious over the years because we have a great many talented but disaffected writers who don't fit a critical description.

Yet, you have been very successful in the academic and literary worlds. Are you saying that there is an overt tension between artists who need to do something new, to cut new territory in genre and technique, and critics who want the familiar gestures?

The tension is there. One of the great ironies for me is [that] over the long haul there has been a decline of overt hostility. Maybe it was better when we were actively hostile toward each other. Now, it's kind of you go your way and I'll go mine, and, perhaps, we'll quarrel.

Do you think then that the atmosphere for fostering creativity is improving in the U.S.?

There's a lot more artistic activity that is supported under the umbrella of educational institutions than was the case, and that is probably all to the good. There's a lot more opportunity to do what used to be called studio work, and that would apply to writing as well. The value of that is clear in undeniable facts; for instance, we furnish most of the world's symphony musicians. Travel to Frankfurt, and it's mostly American kids performing in concert halls. We have our great conservatories. This is our position in the world, and, I think, the same thing is true in most artistic fields. I'm not sure that the study of periods and characteristics does much good, though, because the models are inaccurate descriptions. The more I know what is happening the less I am able to describe it. I am quite stunned with people who seem quite confident that they can. I can only believe that they have shut their eyes to a lot that is happening artistically.

You've been involved in so many college and university writing programs, you must be optimistic about their effect on young writers.

For better or worse, the last generation in America not to go to college very much was the generation of Hemingway, Faulkner, and Steinbeck. The last two generations, 99.9% of all American writers have been graduates of colleges anyway. A great many passed through writing programs because by college age they had some interest in writing. Some of them chose creative writing courses because it gave them a certain amount of time in the context of formal education to work. Also, as a studio person there are lots of things that can be learned. You can't learn the things that make great writing, but you can learn lots of things that make for good writing and speed up the process of self-learning.

What about the academic establishment controlling the studio and therefore stifling the spirit of rebellion?

I do believe that the Iowa Writer's Workshop has become quite rigid and academic. It's the model of what is supposed to be good, but it cannot be because everybody who comes out of it sounds just alike. One of the founders of the Iowa Workshop was R. V. Cassill, who had a lot to do with getting writing programs into major institutions and smaller ones. He created the organization The Associated Writing Programs. For some years he ran it out of his basement with his wife as secretary—they were it! Nobody was very interested, but slowly it came along and today it has over two hundred institutions as members. He sort of dropped out and let it go its own way. A couple years ago, after a fifteen-year hiatus, he was invited to speak at a national convention as founder, first president, etc. He shocked them all by saying, "Well, we have now proven our point, and the advantages of the writer being associated with institutions are now outweighed by the disadvantages. I think we ought to disband the whole thing and pack it in. The writers should get out of the institutions at this point." I think he's speaking about programs that prepare people who go directly into teaching and advance themselves by publication in just the same way that straight academics can. The rigidity really came from within the workshops rather than from the outside—from the writers themselves who ran it. They became respectable within the academic community. They demanded respectability from their students, and the results of that have not been altogether auspicious.

Cassill, however, is a famous gadfly. He would have to agree that what we have created isn't a bad thing on the whole. I was talking with the people at Hollins about this—many people from the program are teachers now. The situation in Europe was set up against the United States, and in the debates the United States came off better than Europe because in Europe, once you get yourself certified as a writer you do not have the opportunity to go to work for the patronage of a university or a college. One is subsidized by the state, which has happened less and less. And what can a writer who is subsidized do—none of those writers are making any money from their books in Europe to speak of; they make it over here if their books get translated. If your whole living depends on the good will of the state, it seems to me you are in a more dangerous position of selling out everything than someone who can, at least, leave one institution for another. We have, at least, as much freedom as baseball players. We can battle to improve our situations and we can also have the situation in the U.S. of dropping out completely or dropping out from time to time from the whole institutional patronage system. The whole situation is more anarchistic, but it's probably better than the European situation. For one thing, the European states can't afford very many writers.

Do you think U.S. writing has generally become less international in concerns and techniques in the last decades?

That's a hard one to answer because we have more consciousness of what is happening in Europe and world literature than we ever had. Lately, we have many things not being translated. Even so, we have more consciousness. We are influenced. We have numbers of American writers who can't read a word of Spanish being deeply influenced by Garcia Marquez's writings, as far as they understand them. So on the one hand we aren't turning inward, but many Europeans and others feel our people are becoming self-engaged navel watchers.

Are there any influences that you would point to in the creation of your Elizabethan novels?

Fielding, I think. I've read a lot of Fielding, once upon a time. And Chaucer.

How about Hawthorne?

Well, I find "The Custom House" passage in the *Scarlet Letter* very useful. I've read it a great many times.

While writing the Elizabethan novels, were you trying to be original—the restless explorer?

No. I liked to read some of the very good novels about the Elizabethan period that I'd heard about and some of the bad ones. I liked to do a study of those novels. And I wanted to do a trilogy. Ford Maddox Ford did a trilogy. The originality of the forms derives from the inability to compress the material into a conventional form. I would have rather done them more simply.

What led you in these directions?

Well an element popped into my mind while you were talking. I wanted something that nobody else could adapt into a movie. Actually, there's a funny story about this. Somebody hired Frederick Raphael, the screenwriter for *Darling*, and gave him a very large sum of money to do the screenplay for *Death of the Fox*. I don't know what it was, but it was a good deal more than the total earnings of the book will ever be. He took a year off and wrote a script which I've been told that I really ought to read because it is so beautiful it would bring tears to my eyes. But I was told it's unfortunate that it can't be made because it would cost fifty million dollars to shoot.

So you were conscious of preserving and extending the genre of the novel?

Well, I hope so. I know how to adapt novels into screenplays. With these novels something could be done—total wrecking crew activity—but something could be done that wouldn't be the same. I wanted something not translatable to the screen. Non-translatable. I've succeeded—so far.

Were you aware that you were moving away from the minimalist treatment?

I very much see that now. For awhile I thought they knew something the rest of us didn't. One big change in my understanding of the minimalists [came about when] I went out and bought a tape of a collection of stories to listen to

on a car trip. Two hours into the trip I realized that they are very special when they work. They are very small, delicate pieces, but they don't open doors. Back to back they numb you. That's a danger. I want to understand because I have a personal friend, Anne Beattie. She's very adroit with them. Minimalist stories in the hands of Carver were a series of gestures. I'm really interested in writers who explore more than that. I guess that's a characteristic of Southern writers.

Some have suggested your narrative techniques imitate William Faulkner's.

Well, in the technical way, that is the kind of relationship with Faulkner I don't have. I honestly do think and I wouldn't be afraid to say that some writers are sort of copycats. For instance, Styron imitates Faulkner's language and rhythm and everything else but doesn't really get to the heart of it. He creates a loud Faulknerian blast. There are some others like William Humphrey who went through a Faulknerian phase. Faulkner has had a tremendous influence, but, I think, most of the influence is stylistic. I don't think there's a lot of stylistic influence in my books except in a couple [of] places in early books when I was trying to indicate there was a fiction: somebody telling a story and getting Faulknerian in style, hoping that a reader would react to the obviousness that something bogus was happening, a fiction. It would be the arranged fiction rather than the series of actual events.

I think I learned a lot technically from him, particularly from his handling of time. We had some similar experiences too. Both of us—he much more than I—worked in the movies about the same ages in our lives, and I can understand what that did to him. It's really the effect of working in film. First, you learn to make certain kinds of moves with the narrative. At the same time he rebelled against its limitations and qualities. He did anti-cinematic things—like trying to explore what you can do with the texture of prose which cannot be done with the camera. At the same time, you have picked up little devices like speed writing structure and relationship of parts. So, I would say I hope I haven't been influenced in a copycat way but I would admit he has been an enormous influence on me. He was amazing. Do you know that no two books—twenty-five novels—are alike at all. They seem alike because they are all in the same

style, but each narrative organization is different. He seemed to get bored with settling in and doing books the same way. I think of him as a kind of restless explorer. He never stopped long enough to throw up a cabin or anything. I think Faulkner opened dozens of doors for American writers rather than closing off things. I don't think he ever closed a door. Some think he burned up a lot of subject matter forever. Certain aspects, his generation's view of things, he used—more efficiently than people will be able to later. I think it is only in the minds of the critics that they say the Southern subject has been exploited and mined and there's nothing but tailings left. I think that is not true.

I began searching your earlier novels and short stories for some sign of the historical interest evident in your later Elizabethan novels. But your earlier prose works are portraits in the realistic mode. Had you experimented with the creation of historical fiction before the completion of these novels?

Actually I have a couple of places. There were four or five short pieces published which I originally thought were going to be part of *The Succession* but never made it. They inevitably had the shape of stories because they had to. A couple of them were identified as excerpts but don't appear in the finished novel.

I perceive a thematic relationship between the earlier realistic fiction and the Elizabethan works: your fascination with the effects of people's dealing with authority and aggressiveness, of the effects of war, of the self-images people create, of the humor they use to survive, of the complicated mysteries of life that never daunt but challenge them. But will you comment on what led you to create the rich style and narrative structure evident in your Elizabethan novels?

The style and language are radically different. The language of my stories has always been more vernacular, more colloquial than any of my other prose forms except, maybe, one novel done in the first person, a G.I. novel *Which Ones Are the Enemy*?

The re-creation of Elizabethan characters, then, somehow freed your powers of language and imagination?

I've found it difficult all my life to do much with something which other writers don't seem to

have much difficulty, to do much with what might be called a high style or moderately elevated style while dealing with mundane twentieth-century life. At least when I was writing about the past, I was able to exercise a style that I couldn't permit myself when writing about present-day domestic life. The necessity of creating a style and language for a distant period is very hard. I see by writers from all over the U.S. both eloquent and elegant accountings of life as we live it now. I have trouble doing that while keeping a straight face. I can't do it. I am trying to think of someone offhand who does—Updike, for example. I have great admiration for what he seems to achieve, and I manage to keep a straight face while reading him. The lavish and lush language—the effect could be comic very often. I have difficulty writing in any kind of lavish style about motels.

There are trends in commercial publishing, for instance Gore Vidal's *Burr* and *1876*, which I think are some of the best of his novels. I reviewed *Lincoln*, and I liked it very much. I do think in almost every case Vidal's main thrust is just to take a popular assumption and turn it upside down. Lincoln emerges as a slick politician rather than as the icon of our society. The same thing with *Burr*. I like Vidal's books; I like the fact that they're not too deep.

I never really thought about this, but the model for my historical writing is Shelby Foote, who wrote what's probably the single biggest piece of prose narrative of our lifetime: the three volume history of the Civil War. He also had written a lot of excellent pieces of fiction before he wrote that. He greatly disapproves of the distortions of fact necessary for interesting historical fiction where the facts are known. That's one of the reasons—and a point of conscience—that I admire his work so much. He makes a good case that you should not really write novels about Lincoln. You should write narratives about him. Then you can deal with the facts and not introduce them. He truly disapproved of Styron's *Nat Turner*, not for any reason except that it distorts the facts of Nat Turner's life.

As far as I can interpret, Foote likes my books and has been very kind about them. One of the things that justifies my dealing with Elizabethan life and fiction is that a lot of the facts are not known and never will be. The people were very conscious of this. Another thing, it was an age which in the absence of television people created images—they dressed up in a quarter of a

million dollars worth of clothes. They were fictional characters creating their own little narratives and dramas. It is, therefore, not unjust to treat them in a fictive cast because that's the way they lived. But if you wanted to write about the eighteenth century or the Old West, the facts are not in doubt and there is a closer relationship to what is presented and what is, so what can be identified as truth is different.

Has your poetry writing any relationship to your fiction writing?

What I've discovered about that relationship is some kind of balance. When I was doing my earlier fiction, which was hard-edged and realistic, I was writing a slightly elevated verse. When I got going on the first of the Elizabethan novels, poetry became my link with the contemporary world. My poems became more colloquial, more humorous. The two work hand in hand for me, not at cross purposes. Now that I've finished the Elizabethan novels, I would like to work on more poetry, maybe create some satiric poems.

You wrote the Elizabethan novels over a long period—your interest began in college, I understand. Would you talk a little about the research process involved? Has there been a system to your research?

No, there never has been, and that's the problem. I had a lot of training in conventional graduate research. Most of that training was focused on having a problem and trying to solve it. Here I didn't know what I was looking for—I suppose there's a question of thrashing about, reading as much as you can in as many different areas as you possibly can and finding those elements that make you feel most at home in writing a scene. It's a kind of constant process, and it's not very efficient.

It sounds like a passion.

And it has danger because it is a sort of passion. The research quite aside from the writing is fun, particularly when it's not so systematic. You are just sort of flipping through books and looking for pictures. I have certain touchstones on which I rely. I have a couple of wonderful books, dictionaries of Elizabethan proverbs, which I come back to when I haven't got anything else to do. I just sort of read through the dictionary of Elizabethan proverbs and it will set me thinking.

Maybe in doing these books it was more important for me to be self-conscious about surfaces than it is in writing about contemporary life. I do believe that all fiction communicates primarily about surfaces—its initial communication anyway. Contemporary literature is more a question of inviting the reader to produce about half of it themselves, to invoke and evoke the sensual world. In historical fiction you create more of the world than you would if you were writing about the present day. So, you expect a little bit of the flash of the exotic as part of the attraction. In historical fiction you are more self-consciously aware of the sensual aspects of it. Because if it isn't sensual, then it isn't happening to people and you want the people to seem to be real.

To give you an example, I found in Venice an order for very large mirrors to be delivered to Elizabeth for the Queen's bath. But this was in the period when Elizabeth had ordered the mirrors at court to be covered. Now if she wasn't liking what she saw when she was fully made up, then presumably what she saw in her bath was much worse. That seemed a puzzle unless you understand that she was into creating images of herself, heavily painted up when she held court, perhaps more for her subjects than for herself. So, in *Death of the Fox* you have the scene of Raleigh guarding outside the bath, knowing that inside she was surrounded by all these mirrors, the one place where she was allowed to face the truth about herself. After the novel was published I had a letter from one of the warders of the Royal Household who thanked me for explaining the use of some standing frames that they knew had belonged to Elizabeth but not what she had used them for. Apparently, the mirrors had long ago been destroyed but not the frames she would have used to transport them from one residence to another.

Each of the sections of the novel has its jewels of portraiture in character, setting, incidents. In the process of writing you must have found yourself constantly discovering new areas for research.

Yes, that's true. That's the very reason that I did more than one Elizabethan book. Each one has been incomplete in some way. There has been a door left open, a possibility, something that doesn't quite match, something that is left, not really essential in the sense of becoming a trilogy. The best example I can give you is that

two of the central characters in the Marlowe novel are in a sense opposites to characters who appeared in *The Succession*. They're flip sides of the same people.

For example, the priest character in *The Succession* represents a kind of good and innocent man. He is the English Catholic of the period who has no vocation as a martyr, but he wants to do his job. He's not himself embittered by this experience. This time I wanted another aspect of Catholic England. I wanted a somewhat angry young man who has been driven out of his home and his life. His vocation isn't religious at all. He's been a soldier and is back in England now not as a representative of Catholicism but as somebody without property and roots. He is a kind of hit-man for other people, and I wouldn't have been able to conceive this character until I had conceived the priest in *The Succession*, realized what was missing in his character would be this character. What was missing in the depiction of the English Catholic was the legitimate rage that some of these people had. Many of them had a lot. In *The Succession* the priest rebelled against his family to maintain his ties with the Roman church. His father switched over to the Anglican church and, therefore, preserved his estate. Many didn't. So the soldier who had property and background when these things mattered just lost them because of his religion. He's a man in the country of his birth without a country. The actor in the Marlowe book is different than the player in *The Succession*. There's a likeness between the two, but the actor in the Marlowe book is the downside; it's a darker book. It shows the underworld people. It almost has to be since the essential event, which causes all the action, is the murder of Marlowe, a pretty sordid, grubby event upstairs in that tavern. Except for the Reivers and a few other people, *The Succession* didn't deal with the disenchanting, dark side of Elizabethan experience. Certainly, that is present in the life of Marlowe, who was alienated in three or four different ways.

In portraying events through the different points of view—say the priest, the player, the Reivers—how do you keep control of the myriad of detail? Do you keep a list? Biographers tell stories of Faulkner keeping a map on his wall above his desk.

He was better organized than I am. Somebody was telling me that while Faulkner was still alive they were visiting him, and they had about

five minutes alone in his library while he went to the bathroom or something. The visitor snatched up a copy of *Lllyses* that was sitting on his desk and saw elaborately annotated full charts and graphs with red and blue underlining and everything else. The high degree of order surprised me. It didn't surprise me, though, that in interviews Faulkner later denied having heard of Joyce.

Are you implying that you are surrounded by charts and graphs all the time, little scraps of paper with notes?

I wish I were. It would be a lot easier—and bulletin boards. I'll tell you this much, though. The Raleigh book took the longest. Most of the time I spent doing the research, and I used lots of paper. I took endless notes, and they were very disorganized. I realized that the only way I could do it was to write a complete draft without any notes. I realized that I would never finish the book until the Elizabethan world was part of my experience—that I would be remembering it as I remembered my own experience. The first draft was written completely off the top of my head. I figured that's fair enough, that anything that got into my consciousness had to be my own. And anything that I didn't remember, there must be some reason for that. I would use only those parts which were memory and so would give it a quality of personal experience, though four hundred years away. The risk was that I would forget that he was married or something. Another factor was there were details about Raleigh when the book was written that we just did not know. Two or three years after *Death of the Fox* was published we learned that he had at least one other child we did not know about, a daughter. So my memory of what I've learned is involved. That my memory is involved makes it my own myths—honest.

What have you done with all the early drafts?

In the case of *Death of the Fox* most of them were destroyed. I had a nice lady in Charlottesville who typed several early drafts for me, and I would write in long hand. She got used to my hand, and I would send her things to type. She wrote to me and said the manuscripts, all in long hand on yellow pages for *Death of the Fox*—not finished at that point—had now filled her garage. I told her to burn them. They are gone.

She didn't have any interest in keeping them—she had to park her car. Since then, I really don't keep very early drafts anyway. I'm very self-conscious about it, and they are subsumed, re-used, re-cycled. The early typed drafts I've kept, and I have a fellow who collects them to pass on.

In a period when most U.S. prose is more facile, were you conscious in these elaborate Elizabethan novels of challenging your audience, demanding its leisure and concentration? In some ways you end up ennobling the reader as you make demands.

I didn't think exactly in those terms, but I didn't see any reason to do less than that.

What work are you planning next?

It probably won't be what I'm thinking, but I'm planning on doing three novels set in American history: one set during the 1893 Chicago Fair, one set during World War II, and the last during the weekend following the Martin Luther King assassination.□

Richard Easton's work has appeared in the New Orleans Review, The Virginia Quarterly, and The Christian Science Monitor. His play The God Game won a regional performance award. He teaches at Washington and Jefferson College.

The photograph of George Garrett, by Pryde Brown, originally appeared in *An Evening Performance: New and Selected Stories* (Doubleday and Co., Inc.), and is published by permission of George Garrett.

Andrée Chedid

THE FLUTE

Translated by Judith Radke

"He taught me to fly beyond the night of words, far from the lethargy of ships at anchor."

—René Char

My aunt beat me. She'd beat me with the bottomside of her old slipper 'til my back, my legs, my head, were black and blue. She always thought of some reason to punish me.

She was the elder sister of my mother, who'd died shortly after I was born. The day I was five, my aunt had arrived from her village astride a donkey and became indispensable to our household.

My father detested her but he didn't think he could do without her.

At night, in the one room we shared with the animals, my father would start snoring right away, but my aunt stayed awake. I never saw her sleep, not ever. Her shadow passed back and forth over the walls of dried mud. Not daring to open my eyes, I knew that it was there, a flat, frozen shadow, that it lingered over my bed. The feeling terrified me.

I wished for a sudden burst of light. If only my father would jump up from his sleep and kick my aunt from the house!

During the day, she'd take me to the canal bank. Leaning over the water, I helped her beat the laundry. She would turn to me and curse me for the slightest reason. Then, just when I hated her the most, when I smarted from her blows, when I felt like pouncing on her, biting her . . .

Suddenly, my aunt would begin to speak.

She'd stand up; and, signaling me to follow, she went back up the bank of the Nile, slowly, walking backwards, the flow of her words unbroken.

My steps in her steps, my eyes fixed on her lips, I followed her. The space separating us swelled with other spaces, the village filled with other villages, and her voice with other voices.

She would say: "Look at the banyan. . . . While

you sleep, the tree, with all its many arms, wrestles the night. Hour after hour, besieged, it defends every branch and each leaf. Only at dawn, when the night is no more than a mouth fading from sight, is the tree again at peace. The banyan is our people, it is we. By clinging to the soil and putting out branches, we shall outlast our poverty one day."

With her free hand, she'd pick up a pebble, which she then placed in the hollow of my hand.

"Hold onto it hard. It's a city, with streets that go off in opposite directions, and, in the center, a house that smells of leaves. Perhaps that house is yours, but will they let you in? Every person carries within himself his sky and his dwelling; promise not to forget that."

"Listen," she'd say. "Listen, how wildly the river struggles! It comes from far away, from a wrinkled earth where old people, seated in a circle, whisper around the dead fig tree. But it flows on and hurries toward the sea; there, children like yourself, standing on the banks, hoist their flame-red sails."

"The smell of this silt cripples us," she would moan. "Breathe the wind, raise your head, little boy." (Then my aunt stopped and beat the ground with her bare heel.) "Love water. Don't cling to the desert; in each grain of sand there's a heart which beats no longer."

Like Abou Bekr's flute, which is cut from a reed and which sings when he puts it to his lips, at the sound of those strange words I came alive.

"I've known warriors who lay down their arms for guavas of a certain velvet smoothness," said my aunt in a murmuring voice. "Eat all that you eat without haste, and think about these things. They hold the secret."

Her words haunted me, cleared paths whose end I could not see. I was everywhere and

nowhere. The blood pulsed in my wrists.

"More. More, Aunt . . ."

But all at once, there was the door. Suddenly, precisely, the words cut off with one chop. It was the door of our hut with its skimpy nails.

* * * * *

The voice was gone.

Turning her back to me, my aunt went ahead and crossed the threshold in one stride.

It seemed she'd been right there waiting for me, leaning back against the wall, for hours.

"Hurry and get in here, lazy boy. Just like your lazy father. Get to work! Pick up the melon rinds, clean the goat! No, not like that, idiot."

There followed a torrent of blows.

I hated my aunt, the humiliation she inflicted upon me. I could have killed her. I wished she were dead.

I would have died for her.

* * * * *

I'm not a child anymore now. I've ordered my aunt to leave. Her shadow makes me laugh just as the scarecrow that terrifies the sparrows in the orchard does. I'm too big for her blows. As for her stories . . . ! My aunt's crazy.

Tonight I told her to leave this house. It's mine

now.

I want walls that are walls. I want to dig up land that has no tales to tell. I want to forget tomorrow, and that things are inhabited. I want to bury words, restlessness, everything. At night—who cares if nothing changes—at night I want to sleep.

I've chased my aunt out. She left without baggage; she'd nothing to take with her.

I slammed the door behind her. Now my door, with its joined planks and its skimpy rusting nails, is shut good and tight.

* * * * *

In the evening, in his hut next to mine, Abou Bekr often plays the flute. And I strain my ears to listen.

I know that afterwards he hangs it on a black hook by its long string. It swings back and forth, back and forth; then it stops moving . . .

Away from his lips, a flute's not anything, a hollow object, dead wood.

When I think about it, a vague impatience comes over me sometimes, and even a sort of regret.□

Andrée Chedid, "La Flute," © Flammarion, 1978.

Zoe Filipkowski

EVERYTHING IN THIS CITY IS AFRAID

I

After the star fell from heaven, transparent like a cat's eye, there was
only the burning.
He could have saved her but he fled into the subway.
She hid in the crevices of the playground, pressed up against
the cool walls of the school's stone fence.
Was it the sound of sirens hopelessly lost, this howling
without reason, that made him run?

II

I let myself believe everything. I found this story in the city.
The couple never knew what hit them.
The exact angle of descent shown perfectly on the photograph
of their home. A streak of light, pencil-thin
clipping off the edge of the rain gutter, bouncing
on their lawn and then landing to die a slow, warm death
in the mouth of the deserted street.
A small bungalow—they were sitting in the living room when it happened.

III

Each window is more than an eye. She should have known that
when her groceries hit the sidewalk, her side ringing with pain.
Each window is a gun, a dark space that spells out missiles, a speaking
direct to the heart.

Neil P. Hurley, S.J.

SOUL IN SUSPENSE: THE CATHOLIC/JESUIT INFLUENCES ON HITCHCOCK

Alfred Hitchcock was unquestionably one of the greatest directors of all time. Out of an approximate seventy thousand features that have been released in the eighty-plus years of cinema history, as many as ten of his pictures could be ranked among the one hundred and fifty greatest films ever made. It is almost a religious experience to study the films of Hitchcock, whose fifty-three films feature themes like "the wrong man," moral regeneration, forgiveness, compassion, and "things not being what they seem to be."

To understand his films more fully, Hitchcock himself advised that the viewer see them three times—three being a sacred digit, a Trinitarian symbol, which Hitchcock used often together with seven and thirteen. But to understand the man behind the film, one must understand also the child behind the man—a child who was influenced by Jesuit priests, their spirituality, and education. What was once said of James Joyce could be said of Hitchcock: "You allude to me as a Catholic . . . now you ought to allude to me as a Jesuit."¹ In his final tribute to Hitchcock, the late French director François Truffaut wrote: "Hitchcock's direction is not simply efficient, but so stylized that it gives these tales a symbolic significance—that of a struggle between the sacred aspect of life, which is given to us, and the impure use we make of it."²

For fifteen years I have studied Hitchcock's films, and I have found hidden messages contained in the images and the sound track. In addition to being master entertainer, he was a religious philosopher (one might even call him a "closet theologian") who made *Psycho* a remarkable film about redemption and reverse evil incarnation (Norman Bates becomes his mother in the final scene). Hitchcock said it was

a "fun film," but it deals with what joins suspense tales and theology: mystery, secrets, and a turning to light, to understanding. Using motion photography he reveals what the camera could not capture—the drama of "souls in suspense." Hitchcock had secrets too, some guarded in his films, carefully folded into the frames to be unlocked by inquiring scholars.

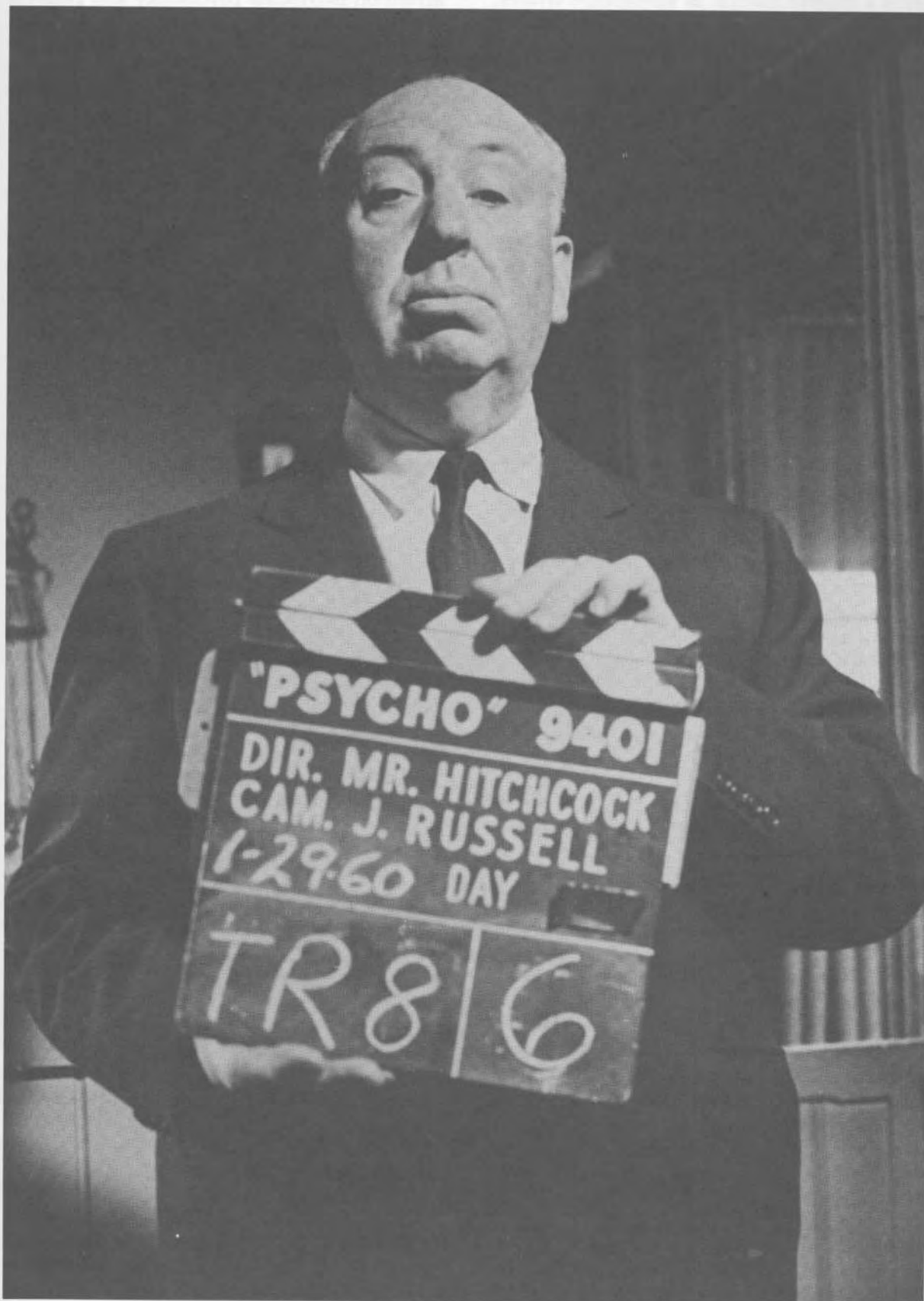
Hitchcock saw secrets as an integral part of man's fallen nature. His films deal with intrigue, intelligence operations, people spying and prying, people lying and denying. "Cover-ups" have always been contemporary topics. In "Genesis" Adam blames his fall on Eve, who in turn accuses the serpent. This avoidance of blame and implication of others are part of Hitchcock's creed reflected in his recurring "wrong person" theme (seen in *The 39 Steps*, *Saboteur*, *I Confess*, *North by Northwest*, and *Frenzy*). In *The Wrong Man*, Henry Fonda played a musician who is falsely accused of a crime. This true story acts as a Passion/Resurrection allegory for those with a trained religious eye. Hitchcock's fascination with this theme comes as no great surprise. He himself was locked up for ten minutes in jail as a small boy, the result of an irresponsible prank pulled by his father and the jailer. This early "wrong person" incident made him sensitive to Jesuit meditations on Christ as "the wrong man," dying for each of us—an idea found in St. Ignatius Loyola's *The Spiritual Exercises*.

Hitchcock's creed also includes the idea best stated as, "Things are not what they seem to be!" The shock of recognition is crucial in Hitchcock's work. In *Psycho* Marion Crane undergoes a conversion after her supper-talk with Norman Bates. Shaken by his bizarre words and his eccentric manner, she sees herself as deviant and resolves to undo her theft of \$40,000.

Hitchcock delighted in probing the hidden forces of disorder and deviance in small towns (e.g., *Psycho*). In fact, he took a mischievous and at times perverse pleasure in portraying average family-type persons and dutiful citizens who

¹As qtd. on the *Third Programme Series*, BBC, 13 & 17th Feb. & 22 Mar. 1950.

²François Truffaut, "Hitchcock—His True Power Is Emotion," in *The New York Times* 4 Mar. 1979, Arts and Leisure Section 2: 1 & 19.



have a morbid interest in sensational crimes. Recall the two small-town neighbors in *Shadow of a Doubt*, discussing as a hobby ways to commit the perfect crime; or Kathy, the small sister of Rod Taylor in *The Birds*, talking matter-of-factly about a man reported to have murdered his wife when she suddenly turned off a baseball game he was watching on TV. Hitchcock recognized not only personal sin, but cosmic forces of disorder (a theme reminiscent of *The Spiritual Exercises*). For instance, in *The Birds* the uneasy patrons of the Tides Café can come to no common agreement regarding the sudden eruption of the birds' aggression. For the audience, the plague of attacking birds has an Old Testament ring to it. Disorder recurs, and we humans recoil and wonder why; we do not see the primordial deviancy in which we take part. *The Birds* suggests religious retribution (recall the view from the gull's vantage point high above Santa Rosa).

Another feature of Hitchcock's cinema vision lies between the micro-level of personal disorder and the macro-dimension of cosmic threat—namely, at the level of government ventures in the areas of espionage, sabotage, conspiracy, and concerted efforts at “destabilizing” enemy states. The political philosophy of Hitchcock exposes *Realpolitik*, the absolute, even idolatrous, nature of state sovereignty as amoral and dangerous to humankind. (Hitchcock was aware of the unprecedented magnitude of nuclear weapons and treated it in *Notorious*, *Torn Curtain*, and *Topaz*.) There is one moral lesson that can be crystallized from other spy thrillers: if man in the singular is warped, then he is capable of even greater social harm when carrying out instructions as an agent-provocateur, an intelligence gatherer, or an architect of covert “dirty tricks” on behalf of some sovereign government in the name of patriotic nationalism.

Hitchcock was in the same tradition as Joseph Conrad, Graham Greene, and, more recently, John le Carré. However, underlying Hitchcock's spy thrillers, a subtle, subliminal spiritual strategy is at work. Against mammoth evils (like the theft of state secrets, bombings, torture, and assassinations), the Master of Suspense pitted an heroic person who embodied the oppositional principle that for every evil there must be a corresponding, countervailing good. This idea is obviously derived from the Bible and runs throughout *The Spiritual Exercises*. Even the most perceptive analysts and critics of Hitchcock's work have not recognized that, despite the

accent on individual psychology and personal drama, his stance of moral irony, humanism, and religious interests extend beyond the private domain to follow the larger involvement in the evils of organizations—particularly the nation-state with its arrogant presumption of justifying any deed, however immoral, in the name of national security.

Hitchcock was ill-at-ease with the police, the law, government, and the church. (He once refused a papal audience.) These fears are clearly inscribed in his work, largely because earlier they had been inscribed in his psyche and soul by traumatic experiences that shaped artistic vision. In short, he never ceased being throughout his life a “soul in suspense.” Hitchcock was a Catholic and died as such; he was friends with priests and Jesuits; he was patriotic, both to his country of birth, England, and to his adopted country, America; he was a supporter of law, order, and the common good. Despite his conservative nature, Hitchcock saw the underside of even noble causes and commitments. He saw through social and political arrangements to primordial disorder, the reality of which is the foundation of the Bible and *The Spiritual Exercises*. As for himself, he had constant reminders of his own frailties (he went on crash diets often, only to return to his former, poor eating habits).

In his sensational book *The Dark Side of Genius*, author Donald Spoto discussed the struggle that Alfred Hitchcock had in his later years with liquor, and an almost adolescent crush on younger female stars who did not return his affections. This book suggests that Hitchcock was more serious than his public image indicates. Certainly we see a dark, pessimistic side of Hitchcock in *The Birds* and *Topaz*, both suggesting nuclear war, and *Frenzy*, using London and the “dirty Thames” (William Blake's phrase) as a dramatic metaphor for the decline of civilization through environmental pollution, citizen indifference, and barbaric acts of lust and anger. Hitchcock's most personal concerns, apart from “the wrong man” theme, are found in *The Trouble with Harry*, *Vertigo*, and *Psycho*, which treat death, sex, and violence through religious allusions.

If Hitchcock himself was caught in the net of moral temptation, he also left an amazing body of sound and images which are a monument to a complex Christian vision of human helplessness and resilience. People are seen as frail and fraught with evil inclinations; but they rise to



INGRID BERGMAN
GREGORY PECK

in

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S

SPELLBOUND

A SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL PICTURE

Screenplay by Ben Hecht • Released thru United Artists

challenges, discover hidden strengths, and recover lost integrity. Hitchcock was a product of a Victorian culture—an era of imperial ambitions and self-righteousness—and of Puritanical (in Catholic terms, Jansenistic) religious training. Within a short time, Hitchcock would experience the rapid changes of Edwardian England, Freudian psychoanalysis, the bold writings of James Joyce, Havelock Ellis, and D.H. Lawrence, and German filmmaking, with its concern for psychological themes. Hitchcock was an entertainer, but underneath the amusing suspense was a philosophy, indeed, even a theology. He soon learned how to disarm audiences in order to involve them, through feelings, in situations of deviant behavior that they often judged critically but had never experienced.

Viewers seldom felt implicated in wrongdoing, although they would often sympathize with culprits. Visualization, a popular therapeutic technique today, was a favorite device of Hitchcock for leading the audience gradually to identify with or turn against protagonists, as in *I Confess*, *Rear Window*, and *Psycho*. He often gave the audience the identity of the culprit(s), as we shall see. By taking the spectator on a roller coaster ride of thrills the audience would identify with the attitudes and motives of heroes and villains alike. In this sense, Hitchcock deserves to be recognized more as a moral ironist in the genre of the horror thriller, than simply a master of suspense.

The suspense in a Hitchcock film is not of the Agatha Christie "who-done-it?" variety. Rather, the question is how can the hero or heroine (invariably flawed, though innocent of the alleged crime) be exonerated—in theological terms "redeemed"? Hitchcock himself seemed fascinated at the fickleness of human life—how apparently in one situation good triumphs, in another, evil (e.g., *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Strangers on a Train*, *Psycho*, *Frenzy*). Hitchcock's art consisted of narrowing the audience's vision, guiding it to details and close-ups which would make them feel the precariousness of justice, of troubled human relationships, and of paradoxical outcomes, seemingly "happy" but tilted toward imminent evil and disorder.

Having identified personally with "the wrong man" theme, Hitchcock did not trust society or the vaunted "due process" of Anglo-American law which insisted on judge, jury, defense attorney, and the rules of evidence. Hitchcock's

technique was to induce fear in the audience by provoking those fears he himself personally experienced. Al Whitlock, Hitchcock's art editor once remarked: "All of us have some fears, but Hitchcock had all the fears." Hitchcock was a fear-ridden child, from his earliest days dreading undeserved or excessive punishment for actions of which he was not consciously guilty. On a number of occasions, he talked about the severe discipline of his early schooling. Three blows of a leather strap on an open palm was one of the favorite punishments administered by the prefect of discipline. To his credit, though, he distilled his fears into immortal art, sharing them with us for our better understanding and not merely for distraction.

Hitchcock never spoke about his home or his parents—church-going Roman Catholics who wanted a Jesuit education for their son. Despite his own silence on the matter, though, the number of references in his films to troubled parent-child relationships seem to speak for themselves. In Hitchcock's fifty-three films, there are repeated references to distrustful, unstable, and disturbed family situations, beginning with the early British film *Downhill* (1927) and continuing in his Hollywood period in *Notorious*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Strangers on a Train*, *North by Northwest*, *Psycho*, *The Birds*, *Marnie*, and *Frenzy*. (In *Frenzy*, the stable marriage between the Scotland Yard inspector and his wife is far from blissful, a self-reference to Hitchcock's own dutiful but seemingly passionless partnership in matrimony.) Since one of his obsessive themes is the lack of communication and understanding between a son or daughter and a parent, one strongly suspects that he may have yearned for greater parental acceptance and love in his own life. The images of parents and especially of mothers in his films allude strongly to concerns stemming from his childhood relationship with his parents.

Through motion pictures Hitchcock strove to cope with the strong, even exaggerated dreads and anxieties of his youth. He seems to have purged himself emotionally by constructing situations that inspired fear in his audiences. He claimed that he understood the criminal mind through his own fantasies about ways of committing crimes. He read avidly about famous court trials and notorious murder cases. He agreed with the German playwright Arthur Schnitzler that the study of disease was therapeutic and that such study led to

preventing and insuring health. Every "wrong man" film diagnoses evil by bringing it out of its larva state. Each film also points to an oppositional principle of correction fundamental to Jesuit spirituality, namely, that patterns of disorder must be reversed (in Latin this principle is called *agere contra*). Often Hitchcock uses this strategy of human protagonists being suddenly trapped in a deterministic situation of fateful doom but resolutely extricating themselves by courageous resolve leading to

conflicted by a tug of war between good and evil, are the physical and psychological images of the tensions produced by the "spiritual combat." Among the primal fears which concerned Hitchcock were those of "space"—as in certain phobias. For instance, Hitchcock portrayed several claustrophobic states: in *Rope*, through continuous ten-minute "takes" shot in sequence; in *Rear Window*, through limited mobility and vision; in *The Wrong Man*, through somber nighttime scenes; in *Psycho*, through an



personal growth, romantic coupling and betterment for a community, a country, or, indeed, the world. (Exceptions to this pattern would be that dark trinity of motions pictures, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, and *Frenzy*.)

Inscribed within this master matrix of good being nurtured within a human person,

extraordinary use of economy, as in the shower scene, which produced greater fear by showing little of the actual stabbing. Hitchcock also dealt with acrophobia—fear of heights—in such vintage films as *The Lodger*, *Blackmail*, *Rebecca*, *Suspicion*, *Foreign Correspondent*, *Saboteur*, and *North by Northwest*.

These basic physical fears of constriction or suspension in space act on the human psyche. The genius of Hitchcock was in using space/height anxiety as a sort of trampoline to lift the audiences' awareness into the realm of the philosophical, the religious, and the spiritual. The title of this article, referring to Hitchcock as a "soul in suspense," evokes the experience of being falsely accused, of having one's reputation maligned unjustly. Such a situation is a form of "soul-entrapment," shrinking the psychic space of the "wrong person," whose mobility and security are restricted as if an inmate in an emotional prison. It is revealing that Hitchcock once remarked to a London reporter that, because of his physical



size, he felt "imprisoned in an armor of flesh." With this remark he strongly intimates that in biological terms his plight is that of "the wrong man." Little comment has been made about his deep feelings that he was a kind of biological misfit surrounded by attractive, trim, well-proportioned stars and performers. His portly shape and irregular profile were a constant reminder to him that in the Hollywood setting of glamorous celebrities he could not live up to those exceptional public standards in which the physical self was presented to "significant others." Recall that his celebrity status owed much to his profile and rotund physique. He endowed abnormal characters with sympathetic traits, appealing both to the mass public and the trusting persons within the film itself. Here humor was a disarming factor as he played the witty satirist, the clown, and the self-mocking tease. Very likely these were defense strategies for a sensitive "soul in suspense."

Crucial to this study of Hitchcock and his Jesuit religious background is the notion of

falling to destruction or confinement in an unpleasant, lonely space. One can see Biblical themes such as the Fall and Gehenna (or Hell) as related themes. In short, he moved audiences to feel more than physical fear (pursued, dangling, and pressured by the clock). Thus, Hitchcock effected a transition to other, less photographable fears. I refer to missing the mark in life, what the Greeks call *armatia*, a character defect that can lead to the moral unraveling of a life with tragic consequences for others (e.g., Hamlet and Macbeth). Resonating with the spiritual themes of the Ignatian exercises, Hitchcock often treats crime as a pathetic waste, an echo of Dante's being "lost in the dark wood of error." Consider Uncle Charlie in *Shadow of a Doubt*,



Bruno Anthony in *Strangers on a Train*, the murderous sacristan in *I Confess*, Norman Bates in *Psycho*, and the eponymous kleptomaniac in *Marnie*.

Alfred Hitchcock's best films are those that use sparse, even austere means to draw the viewer into a world different from the ordinary. In familiar and often tranquil surroundings, there are sudden interventions: kidnappings, false arrests, robberies, murders, and rapes. The more lavish the film in terms of sets and location, the less Hitchcock seems to warm up to his theme. His most representative films in terms of expressing his deepest convictions—not necessarily in terms of box-office success—are those with simple settings, such as *The Lodger*, *Blackmail*, *Sabotage*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *The Paradine Case*, *Rope*, *Strangers on a Train*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Rear Window*, *The Trouble with Harry*, *The Wrong Man*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, *Marnie*, and *Frenzy*. The shadow of Ignatian spirituality falls across all these films—good and evil are blurred, persons are victims of desire and passion,

spiritual rebirth takes place through prayer, love, affirmation, or courageous resolve. Some films explore the depths of human debasement, others the heights of courageous self-betterment. (*North by Northwest* certainly fits here.)

In these films, Hitchcock made his audience aware of the ebb and flow of moods, peeling away the surface of everyday life to reach the deeper emotional feelings that govern decisions and behavior. To do so, he used technically intriguing sparse cinematic means: the close-up, the tilted camera, the off-center and upside-down shot, the slow pan, the tracking shot, the zoom, rapid cutting, and doom music (cleverly referred to as "music of the fears"). The arrangement of these stylistic effects creates a sense of asphyxiation, of an ever-shrinking world that crowds the characters of his stories, as well as the audiences watching them.

The plots of these "austere" films were Hitchcock's favorites; he returned to them again and again with zest and single-minded dedication. Even though he liked to entertain his audiences, he had a personal statement to make. His most expressive films were his most personal and seem to reflect the moody memories of his youth studying under the Jesuits from 1910 to 1915, years which reflect a transition from the Victorian Age to the new Edwardian Age of more relaxed morals, women's suffrage, escalating violence (World War II), and literary and artistic experiments in new modes of awareness and sensibility.

The religious and educational atmosphere of St. Ignatius College, where Hitchcock studied, was heavily baroque prior to World War I; nevertheless, it was congruent with the new wave of Expressionism in painting. This new art form used physical distortion, shadows, and conflicting color tones to portray externally those inner impulses of fear and anxiety which were not photographable. What the young Jesuit student Alfred Hitchcock experienced became, often subconsciously, the scaffolding for his motion pictures, with their tight plots and concentrated emotional treatments of passion, crime, subversion, and mental disorders. Hitchcock loved to cast doubt on the law, the police, the celibate clergy, marital fidelity, smalltown wholesomeness, public opinion, democracy, the family, parental integrity, and personal notions of justice. His religious motifs lend themselves indisputably to the maxim "Things are not what they seem to be," a paradoxical principle which reappears time and

again.

Hitchcock's films reflect an obsessiveness. Producer John Houseman said he was basically a "movie-making machine." Together with Hitchcock's preoccupation with human lapses from accepted norms of behavior, there are other recurring religious and moral themes, such as conscience, guilt, atonement, and redemption, all topics fundamentally shaped by the childhood influences of home, school, and church. There is a striking resonance, indeed, even curious consonance between his most personal films and the paramount themes of *The Spiritual Exercises*: the downward-spiraling resourcelessness of humankind, the need for courage to face adversity, trust in the "happy ending," despite malice and mayhem by evil-minded people, and "meliorism," that is, personal character growth through moral struggle and the will to refuse to acquiesce in apparent situations of defeat. This is the case with Richard Hannay in *The 39 Steps*, Robert Tisdall in *Young and Innocent*, Mrs. de Winter in *Rebecca*, Father Michael Logan in *I Confess*, Emmanuel Balestrero in *The Wrong Man*, Roger Thornhill in *North by Northwest*, Melanie Daniels in *The Birds*, and Marnie Edgar in *Marnie*. They are more integrated both psychologically and morally at the end of the film than when they are introduced. The moral effort to avoid undeserved punishment and loss of reputation leads to a more integrated person, one capable of a responsible romance and service to the community or country.

In many films, the audience is educated morally and spiritually by adopting Hitchcock's viewpoint regarding the tragic consequences of human frailty and fateful forces. Hitchcock's abiding compassion is seen in films such as *Shadow of a Doubt*, with its oblique but daring look at the theme of original sin.³ Other films introduce moral relativity, which prevents condemnation and severe judgement of seemingly contemptible actions—as in *Spellbound*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, and *Marnie*. In other films, we are given glimpses of the hidden side of people with whom many identify: the patriot (*Lifeboat*), defenders of law and order (*The Paradine Case*), college teachers (*Rope*), sport celebrities (*Strangers on a Train*), detectives (*Vertigo*), professional communicators (*North by Northwest*), the wealthy (*The Birds*), scientists

³William Rothman, *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press).

(*Torn Curtain*), and intelligence agents (*Topaz*).

Hitchcock was very aware in matters of technical advances in filmmaking and in the fields of painting, psychology, criminal lore, and public affairs. Two veteran associates of Hitchcock, Albert Whitlock and Robert Boyle (both art editors), testified to his firm grip on the process of movie production. At the same time they told how timorous he was of even low-level executives at Universal Studios. The man lived an intense life of the imagination and saw everyday life in terms of "appearances versus reality," the ironic, slightly sardonic view which is Biblical, Catholic, and, essentially, Jesuit. He knew evil could pose as good, and he sensed that all evil called forth a need for an equivalent good to challenge and neutralize it.

In January of 1987, PBS broadcasted Richard Schickel's one-hour PBS documentary interview with Hitchcock, narrated by Cliff Robertson. After reading *The Dark Side of Genius*, it is ironic to listen to Hitchcock talk about the rapist-murderer Barry Foster in *Frenzy* as dangerously evil and see the companion clip of the two unforgettable rape scenes in a film which recalled for the director his childhood years in London. However, Hitchcock's films and his personal life are not necessarily apart from us. Viewers invariably identify with the Master of Suspense as he makes them covoyeurs with Jimmy Stewart in *Rear Window* or willing witnesses of the shower murder in *Psycho*, of the brutal blood-letting in *The Birds*, of Paul Newman in *Torn Curtain* snuffing out the life of an East German agent by holding his head in a gas oven, or of the rapes in *Frenzy*.

The reader should appreciate that the interpretive frame of reference of this study is based on cautiously responsible deductions. Hitchcock has stressed the "fright" side of his Jesuit training rather than the "delight" side. In the case of exceptionally endowed pupils (e.g., James Joyce, Luis Buñuel, Alfred Hitchcock), the disciplined regimen and cultivation of the imagination offered by Jesuit education are undeniable pluses, even when these intensely aware talents react to the "down-side" more than average students. The discipline and "reaching beyond" (meliorism) were clearly Jesuit influences. Some research links Hitchcock's early religious formation with his film career, a sentiment not shared by some (for instance, John Russell Taylor in his book *Hitchcock*, an unauthorized biography). Such a study in symbolic consciousness must rest, in

the final analysis, with the reader's judgement.

The complete Hitchcock is found in his films, more in the images than in the sounds, but especially in his very personal choices of subject matter and stars. If he saw actors as "cattle," he prized some much more than others. (He was fond of Bruce Dern and once remarked teasingly, "Ah! You, Bruce, are the golden calf!") Hitchcock hid his indebtedness to others and was the star. He borrowed unabashedly from other filmmakers—for instance, he chose Cary Grant and Jimmy Stewart because of their romantic comedy roles in the work of Howard Hawks and Frank Capra. He probably relished the irony of Gary Cooper's Oscar-winning role in *Sergeant York* as a staunch pacifist turned military hero in World War I. (Hitchcock failed to obtain Cooper for *Foreign Correspondent*.) Moreover, the film ballet classic *The Red Shoes* influenced scenes in *Torn Curtain*, for he employed the same production designer. In many ways Hitchcock can only be understood in terms of the many signs, symbols, clues, and hints left in his work. Of his fifty-three films, thirty-seven have religious allusions: Christic parallels, crosses, Pieta figures, church altars, etc. His public utterances were discreet, oblique, and often evasive.

Hitchcock saw the world from his idiosyncratic vantage point (e.g., "open-ended pessimism") and succeeded in winning over tens of millions to take that view seriously. Similarly, *The Spiritual Exercises* represent a highly privatized view of religious experience by a genius, St. Ignatius of Loyola, who also subscribed to a vision of "open-ended pessimism." Without claiming that the young Hitchcock made the full thirty days (or even an abbreviated version) of the *Ignatian Exercises*, the deeper portrait of the man contained in his films has roots in an educational system which derives its essential spirit from those same *Exercises*. Jesuit students tend to look beneath surface appearances to see the deeper dynamics in the struggle between the forces of light and darkness. Indeed, as Hitchcock would aver, "Things are not what they seem to be!" □

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Edited by Elizabeth Bonifield.

Robert Hill Long

IN COUNTRY

The war is far away by now, a book left open on the porch swing, in which a blank page softly taps against a page filled with tiny names. The man beside it sleeps so carelessly—arm thrown backwards over the swing, head lolling against its hard top slat—you can tell how it will hurt to wake: legs needling him like phantom limbs, cicadas firing short bursts in the pines. Coming to, he might forget which country it is and start sweating again, despite the wisteria's evidence. The interrogation could resume even here. Why shouldn't they use his grandmother's porch? Why spare expense to get him to see the dew slicking moon-whitened rails and columns, to inhale the pungence of wisteria and river together again, if it will make him yield the truth? The empty pint bottle he kicks in the struggle to right himself proves nothing: maybe the interrogator got up to get another full one. The bottle, the porch, the ache in his neck are as untrustworthy as the notion of a heaven built of nothing but unviolated memories. The school of backyard goldfish grandmother let him feed would not feed the eight children of a Cambodian farmer for even one meal, yet he saw them—children, all ribs and sores—combing monsoon-swollen bomb craters for frogs and carp. Earlier today, at the city zoo's reconstructed swamp, he watched kindergarteners giggle and toss popcorn to alligators, and felt again he had been sentenced to life in the wrong country. Instead of dying cleanly, he must watch the children of two worlds deal with hunger, he must answer questions put by no one. And he must get drunk, nightly, thinking how history can be grasped between thumb and forefinger; how it's made of paper, numbered, finite, can be flipped forward or backward between drinks; how at last it will put him to sleep with the naked little girl who keeps trying to outrun her napalm burns on the dike between paddies, or with the plaid-shirted man who—as he feels the revolver pressed into his temple—winces and involuntarily starts counting off the time lapse between hammer-cock and trigger-pull. □

"BERENICE" AND POE'S MARGINALIA:
ADVERSARIA OF MEMORY

Poe's "Berenice" may be his most horrific tale. An exercise in the succession of the compressed recollections of a narrator beset by illness, the story presents us with Egaeus and his twinned lover, literal cousin, and equally sick companion Berenice. Berenice is the figure that Egaeus toils to reconstruct in the jottings that comprise the tale, but who only finally serves as a vehicle of a grotesque confession: not only has Egaeus buried Berenice alive, but he has extracted her teeth—those perfectly notched intervals of his obsession, those white tablets on whose surface he reads his own face, repeated but not regained.¹

The names, "Berenice" and "Egaeus," refer us to stories of dismemberment:

Berenice, wife of King Ptolemy of Egypt, promised her hair to Aphrodite if her husband returned safely from the wars. He returned, and her hair was gathered into the heavens and there converted into a new constellation. The complete Latin version of this story by Catullus is a lament by one of the lost locks, who risks telling the secret; and though fearful that the stars might rend her with angry words, mourns the sundering as a rape and longs to rejoin the head of Berenice.

(Dayan 495)

Similarly, Egaeus' is a myth of missed connections and broken affiliations. Egaeus' childlessness leads him to consult the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. His inquiry engenders, of course, a reply that he cannot interpret and an eventual son (Theseus) who must seek *him*. Soon

after the presumably longed-for meeting of father and son, Theseus decides to become the sacrificial youth to the Minotaur. If his quest is successful, that is if he survives the labyrinth, he must signal his victory and return to his father by hoisting white rather than black sails on his ship. Though Theseus survives this trial, he forgets to produce the signal that will rightly inform his father, and Egaeus, sighting black sails on the horizon, kills himself. This story of a father who can never strike a meeting with his offspring, or a son who, having mastered a certain labyrinth, still fails to achieve his origin, tells a tale very much analogous to the processes of "Berenice." Like much of Poe's *oeuvre*, the story presents us with the *un-reconciliation* of opposites—in this case, of origins and endings, the moral and the physical. In "Berenice," the thing one moves toward continually moves away from one; the desire to re-member requires the violence to dis-member; the left hemisphere does not know what the right is doing—see, for example, Berenice's epilepsy. My reading of this narrative's current, its broken fuses that nevertheless exert a charge, proceeds along three lines: the relation of illness to the making of meaning in the story; the subsequent emergence of a theory of memory in the story, through which I will suggest recourse to Poe's *Marginalia*; and, finally, the implications of the application of one of the narrator's theories of perception to the reading of a book or of a woman.

In "Berenice," illness is linked to the making of sense, or to matters of significance and insignificance. Unlike Poe's predecessor, Charles Brockden Brown's novelistic uses of insanity to construct a heretofore absent "common sense" (cf. *Weiland*) or to suggest that a language is wanting for such a thing, Poe's incorporation of disease into his narrative is an attempt to subvert what is common and assert a *body of knowledge* that is original, one's own, solely Egaeus'. The story is anti-transcendental, however, to the extent that such a proposition

¹Joan Dayan, in a brilliant essay on the tale, writes: "We have only to note the increase in the use of 'I,' recited in litanic insistence subsequent to the sight of Berenice's teeth, to connect his identity, what indeed he stands for, to those pure white surfaces, both reflecting the self (as so many Poe surfaces) and denting the self with the self until it ceases to be." See "The Identity of Berenice, Poe's Idol of the Mind," *Studies in Romanticism* 24 (Spring 1985): 491-513.

(i.e., that one shall have an original relation to the universe), inescapable as it may be, gives rise to the aberrant and perverse.

The story first refers to its own significance when Egaeus addresses the reader with

But it is mere idleness to say that I had not lived before—that the soul has no previous existence. You deny it?—let us not argue the matter. Convinced myself, I seek not to convince.²

Thus, the question is raised of whether the story shall gain significance by virtue of its appeal to an audience who is in agreement with its precepts or if, on the other hand, the story shall be deemed worthy of being written, worthy of being read precisely because it is a "tale which should not be told" (19). Does the story gain significance by our sighting of ourselves in it, by its appeal to common sense, to social discourse, or because it tells us something that we may have once before heard but dare not have uttered? Poe would answer us with the latter part of this proposal:

It is more than probable that I am not understood; but I fear, indeed, that it is in no manner possible to convey to the mind of the merely general reader, an adequate idea of that nervous intensity of interest with which, in my case, the powers of meditation (not to speak technically) busied and buried themselves, in the contemplation of the most ordinary objects of the universe.

(26)

Here we have a translation of Emerson's "to be great is to be misunderstood" and Whitman's "Do I contradict myself? . . . I contain multitudes" into a tantalizing irony.³ Egaeus will not be understood because the ordinary reader will not be able to make sense of his

²I will be referring to *The Selected Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Julian Symons (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980).

³See Edwin Haviland Miller, ed., *Leaves of Grass, Selections*, by Walt Whitman (Ill.: AHM Publishing, 1970). In the 51st stanza of *Song of Myself*, Whitman writes,

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then . . . I contradict myself;
I am large . . . I contain multitudes.

(83)

preoccupation with the ordinary, or by extension, his preoccupation with his own importance.

Egaeus' significance is highlighted by the aura cast by his illness: "my own disease—for I have been told that I should call it by no other appellation—my own disease, then, grew rapidly upon me" (20). And, again, it is via his own disease and his response to Berenice's illness that the issue is raised of whether Egaeus shall be significant, and therefore readable. Egaeus, for example, acknowledges how all of mankind might respond to Berenice's illness before offering us his way of responding to her, until we can neither locate his importance in the communal nor the particular. To have focused on the moral changes wrought upon Berenice by her illness, he tells us, would have linked him to "the ordinary mass of mankind" (21); such "reflections partook not of the idiosyncrasy" of his disease: "True to its own character, my disorder revelled in the less important but more startling changes wrought in the *physical* frame of Berenice" (21).

The *physical* in this story is a trope for the self. The physical signifies the desire to wrench a particular from the communal or moral—a body that one can call one's own. As Joan Dayan and others have astutely observed, the piecing together of parts of the French quotation that appears midway through the story, "que tous ses dents etaient des idées" (3), gives us *i/dent/idees* (identity) whereby the teeth (dents) assume a kinship to the self. The self, however, in its lustrous physicality, is also ghoulish as it becomes that which we construct but which, as it leers back at us, is simultaneously unfamiliar, unreadable. Or, identity in Poe is like a contagion that infects us, takes different forms, but whose aetiology we fail to discover.

Such an abstract translation of Poe's project may come clearer if we compare Poe's Egaeus to other characters in nineteenth- (and early twentieth-) century American literature who resemble but depart from him in important ways: Hawthorne's "Wakefield" and Henry James's John Marcher. Egaeus, Wakefield, and Marcher are each, in their turn, sick male characters who grapple primarily with questions of their own significance: "Had his acquaintances been asked, who was the man in London the surest to perform nothing today which should be remembered on the morrow," Hawthorne writes, "they would have thought of Wakefield." Of John Marcher, it is written, "he

had been the man of his time, *the man to whom nothing on earth was to have happened.*"⁴ Both Marcher and Wakefield embody a passionate holding back or self-exiling that is designed to make them present; both Marcher and Wakefield mystify the self in an attempt to make it interesting. In spite of the fact that all three of the characters' passive aggressions have violent outcomes, Egaeus' is the only act that is more than figural.⁵ Egaeus is the only one who has performed a bodily deed that his mind has failed to acknowledge. Subsequently, Egaeus, unlike Marcher and Wakefield, is not judged by a better-seeming narrator: Egaeus is the narrator whose self is his disease, inextricably bound up with his body. Unlike Marcher and Wakefield, Egaeus cannot change, nor can we imagine a different life for him.

In "Wakefield," the authorial presence is distinct: the narrator, in fact, is an author who is re-writing the story of Wakefield (he "recollected" the story from "some old magazine or newspaper" [67]) so that he might demonstrate to the reader how stories are made: a character is an "idea" that is given a "name" (68); a character can be fashioned now in the third now in the second person, or a character offers the writer the advantage and danger of the free play of multiple selves (70), and so on. "Wakefield," like all of Hawthorne's stories as he would have them, is "twice-told." All stories necessarily take other stories as their point of departure in Hawthorne's view, and the upshot is that we must take *responsibility* for the place of our narratives in a history of utterance. If we fail to participate in the making of this communal word-pool, we risk self-deception or solipsistic isolation. Like Wakefield, we commit the unpardonable sin of believing that our stories make us unique. Poe's Egaeus, on the other hand, does not have the option of taking such responsibility for his self-construction. Throughout the story (and I shall discuss this in more detail later), Egaeus cannot tell where his library (which he was both born in and lives entombed in) begins and his disease ends. Egaeus' disease and his books partake of one

another in the way that a plagiarized text corresponds to its source—through an interplay of unconscious usurpation.⁶ "My books, at this epoch, if they did not actually serve to irritate the disorder," Egaeus says, "partook, it will be perceived, largely in the imaginative and inconsequential nature, of the characteristic qualities of the disorder itself" (21). All imaginative production may be, beyond Hawthorne's most radical anxieties, according to Poe, profoundly dispossessed even as it claims identification with its author.

Hawthorne, again, is wary of the possibility that writing is nothing but an elaborate experiment performed on the self. If Wakefield is insignificance incarnate, Hawthorne fears that his own work may merely be the fantasy of an insignificant man. Hawthorne distrusts the craft in artifice. Wakefield, for example, has a "disposition to craft" (68), "a quiet and crafty smile" (69, 75), and a "harmless love of mystery" (69). We are reminded of Hooper's smile as well and of Wakefield and Hooper's shared propensity for making others the victims of their petty secrecies. Wakefield, in using his paltry imagination to an equally paltry end, represents in short, "crafty nincompoop[ery]" (71). Hawthorne knows by implication that writing entails craftiness as well. The construction of "Wakefield" is crafty, and we can sight the author cunningly rubbing his hands together as he announces, "Now for a scene!" (73). While Hawthorne, in other words, fears that the craft behind the work will compromise its integrity,

⁶For one of many reflections on plagiarism in Poe see his *Marginalia* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1981), where he follows a litany of literary lines that resemble one another with the following statement:

I would have no difficulty in filling two ordinary novel volumes with just such concise parallels as these. Nevertheless, I am clearly of opinion that of one hundred plagiarisms of this character, seventy-five would be, not accidental, but unintentional. The poetic sentiment implies an abnormally keen appreciation of poetic excellence with an unconscious assimilation of it into the poetic entity, so that an admired passage, being forgotten and afterwards reviving through an exceedingly shadowy train of association, is supposed by the plagiarizing poet to be really the coinage of his own brain. An uncharitable world, however, will never be brought to understand all this, and the poet who commits a plagiarism is, if not criminal, at least unlucky; and equally in either case does critical justice require the right of property to be traced home. Of two persons, one is to suffer—it matters not what—and there can be no question as to who should be the sufferer.

(86)

⁴I will be referring to *The Celestial Railroad and Other Stories* (New York: New American Library, 1963) 68; and *Great Short Works of Henry James* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) 489.

⁵I mean to suggest May Bartram's death; Wakefield's separation or self-sundering; and Egaeus' meditation in the library that leads to disfigurement of the beloved.

Poe insists that to mask and mis-shape is the only defense against those forms that deceive us by their assumed wholeness and integrity. If Marcher's hamartia is that he cannot take part in the commonplace, in love and death, Egaeus' compulsion is to take love and death apart.

Thus while Poe in my view describes the ways in which we cannot use deformity *enough* to mean, Hawthorne and James more often confront the ways in which we use deformity wrongly to mean. In James's *Washington Square*, for example, to be sick is to be interesting; and, no character, including the Doctor and excluding the least interesting character (in the doctor's view, Catherine), is exempt from causing another character pain. In both this novel and in "Daisy Miller," in fact, illness is required for participation in that social milieu of late nineteenth-century America that consists of a rising middle class who have made their fortune but who do not achieve a concomitant sense of "culture," "form," "propriety." Daisy Miller is expressly *not* sick, though she is surrounded by people who by turns suffer from dyspepsia, headache, and insomnia. She announces: "I never was sick, and I don't mean to be."⁷ Indeed, Daisy's fatal illness is brought on, it seems to me, by an act of volition. Daisy's death by consumption is not a moment of high drama; we do not have here the stereotypically Gothic displacement of consummation by consumption. Instead, Daisy's death is treated nonchalantly if not expectantly by her suitors in a setting of continual denouement. The game required her, after all, to be sick, and, if that proved impossible for one so vital as herself, then death might prove a viable substitute.

In *Washington Square*, too, Catherine Sloper needs to be sick in order to play a part, to stand for something, to have significance.⁸ As it is, she is "very robust and healthy" (though never defiantly so [30]); as it is, she is an ineffective member of the plot, an audience figure of her life as fairytale—"she is not scenic" (95), she has "little histrionic talent" (105), she is unable to "act" (108) in a setting described by curtains, wings, balconies, and front row seats. Catherine's father, on the other hand, has a "misfortune" that "made him interesting, and

even helped him to be the fashion" (31), while her pseudo-lover, Morris Townsend, is "interesting" precisely because of his apparent "misfortunes" (70-71). Indeed, "there is something brilliant in his very misery" (118).⁹

We finally find ourselves gasping at the end of this novel, not because, as in Poe, something has been wrenched that can never be made to fit again, but because an unformed part has been made to conform to the deformed whole. In the process of the novel, Catherine suffers a misfortune that calls a self into being so that, by the end, her sickness is aptly cast: she will never again take a suitor, she will not become healthy in other people's terms. "Picking up her morsel of fancy-work," she has woven her sentence "for life, as it were" (220).

Hooper's "fancy-work," in Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil," is the piece of black crepe that he wears on his face, and, like the story that Wakefield hides behind, it represents a dilettante's attempt to be fanciful. Hooper assigns himself a ghostly apparition when he dons this morbid veil in the pulpit—he assumes an other and un-seen self that his parishioners are called upon to interpret. While the story implies epistemological questions, such as how we reveal the unrevealed, it juxtaposes an anti-psychoanalytic and anti-literalist strain. According to Hooper, for example, that which is most horrible cannot be revealed on earth, and this leads his congregation to believe that what is behind the veil is more important than the veil itself. That Hawthorne distrusts an epistemology more reliant on depths than on surfaces is clear, but he simultaneously criticizes the crude literalism of a Goodman Brown in this story. Hooper finally is estranged from the community (which includes his beloved) and is a prisoner of the text he has transformed himself into. Hooper uses deformation—as it is self-imposed or perceived as all the rancor in the world around him—to mean things that it

⁷The complete dialogue between Mrs. Penniman and Dr. Sloper reads as follows:

"What is the course of your interest in Mr. Townsend?"
 "Why," said Mrs. Penniman, musing, and then breaking into her smile, "that he is so interesting!"
 The Doctor felt that he had need of his patience.
 "And what makes him interesting?—his good looks?"
 "His misfortunes, Austin."
 "Ah, he has had misfortunes? That, of course, is always interesting."

(70-71)

⁷See "Daisy Miller," in *Great Short Works of Henry James* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) 51.

⁸Henry James, *Washington Square* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984).

should not.

In Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death," deformation is not tied up primarily with ethical deliberations. Rather, it is called upon to test the limits of the Gothic genre. Prospero's Gothic castle—"an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's own eccentric yet august taste"—cannot keep out the Red Death, and, in some strange way, it even calls the illness into being (136). Like so many of Poe's tales, the story is fuelled by the dynamics of inner collapsing into outer and vice versa. Victims of the Red Death "bleed at the pores" (136). Those microscopic orifices, those passageways or channels between the body and its habitat, now deplete the body and betray their function. Whether the plague emanates from within or without is not answered by the story, and the body may even be accused as the source of its own destruction. "The scarlet stains" that tell the plague are most redolent on the "face of the victim," but it is not so clear which self sickness's mask reveals or conceals (136; italics mine). Thus the story uses the unplumbed premises of contagion to question the sources of identity. But, beyond that, it links processes of contagion, processes of self-construction to the boundary-making and boundary-breaking of aesthetics. Prospero is, after all, an artist: not only has he created a castle (most of whose rooms have windows that look in on themselves [137]), but he has designed a "masque":

it was his own guiding taste which had given character to the masqueraders. Be sure they were grotesque. . . . There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the *bizarre*, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust.

(138)

The phantasmical balance rendered by this artist who fashions the "arabesque" (138) always with an eye to "decorum" (139) does not, however, prevent the emergence of an element he was unaware of creating: a masquer over whom the inner and outer hold no sway, who shows neither "wit" nor "propriety" (139), who, dressed as the Red Death, admits a mask behind which nothing, or "no body" at least, exists. While this final mask may be a type of them all—a sign behind which lies no meaning, a sign that covers over the void—it also suggests that there are certain things that cannot be

represented by the macabre without incurring violence.

Thus Poe does not so much participate in that Hawthornian and Jamesian tradition in which the moral and physical converge, as he locates the physical in the aesthetic. At the end of "The Masque of the Red Death, the plague-fleeing revellers

gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave cerements and corpselike mask *which they handled with so violent a rudeness untenanted by any tangible form.*

(141; italics mine)

The revellers here are like primitivists who try to shape what appals them but who cannot wrestle the image to the ground. In Poe, if we do not know how to "handle" the formless, then certain kinds of de-formation cannot mean; or our forms forever fail to accommodate that which de-forms us.

I want to return to "Berenice" now in the terms of the "physical" and "significant" by comparing some of its features to yet another parallel tale by Hawthorne—"The Birthmark." Both "The Birthmark" and "Berenice" are about the fetishization of the female body by a male gazer. Hawthorne's version of the surgical procedure turned erotic fantasy (or vice versa) occurs at one remove from his narrative. That is to say, the story comes to us as the recounting of a macabre but nonetheless telling incident that has already occurred and that Hawthorne and the reader are now meant to make use of. We know from the beginning of this tale, in other words, that Aylmer is going to remove Georgianna's birthmark and that he may destroy her in the process. The horror of Hawthorne's tale is not located in the literal extraction of the hand-shaped mark but in the metaphorical potency of the act: we are shocked at Aylmer's having transformed the mark on his beloved's face into an emblem of multiple meanings each of which he must master. The "little hand," after all, represents for him the hand of God; the mark of origin; the hand of Georgianna's mother; the sensual and profane hand. It even refers to the hand that writes.

Early in Hawthorne's tale, Georgianna exclaims, "You cannot love what shocks you!" (206), and we are meant more to agree with than dispute her claim. In fact, Aylmer might agree with Georgianna as well since he, too, feels that he cannot love her until she ceases to shock him,

until her birthmark is no longer a part of her face. In "Berenice," however, in a moment that verges on the comic, Egaeus tells us that he asked for Berenice's hand in marriage precisely because of her newfound decadence:

During the brightest days of her unparalleled beauty, most surely I had never loved her. . . . And *now*—now I shuddered in her presence, and grew pale at her approach; yet, bitterly lamenting her fallen and desolate condition, I called to mind that she had loved me long, and, in an evil moment, I spoke to her of marriage.

(22)

In both of these stories, the part (teeth or birthmark) must be extracted from the whole (body of a woman), and in both, the part must become something other than itself so that the removal can occur. But we experience the horror differently in each of these stories. While in Hawthorne's tale the horror lies in what we know already or in an outcome that we are led to imagine from the start, in Poe's story, terror emerges as a response to what we do not know: that Berenice is to become "teeth." Excited as we may be by Egaeus' sickly-imbued love, by his uncanny obsession with teeth, or by his compulsion to transform the teeth into "ideas" (23), what most shocks us and makes us shudder is the *physicality* of what we had *only* presumed to be mentation—the actual application of "the instruments of dental surgery" to Berenice's face (25). In Poe's tale, then, metaphorization entails literal displacement, a wrenching of a thing from its native place, for it is only by the last sentence of the tale, when the teeth have been extracted, that the metaphor is wholly achieved. Then the teeth can be called "ivory-looking substances that were scattered to and fro about the floor" (25). Metaphor here entails both an act of removal and a space for what we cannot admit. And, "Berenice" is not, like Hawthorne's story, the recounting of an event whose opening and ending are intact. "Berenice" is not a story that believes in the completeness of the retro-spectacle. Rather, it is the enactment of a process of remembering/dismembering. Berenice's teeth will be removed anew each time Egaeus ventures to tell the tale, or each time we read it.

I would like now to describe one final point of departure between the two tales in order to make way for the further excavation of memory

and the marginal in "Berenice." "The Birthmark" is primarily an exchange between Georgianna and Aylmer, but many critics have drawn attention to the significance of that third member of this unhappy party, "Aminadab." "Aminadab," or, as Jungian critics have noted, "bad anima" spelled backwards, is a sort of Frankensteinian laboratory assistant with allegorical overtones. In "Berenice," there appears a more profoundly interesting other, I think, in the "menial" who provokes Egaeus' confession in the last two paragraphs of the tale. Poe's third party (if we dare consider Egaeus and Berenice to constitute two) is not quite like Aminadab, a scientist's servant who comes to represent all that is base about the scientist. The menial, rather, is a messenger from the margins who *speaks*—he is the seemingly insignificant element who directs the main player in a theater of the grotesque: "he told," "he pointed," "he directed"; "he took me gently by the hand" (25). The menial is both a complicit and opposing member in Egaeus' dramatic confession. He serves the purpose of a climactic delight that may be felt by Egaeus at this moment as his "tremulous, husky and very low" voice evolves into "tones" that grow "thrillingly distinct" (25); and, he spurs the revelation and remembrance of an unbelievable violation.

The menial is both more and less than a part of the narrator's psyche. His presence (the menial's) has an unspoken resonance in the epigraph that prefaces *both* the story (18) and his entrance into it (24): "*Diceant mihi sodales si sepulchrum amicae visitarem, curas meas aliquantulum fore levatas*"—"My companions told me I might find some little alleviation of my misery in visiting the grave of my beloved." This quotation, from which the story derives and to which it returns, refers to a "companion" who is horrifyingly absent in the story. Most often we find Egaeus "sitting in the library, and again sitting there alone" (24). To the extent that the menial is the missing companion in the tale, he is also the "other" that Poe's fictional selves are usually wont to find. The epigraph of "The Man of the Crowd" might be called upon to clarify this point: "*ce grand malheur, de ne pouvoir être seul*" (97)—"It is a great misfortune not to be able to be alone." The passage can be retranslated in terms of that story to mean it is a terrible misfortune to have to seek the self; it is a terrible misfortune to have to crave another who will only prove a double and whose resemblance to the self one fails to recognize.

This menial who draws the final memory out of Egaeus' dismembered text stands on the periphery of Egaeus' consciousness in order to show him something rude and suggestive—the locus of his pain and of his seeking. "I spoke not," Egaeus says, "and he took me gently by the hand; it was indented with the impress of human nails" (512). This sentence speaks to a multiple (though not mutual, not reciprocal) laying-on-of-hands: of the menial, of Berenice, of Egaeus. That Egaeus' hand is not just indented but indented with an impress suggests a further layering, or pounding, if you will, of Egaeus' consciousness into itself. Now "to indent" may mean both to impress with teeth and to make a margin. Egaeus, in fact, removes Berenice's teeth because marginality means so much to him, but his act is only answered by the making of yet another margin in the shape of the menial or in the teeth-inflicted wound. What the marginal finally prompts Egaeus to express is nothing he can contain, nothing that he can handle, but that which necessarily slips through in pieces because of his forceful attempt to hold it back:

With a shriek I bounded to the table, and grasped the box that lay upon it. But I could not force it open; and, in my tremor, it slipped from my hands, and fell heavily, and burst into pieces; and from it, with a rattling sound, there rolled out some instruments of dental surgery, intermingled with thirty-two small, white, and ivory-looking substances that were scattered to and fro about the floor.

(25)

From here we must proceed to ask what exactly the narrator of "Berenice" is eager to remember and forced to forget. We must ask how the tasks of remembering and forgetting are encouraged or deferred by the act of writing in the story. If Poe departs from a contemporary like Hawthorne in important ways, he anticipates and revises modern pre-occupations with the relation of memory to written utterance. Thus we can read our way back through Poe in the language of writers like Proust and Rilke.

In that most "memorable" passage from Proust's *Swann's Way*, in the birthing of the memory of *petites madeleines*, Proust demonstrates the relation between the "accidental" and "willed" in transforming a

nostalgic longing into an actual ecstasy.¹⁰ So long as one exerts one's will in trying to recall a past experience, one can neither wholly regain it nor become it. Rather, one's past is best revealed to one by accident, when one *happens* to find the chance object (and especially the sensation produced by the object) within which one's past resides. For Proust's narrator, then, an accidental cup of tea and the taste of *petites madeleines* make his memory of Combray solid, whole. They enable it to blossom and lead him to "cease to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal" (34). As the accidental is exposed, an identification with the accidental dissolves. It is only when one's self is not coincident with time that one feels faced by one's end and insignificance.

Every conscious attempt to reveal a past is an act of incompleteness and, therefore, is finally ineffectual. And, since most of us never rightly brush up or into the accidental, our pasts as well as our figurations of that past are dead. If we consult Hawthorne in this matter, we find a bias falling on the side of conscious effort in making the past our own. Hawthorne might join with Proust in saying that to most of us the past remains dead, but then his reason for bringing a past to life would be to establish a difference rather than an identification between past and present. Because we are our pasts or because every present perception and gesture is based on some past experience and knowledge, in Hawthorne's view, the revelation of one's past involves a supreme act of responsibility. Thus Hawthorne shows us in a story like "Rappaccini's Daughter" the consequences of the narrator's failure to make sense of his associations, his failure to construct the link between his psychical past and his present perceptions and relationships. And, Hawthorne invites the reader to use his past knowledge to gain a present understanding of the text by introducing a myriad of signs that *must* be translated, both in the French titles of his preface and in the allusions to the Old and New Testaments, Cellini's *Autobiography*, to Ovid, Spenser, Shelley, Keats, and Beatrice Cenci. Thus, in Hawthorne, the past *can* be revealed by an act of the will even if it can never be revealed in its entirety, and the purpose of such revelation is not a necessarily integrated self but one that can tell the difference between its past and

¹⁰Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff (New York: Vintage Books, 1982) 95.

present versions. No matter how many allusions we translate in "Rappaccini's Daughter," for example, we cannot claim that any single one gives us the complete or "true" meaning of the text. Uncovering the relation between earlier and later texts does not necessarily make us more sure, but aware of how much more complicated the construction of meaning is. When we read Cellini's *Autobiography* alongside of Hawthorne's story, moreover, we can draw very ready connections between Guasconti of Hawthorne's tale and both his namesake in the *Autobiography* (Guasconti) and the subject of the *Autobiography* (Benvenuto Cellini). Hawthorne's tale makes us consider how every story is told from a point of view embedded in a history of other stories that are similar to it and different from it.

I would like now to quote at length a section from Rilke's *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* because of its familiarity with Poe and so that I might further demonstrate Poe's departure from the notions of remembering that I have already outlined:

I am lying in my bed five flights up, and my day, which nothing interrupts, is like a clock-face without hands. As something that has been lost for a long time reappears one morning in its old place, safe and sound, almost newer than when it vanished, just as if someone had been taking care of it—: so, here and there on my blanket, lost feelings out of my childhood lie and are like new. All the lost fears are here again. The fear that a small woolen thread sticking out of the hem of my blanket may be hard, hard and sharp as a steel needle; the fear that this little button on my night-shirt may be bigger than my head, bigger and heavier; the fear that the breadcrumb which just dropped off my bed may turn into glass, and shatter when it hits the floor, and the sickening worry that when it does, everything will be broken, for ever; the fear that the ragged edge of a letter which was torn open may be something forbidden, which no one ought to see, something indescribably precious, for which no place in the room is safe enough; the fear that if I fell asleep I might swallow the piece of coal lying in front of the stove; the fear that some number may begin to grow in my brain until there is no more room for it inside me; the fear that I may be

lying on granite, on gray granite; the fear that I may start screaming, and people will come running to my door and finally force it open, the fear that I might betray myself and tell everything I dread, and the fear that I might not be able to say anything, because everything is unsayable,—and the other fears . . . the fears. I prayed to rediscover my childhood, and it has come back, and I feel that it is just as difficult as it used to be, and that growing older has served no purpose at all.¹¹

For Proust, once you have made contact with the accidental, you are no longer accidental; once inside your past, you are not a slave to time. For Rilke, on the other hand, the past eternally resides in its own place which is quite beside ourselves even though it occasionally returns to haunt us. In Rilke, as in Poe, objects slip and slide into smaller and larger registers of significance so that perception (and self-perception in particular) is characterized not only by shifts in time but by shifts in space. Moreover, Rilke and Poe both qualify Hawthorne's suggestion that we are our pasts by asserting that we are our past fears, we are what we are afraid of. Some of the particulars of Egaeus' malady—specifically, his propensity for what he terms "attentiveness"—may lend pertinence to this issue.

Egaeus explains attentiveness to us by pairing it with "speculativeness" (20-21). A perceiver working out of the speculative mode begins with a momentous thought. But, this object of importance soon leads to a series of associations presumably less significant than their origin but powerful enough to render the original thought irretrievable. The moment of original importance (or largeness) cannot be returned to because of the sluggish series of small thoughts to which it has given rise. The "attentive" perceiver experiences a similarly distressed situation in reverse. The attentive onlooker (i.e., our narrator) grants the seemingly insignificant a hyper-importance. He begins where the speculative observer ends—with the frivolous—and transforms it into something important. In Poe's story, unlike Proust's passage, our brushing up against the inconsequential does not lead to a flowering of the past but to a *trap* out of time as

¹¹From *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, in Stephen Mitchell, trans., *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982) 95.

the mind's eye bores into the insignificant "monomaniacally" (20).

When Rilke's narrator speaks of the "fear that I might betray myself and tell everything I dread," he reminds us of the double-bind that so many of Poe's narrators find themselves in: the fear of self-betrayal coupled with the fear that a self can never be revealed. But, more than this, Rilke summons the fear that is so telling in Poe's work of expressing the inexpressible. In an entry of the *Marginalia*, Poe articulates this dilemma not in terms of the relation of past to present but according to the space between "wakefulness and sleep"; yet, his fascination with that shady area is directly linked with making a memory. Poe begins by asserting the function of language to formulate an otherwise ungraspable thought:

I do not believe that any thought, properly so called, is out of the reach of language. . . . For my own part, I have never had a thought which I could not set down in words, with even more distinctness than that with which I conceived it:—as I have observed, the thought is logicalized by the effort at written expression.

(98)

Poe goes on to describe a class of non-thoughts, however, which he calls "fancies," that he has found "impossible to adapt to language" (99). They constitute a form of mentation that has yet to be described. Tao-like, they remain unutterable, though, as Poe believes, they are not by definition so. They occur at the boundary between sleep and consciousness, and, unlike "absolute thought" (99), they do not "demand time's endurance" but inhabit a crowded yet brief *point* in time (99). Their "evanescence," he says, makes them difficult to express, indeed to "embody," because words are powerful (100). The material is so delicate, in other words, as to prefigure brittleness, and words might only tear at such a fabric, afterwards forcing it to have seams. Poe wishes, in fact, to harness such "psychal impressions" *before* they cross over the boundary of sleepy wakefulness and into sleep (101). Curiously enough, this region of the mind is only accessible during times of "intense tranquility—when the bodily and mental health are in perfection" (99). With this condition as a given, Poe's attempts to intervene in this particular mental process are dependent on an immutable balance of will and accident. Poe tells us, for example, that he has tried "to control

(when the bodily and mental health are good) the existence of the condition:—that is to say, I can now (unless when ill) be sure that the condition will supervene, if I so wish it, at the point of time already described" (100). "Circumstances" have to be "favorable" in order for the condition to "supervene," and the author must simultaneously be able to "induce" or "compel it" if he is ever to usher it into the dominion of written expression. Since Poe insists that his health be sound for such a condition either to be induced or controlled, one wonders why he assumes this prerequisite and what outcome on and of this psychal realm he might imagine when the mind or the body of the subject is sick. A recapitulation of one further element from Poe's excerpt on this subject might enable us to consider such questions in terms of "Berenice."

Poe wishes to prevent the *point* (at which wakefulness and sleep converge) from lapsing into "the dominion of sleep" (100), and he does this not by willing a *prolongation* of the condition but by 1) waking himself up, and 2) *transferring the point itself into the realm of Memory* (100). Thus relocated, the experience, he thinks, can now be analyzed and later written. By conferring a "pastness" onto a thing, the author renders it expressible; by putting the thing into memory, the author can put a thing into writing. I use this particular phrasing, "put a thing into," to suggest the material shape that Poe seems to want to give his abstraction but whose transmutation proves inadequate in his tale "Berenice."

In "Berenice," possibly, Poe places a sick subject into the role of experimenter of imagination almost as an acknowledgment that, sick or well, we are directed by a pre-linguistic spectre, unformed but formative. Just as Poe would like to bring the boundariless and spell-bound region of his faculties under control and thus give form to "ecstasy," Poe's Egaeus is plagued by the memory that Poe himself constructs (99).¹²

While one might seem well-meaning or well-feeling when one *makes* the memory that Poe describes, one may fall ill later and thus have additionally to contend not only with an unwilling but with a willed transmutation. What we do while we are well conspires to sicken us while we are sick. Poe's sick narrator in "Berenice" is haunted by the memory described by the speaker in Poe's *Marginalia*, "a memory like a shadow—vague, variable, indefinite,

unsteady; and like a shadow, too, in the impossibility of my getting rid of it while the sunlight of my reason shall exist" (18). In illness, the *immemorable* but remembered ecstasy becomes a horror, for Egaeus' "memory was replete with horror—a horror more horrible from being vague, and terror more terrible from ambiguity" (24). Moreover, once the memory is implanted, Egaeus is compelled to repeat its process in reverse. If the memory is a manifestation of the mind's making the vague solid, then Egaeus is compelled to lift objects from their loci and *return* them to a region of vagueness and nonentity. His sickness, for example, leads him to

repeat, monotonously, some common word, until the sound, by dint of frequent repetition, ceased to convey any idea whatever to the mind; to lose all sense of motion or physical existence by means of absolute bodily quiescence long and obstinately persevered in.

(20)

Like the origin of the memory, Egaeus' illness is

¹²The difficulty of recovering the self in language is probed at length by Virginia Woolf in her previously unpublished "A Sketch of the Past," in *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Jean Schulkind (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976) 64-85. Woolf imagines the writer's task as turning "shocks," or "blows from an energy hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life," into expressions of revelation or wholeness (72). For Poe, such shocks cannot be reproduced and conquered by words but endlessly re-enacted. Though the memory might seem to be cast out of oneself via writing in Poe, that language proves to be merely another surface that will be broken through by yet another memory. Egaeus' objectification is replete with subjectification: having cast the memory into the form of object—either teeth or story—he merely replicates himself or creates another occasion for the annihilation of the self by the self. But neither does Woolf finally believe in the integrity of the writing act, for while she admits to having purged herself of an obsession with her dead mother after writing *To the Lighthouse* (81), it is precisely the intensity of her mother's "invisible presence" (80) that requires this "Sketch of the Past." Woolf's conception of the relation of writing to remembering is, moreover, readily reminiscent of Poe's as she describes the difficulty, if not impossibility, of writing both "being" and "non-being"—that part of every day that is not lived consciously (70); or, the difficulty of transcribing two sorts of time: the time of the body and the time of the mind (79). The reconstruction of the past is so difficult in "Berenice" precisely because the memories of our minds cannot meet the memories of our bodies, or, for that matter, what is inscribed in the body for the future, what the body knows about the future: the demise of both the body and the self.

defiant before "analysis or explanation" (20). Now that the memory exists, Egaeus' task is to rid himself of it; and, we must now try to answer what writing accomplishes in this regard.

It is clear to us from the start of "Berenice" that Egaeus wishes to omit certain memories from his narrative and to include others. Egaeus will not name his family, nor will he speak of the books in the library where he was born and where he has grown (and declined): "My baptismal name is Egaeus; that of my family I will not mention," and, "The recollections of my earliest years are connected with the chamber, and with its volumes—of which latter I will say no more" (18). That Egaeus' books and family members become protrusions of the text cannot be denied, but what he wishes to restore via the narrative, is, as I have previously mentioned, "a remembrance that will not be excluded: a memory like a shadow," etc. (18). Both the books and his family lead us and Egaeus back to himself, yet what Egaeus seems to wish to recollect is that part of his face (his identity) that is not corporeal and that finally takes up residence in the teeth of his beloved.

To return to the proposition with which I opened this reading, the projection outward of memory onto a body that is not one's own (e.g., the book's, the woman's) suggests that, for Egaeus, remembering entails dismembering. That Egaeus is trying to cast something out of himself in the writing of his memory is clear. But whether the story answers just what it is that plagues his memory, just what he is trying to rid himself of, is another question. Is Egaeus trying to *recall* the *idea* that the teeth represented in order to enact a self-cure that "might restore" him to "peace" and give him back his "reason" (23)? Or, is the trial of his narrative meant to help him to *forget the deed*, the premature burial? Egaeus might not be keen to the fact that what is capable of being expressed and what is capable of being remembered are not the same thing. Writing is presented in this story as failed exorcism partly because one's texts are coextensive with one's self. In the final paragraphs of the story, for example, Egaeus refers to the memory that cannot be retrieved or formulated as "a fearful page in the record of [his] existence, written all over with dim, and hideous, and unintelligible recollections" (24). Soon after this conjunction of text and mind, his eyes drop to "the open pages of a book, and to a sentence underscored therein"—the epigraph

from Ebn Zaiat (24). As if to remind us of the irony of Brown's Wieland, Sr., whose eyes find the line "seek and ye shall find" in a narrative that continuously subverts that hope, Poe's Egaeus makes us wonder whether the book commanded him or if he has sought the page that justifies his deed. Does the book give him back his self, his past; or, has he, in the act of reading and writing, turned the book into his past? In *Wieland*, the book has neither the power to command nor justify, but in "Berenice" it is capable of both. The book is omnipresent, it is both before and after. In "Berenice," the symbiosis of self and text proves that writing remains a part of one, for writing is the reshaped version of the self that now forces itself back on to the face that disowned it. Writing does not enable the writer to "get something out of his system," because the body has its memory too; because the body is the boundary or margin of the self that the self can never meet. Each person's skin is, in other words, both his second and original self.

Poe's "Berenice" may be a making of that second skin, the encasement of memory, the self's border that taunts its contents with unreachability. In a project separate from this tale, but which, as I have tried to show, informs the tale, Poe had intended his own book of "marginalia." "During a rainy afternoon, not long ago," Poe tells us, "being in a mood too listless for continuous study, I sought relief from ennui in dipping here and there at random, among the volumes of my library" (3). What emerges from the impulse is Poe's self-collected *Marginalia*, which he curiously published out of context over a period of several issues of *Democratic Review*, *Grahams Magazine*, *Godey's Lady's Book*, and *The Southern Literary Messenger*.¹³

¹³In his introduction to the *Marginalia*, John Carl Miller notes, "After defining clearly and concisely in the first installment what he means by his title, 'Marginalia,' Poe then skillfully constructs a framework of sorts for the varied items that follow, almost certainly with the idea of later putting the whole of them into a book" (x). See also Arthur Hobson Quinn's *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography* (New York: C. Appleton-Century Co., 1941) 436: "There have recently come to light, a number of the pages from the first chapters, which were evidently being prepared for a new printing, or perhaps even for book publication." Moreover, the procedure entailed in making the "Marginalia," as Poe describes it, reminds us again of the delicate process of bringing a fancy into the light of written expression: "The main difficulty respected the mode of transferring the notes from the volumes—the context from the text—without detriment to that exceedingly frail fabric of intelligibility in which the context was imbedded" (3).

Like the fruitless labor (21) of Egaeus' continuous reading in his library (*his* self-enclosure), Poe's insertion of commentary into or onto his books is both frivolous and insistent: "All this may be whim," he writes in his preface to the *Marginalia*, "it may be not only a very hackneyed, but a very idle practice;—yet I persist in it still" (1). What distinguishes marginalia from other kinds of writing, and from literary criticism in particular, is that it is both more deliberate and more trivial. Literary criticism is "'talk for talk's sake,' hurried out of the mouth; while the *marginalia* are deliberately pencilled because the mind of the reader wishes to unburden itself of a *thought*" (2); or, "purely marginal jottings, done with no eye to the Memorandum Book, have a distinct complexion, and not only a distinct purpose, but none at all; this it is which imparts to them a value" (1). If the purposeless quality of marginalia is what gives it a value, then what would happen to its value were Poe to collect it into a book? Does marginalia violate the text it refers to, and, if so, might dismembering it (i.e., separating it from the corpus out of which it grew) reverse the effects of the violation? Do we annotate books as a way of forgetting them, or as a way of forgetting what they prompt us to remember? Do marginalia prevent the book from straying into the territory of our lives? Such are the questions, circling, and dialectical that Poe's *Marginalia* taken together with his tale require us to ask.

We can describe Poe's unplumbable layering through the following series: frame and content, manner and matter, reader and text. The beauty of the marginal, according to Poe, is that its manner is unselfconscious even though in it "we talk only to ourselves" (2). Manner that is "left out of the question" is "capital manner, indeed" (2). Thus, marginalia in diverting our attention away from manner enables us to turn our backs, so to speak, on that (internalized) outer skin that we are futilely compelled to chase. The marginalia enables us either to flee manner, or to dodge it in such a way that we can tap it on the back and, in its moment of surprise, make it face us. This second model comes to the fore if we notice how in Poe's preface to the *Marginalia* he both mocks himself (or the notion of a preface to the marginalia) and takes his project seriously. He sounds, in fact, very much like one of his beset characters whose narratives, cloaked in a rigorous step-by-step analysis, are shown to be driven by a force not their own. For such

narrators, order is pretense. Their matter makes their manner appear to be taken off guard.

Another descriptive model of the relation of surfaces to their interiors is posed precisely by the relation of the reader and the text of "Berenice." Let us recall that Egaeus is not only obsessed with marginalia—he "muse[d] for long unwearied hours, with [his] attention riveted to some frivolous device on the margin or in the typography of a book"—but that he is a maker of marginalia (20). Egaeus' narrative is comprised of four sections separated by asterisks. Rather than read them as marginalia of a missing ur-text, we try to distinguish and relate the parts (see Dayan, for example). When we find the unity in the aphoristic style of Emerson's *Nature*, we make the metaphor that is nature. But, when we close up the intervals of Poe's "Berenice," when we connect the lines of its gestalt, we make horror from ideas and ideas from horror. Poe's "Berenice" is a series of

dotted segments that, welded together or not, make the box that holds the horror of the teeth, and, by association, the act of their removal: the box that still contains the instruments of separation.

Neither "Memoranda" nor "Marginalia," Poe's collected jottings might be better named *adversaria*. For, in this word that indicates both the annotations or commentaries written on a facing page of a book, and a commonplace book for things "worth keeping," the dual movements suggested by Poe come clear. *Adversaria*, literally "that which has been turned to," figuratively, that which opposes, is precisely the term to tell of how the body turns toward and opposes its interior—how memory turns toward and opposes its text.□

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Meng Chiao

COLD CREEK

Translated by James A. Wilson

i

the frost exhausts
water's blue used up

cold creek
shows splintered scales

bow to inspect
its mirror, fake

reflecting this
body beat and broken

it slides away
but can't hide itself

bed exposed
rocks always glossy

opened up
a generous friend

but its currents
can close on the trustful

witness in full
its mind, ignominious

iced at night
tricky fords at dawn

it purifies here
jade held in the hand

thawing far off
its particles pollute

know from the first
that a stream, step-muddied

knows no one, exiled
from mountain springs

ii

from Lo-yang
follow the shore

to the Meng clan
town facing the creek

boats rock
white ice cracks

as if cut
by corners of clear stone

the green stream
congeals to jade

pale waves
raised into marbled tips

the whiteness brightens
in this rare mirror

the sky vague
to the living

in steep descent
through tricky twists

grab wood, rotten
hear birds with dead mates

the fragrance of frost
thins out, is gone

freezing
vague and numb

sitting
I listen dumbly

stumbling
I lose a shoe

the bank thick
tangled with brambles

knows no one, exiled
from mountain springs

ii

from Lo-yang
follow the shore

to the Meng clan
town facing the creek

boats rock
white ice cracks

as if cut
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in steep descent
through tricky twists

grab wood, rotten
hear birds with dead mates

the fragrance of frost
thins out, is gone

freezing
vague and numb

sitting
I listen dumbly

stumbling
I lose a shoe

the bank thick
tangled with brambles

my speech
exceeds grief

iii

at dawn get drunk
the whole bottle

cross the snow
come to clear creek

the flow of waves
has iced to knives

teal cut up
mallard carved open

feathers once folded
slashed, cast aside

blood heard
soaking sand and mud

I want to say
. . . what?

brood in secret
heart in its acids

frozen blood?!
not for spring

with blood in spring
birth couldn't be vague

frozen blood?!
not for blossoms

with blood in blossoms
mateless birds might lament

hidden in hills
this village, thorn-dense

frozen, inanimate
impossible to plow

the boat-poler
knocks off jade stars

his whole road
floating with fireflies fallen

the new moon freezes
grief sinks to the depths

hunters, starved
sing for putrid fish

iced teeth
grind together

wind tones
sour through chimes

harsh sorrow
can't be ignored

engulfing
faint, delicate sounds

emerald ripples
finished, rolled up

iridescent silks
fragments flown whirling

stepping down
slick, unsettled

perching above
breakage, little rest

grunts, squawks
cacophonous

looks that accuse
how long do we take it?

bend after bend
then rapids

white dragons
scales rippling!

frozen whirlwind
fractured cries

souring tones
ravines embittered

notebooks and pads
unravel, words weaken

yet the winged or walking
increase their grace

the mad bow
its one string broken

eases all beasts
impels them to respect

great dignity
set up here

keeps small killings
from occurring again

"purity, brilliance
such radiant white

cosmos be constant
open birth and breath"

a fine sky
sun and moon brushed in

in deep blue
stars, planets break through

I stand alone
feet in snow

intoning to no one
doubts beyond counting

the comet of slander
blazes in vain

the tongue constellation
flaps its gums

"Yao was a sage
and did not attend you

Confucius was humble
and still had subjects"

my remonstrations
come roughly to an end

the old notes
don't easily hold

vi

because of the cold
one could eat what's dead

(the killing wind
still persists)

if weapons were made
with propriety and grace

propriety and grace
would grow on a blade

on a blade
both would rot

a generous friend
makes no such mistake

let the waves
draw out daggers of ice

knifing each other
endless rivals

vii

jagged snow
pierces hearts of fish

hideous blush
brightened with blood

convulsed
their ghosts

accuse:
"motives are wounds"

how did the vapor
of some strange place

flow here
to this exact spot?

cut off:
a month of spring

blocked up:
a hundred gullies choked

face lifted
I look for clear skies

shine down
illumine my doubts

viii

the creek, hoary
weeps bitter cold

tears, floating
ice into brittle chimes

the flying dead
the walking dead take shape

snow explodes
disorders heart and liver

sword edge
frozen, blunted

bowstring
impossibly stiff

you've heard before
a generous friend, firm

won't eat even
what the heavens have killed

carving off jade
I cover their carcasses

mourn with red stones
tears from eye sockets

ix

wind on the creek
loosens ice that's left

brightness in the creek
holds promise of spring

jade warms
flowers drop dew

dragons unknot
making scales glisten

with anxious steps
I descend to clear bends

while they thaw
I wash at the perfumed ford

for a thousand miles
ice cracks in all places

each spoonful of water
softened and graced

each creature's ghost
unfrozen, purified slowly

small ripples start
waves nearly renewed—

almost at once
sword wounds vanish:

now rise
bodies from a hundred wars!

AN EVOLVING WORLD OF LANGUAGE

1. *Knowledge, performance, and evolution*

The Western epistemological tradition has been dominated by the idea that knowledge is our most valuable asset, even leading us to define humanity in terms of a preferred relation that we believe to exist between us and the world we live in.

One reason for this feeling of uniqueness is clearly the enormous power of our human language, and the dizzy feeling that we experience when we use our language to reflect on itself. However, our language as a performance in the world that contributes to the constitution of our knowledge is literally the result of a very gradual evolutionary process on the biological level.¹ Extending this, we might say that language IS evolution or that for that matter *evolution itself IS language*: a continuous search for solutions, adaptation, connections, use of previously established pattern in new and more complex situations, etc.

Viewing this evolutionary process as a basic—if not the basic—performance, we will argue that the extent to which we are able to perform in the world constitutes the extent of our knowledge about the world, and therefore constitutes our world. This implies that for instance the extent to which our stomach reacts to what we eat is a part of our knowledge of the world and that it constitutes the world from the point of view of our stomach. We don't *have* knowledge that tells our stomach, our intestines, our brain, and all the other organs involved in digesting food what they should do when we eat. The very complex interaction between all those organs and the individual performances of each of the organs *constitutes* that part of our knowledge of the world. When I cut my finger with a knife, this cut, as a physical reaction of my skin, is part of my knowledge of what is going on in my environment. Although my skin has no concept of a knife as a functional object and has no idea

about its relation to a fork, it literally knows what a knife is to extend that some of the knife's properties are available to it and that it reacts to it. In other words, *performance IS knowledge and knowledge IS performance*.

This is clearly a very flexible approach to knowledge that allows us to use the term in a broader context than a strictly human one. To the extent that a rock is able to maintain itself in the world, or to the extent that it falls when it is dropped from a certain height or when it is hit by another rock, it has knowledge of the world. The falling of a rock when it is dropped constitutes the rock's knowledge of its environment, of the world. The knowledge is there *in the act of falling itself*, in the interaction with an environment. Evidently, what holds in the extreme case of a lifeless rock will equally hold for plants, for lower—or less complex—forms of animal life, for animals in general.

2. *Language, ontology, and epistemology*

2.1. A dual hierarchy

If we want to investigate the vast field of epistemology that lies between us and the world, whereby we define world as that which is accessible to a given organism, we will have to investigate our performance in the world. It is obvious that this implies that it is no longer possible to subscribe to either of both one-directional views on knowledge: our knowledge is not solely determined by the world, nor are we completely imposing a structure upon the world.

The first hypothesis, that our knowledge is a true image of the world, has even in the so-called hard sciences such as physics lost its influence since it is no longer obvious that the different basic elements of the most fundamental theories—quarks, gluons, leptons, etc.—refer to real entities. They can therefore be said to be invented rather than actually discovered. But as a result of that, the second hypothesis—that we impose a structure on the world—has

¹See Philippe Lieberman, *The Biology and Evolution of Language* (Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984).

significantly gained momentum, leading to a strange epistemological perspective that can be characterised by a dual hierarchy operating simultaneously.

First of all, we basically express knowledge in a verbal structure. Other media—especially the visual media—are then used to support this verbal structure or to make the headlines easily—literally at a glance—accessible. To some extent this first hierarchy seems at least in its present forms related to the idea that we impose a structure on the world—the idea being that we more or less arbitrarily build up networks of words that are only locally linked to what is going on in the world. The second hierarchy has to do with literal language. Literal statements—and, as a result of the first hierarchy, especially literal verbal statements—are often considered to refer directly to the world, and they are therefore attributed a higher truth value. We find this for instance in an extreme and very obvious form in the fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, which denies any kind of truth or even any kind of cognitive value to a figurative reading. This second hierarchy is obviously closely related to the view that our knowledge consists of an adequate image of the world.

So it seems that the cognitive priority of verbal discursive language is in some strange way the result of the combination of both internally incoherent views, leading to a position where a specific mode of reference to the world is identified with reference to the world as such. In other words, this is a position that identifies the literal aspect of a part of our verbal language with the denoting aspect of language.

In accepting this dual hierarchy, we unnecessarily restrict our possible knowledge about the world. This implies that we restrict our possible performance and therefore our survival value. The verbal and the non-verbal, the discursive and the figurative cannot be reduced to one another, even when they ultimately refer to the same world, or, as I will argue, because they refer to the same world. Why should figurative or non-verbal knowledge be impossible without the aid of a literal, verbal meaning? When one takes the point of view that our language refers to the world—a presumption that is rejected by Derrida and others—the construction of the figurative based on the literal or even as a deviation of the literal seems to be useless. Even the point of view that

figurative language functions as a shortcut for discursive language seems then hardly acceptable and definitely contradicts our experience. It is only when language is no more than a game with its own rules for which the world is irrelevant that it seems necessary to construct the figurative as a specific case of the literal, since otherwise the figurative would lose every reference and become meaningless and trivial. The same holds for non-verbal forms of knowledge. Here our argument is even stronger, since the direct relationship between the visual and the world is even more stringent than the relation between a verbal structure and the world. It is easier to accept that a visual language refers in a cognitively meaningful way to the world, since the images involved are—even in the case of abstract painting—more closely related to our experience of the world. Most people do not believe that a word as such is an image of the world or of something in the world, whereas most people will readily accept that the picture that I take is a real image of the thing out there, or that an abstract painting contains to some extent the same qualities as the objects in the world.

I am not trying to imply that either of those positions is right or wrong, only that the reference of a word to the world is different from the reference of a visual image, and the reference of discursive language different from the reference of figurative language. Here I have come close to the point I want to make: visual metaphor has a cognitive potential of its own that—however closely related to what is going on in other media—cannot be reduced to the cognitive functioning of those other media.

That the verbal and the non-verbal, the discursive and the figurative cannot be reduced to one another is basically the reason why in an evolutionary process a discursive verbal language might have had a surplus survival value. If they had merely been different presentations of a basically identical way to organize the world, and if—as all the evidence points out—there was visual language going on before verbal language since our verbal abilities (e.g., the ability to speak) appeared long after our visual abilities (we could see before we could speak), then it becomes very hard to understand why there would have been a need for verbal language, and more specifically for discursive verbal language.

So the very fact that at first sight might seem to oppose and contradict my attempt to

reconsider the cognitive value of the non-verbal and the non-discursive—namely that a discursive verbal language is “proven” to be the better solution—is as a matter of fact the most powerful argument we have to break through the hierarchy of the discursive, verbal language: not to simply replace it, but to enrich it. The conditions we live in have changed to such an extent that the meaning of “survival”—or for that matter of “evolution”—is no longer the same as at the time when verbal language indeed proved to be a superior tool for survival.

These changes actually allow us to spend time and energy to recover or develop those other possibilities that have been in some sense put on the sidelines in the course of evolution. I don't think that we should accept the solutions to problems that evolution has come up with as sacred institutions that have been established once and for all, although we should understand the conditions that made them valuable at a specific moment in time. Evolution itself seems to change the decisions it once made in order to adapt to new changes in the environment, and we could consider this to be the very essence of evolution. The fact that something has at one point in evolution been an absolutely crucial invention does not mean that it will not at another point be superseded by others. We, for that matter, constantly revoke previous decisions in order to keep up with changes in our environment. Turning this around, we should also recognise that a solution that has been superseded may prove to be a better solution in a future situation. A shift in the structure of the distribution of power in a democratic society is probably essential in times of war but should be revoked as soon as things are back to normal.

If the verbal and the non-verbal, the discursive and the figurative are indeed to a large extent different ways to express knowledge, and if the knowledge contained in each of them is not merely a redundant repetition of knowledge contained in one of the other forms—although some form of redundancy is certainly and necessarily the case—then a synthesis of the different forms of our knowledge—verbal, visual, kinesthetic, tactile—would maximise or at least increase the degree to which we are able to map our environment and react to it. Survival of the fittest is to a large extent survival of the best informed, or—referring to what I have said earlier—survival of the best performing.

Given such an evolutionary view of language, it becomes fairly clear that our knowledge differs from the knowledge of the rock to the extent that we are able to adapt ourselves to changes in the world. In other words, we are able to change our performance as a function of changes in the environment. And while for the rock this adaptation is basically a reactive, passive type of performance, we are able to take a much more active posture, based on our possibility to project and in some sense predict future changes. When a stream of lava pours out of a volcano, the rock has no choice but to adapt itself by going along with the stream, whereas we might be able to predict the eruption, predict the path of the stream of lava and simply step aside. Even when we cannot predict with a 100% certainty what will happen, we are able to exclude some possible outcomes and stress others. We can make up something like an emergency plan, which a rock obviously can't do.

2.2. Possibility and probability

The question then is: how can we bring such a synthesis or unity to our knowledge when this unity is not given in our experience?

Since this is basically a question about how our knowledge of the world is possible, it seems methodologically right to ask what possibility means. But at the same time, the answer to this is a basic—if not the most important—part of the answer to the question we are asking. In other words, we believe that *possibility is the answer to the how*. Let us try to elaborate on this relation.

Using the concept of probability, we can formulate the fundamental relation between the ontological and the epistemological as follows:

The probability of an event has to do with the chance that the event will actually take place. Within a Kantian framework this taking place has to be related to our knowing that an event takes place and therefore to its *reale Möglichkeit*, which Kant defines in a footnote by A244 of his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* where he introduces *logische Möglichkeit*—the absence of contradiction—as what is left when one eliminates all sensory experience (*die einzige die wir haben*) from the *reale Möglichkeit*. Here we find ourselves at the hinge between the ontological and the epistemological in Kant's thinking. *Reale Möglichkeit* has a double aspect. On the one hand it is one of the elements that acts as a basis for our knowl-

edge of the world as a phenomenon, as something we get to know through our sensory experience, and on the other hand it has to do with the confirmation of the existence of the world as a *Ding-an-Sich*.

The probability of an event is then related to the probability of its *reale Möglichkeit*. In other words, the possibility of our knowledge is a function of the probability of the world and the probability of our knowledge is a function of the possibility of the world.

The probability involved is a conditional probability, dealing with the chance that an event will take place given a series or a set of elements, in casu a set of previous evolutionary events. Neither the classical theory of probability as it was formulated by Bernouilli and Laplace, assuming the principle of indifference which states that events are equally probable unless we have a good reason to prefer some of them over others, nor the relative frequency theory of probability, based on probabilities assigned as the result of empirical investigation, can be used to fully understand the functioning of probability in the evolutionary process.

Carnap has tried to overcome the problem of the empirical verification of outcomes by substituting the empirical with a logical verification. This brings him close to what has been called the a priori theory of probability (APT), characterised by three assumptions:

- probabilities are determined a priori, and not empirically.
- probability is a logical relation between sentences (expressions, events, properties . . .)
- a probability is always relative to a proof, to given knowledge.

More than the other theories, APT focuses on the epistemological aspect, but it does not relate this knowledge to the world. It does not relate the probability of our knowledge to the probability in or of the world.

In a version of APT presented by Keynes, the probability relation gets a definite Kantian aspect when he defines it as

the degree of probability to which those logical processes lead, of which our minds are capable.²

²J.M. Keynes, *A Treatise on Probability* (London: Macmillan, 1957) 32.

We see APT appear as related to what Kant has indicated as the *logische Möglichkeit*, and thus relevant for—but not identical with—*reale Möglichkeit*. Again we are confronted with the apparent gap between the ontological and the epistemological level.

Nevertheless, APT is interesting since it allows for other logical aspects than contradiction to play an important role in what Kant called *logische Möglichkeit*. However, the two major representatives of APT—Carnap and Keynes—hold a different view on the relation between classical logic and probability. Carnap considers probability as an addition to classical logic, whereas Keynes considers classical (binary-valued) logic as a limit of a more general theory of probability: a limit in which all the probabilities are either 1 or 0.

Keynes' approach has the advantage that it introduces probability as a basic notion, and not just as a local aspect of a binary logic. In principle, this should allow us to extend the domain of the notion of probability to incorporate the ontological level, the world.

In that respect it is interesting that Keynes holds that probabilities cannot be compared. This would imply that different sets of events leading to another evolutionary event cannot be compared. Keynes himself seems to be thinking in that direction when he writes that

Some probabilities are not comparable in respect of more or less, because there exists more than one path, so to speak, between proof and disproof, between certainty and impossibility; and neither of two probabilities, which lie on independent paths, bears to the other and to certainty the relation of 'between' which is necessary for quantitative comparison.

(35)

The only thing I can do is try to find out to what degree conditions for one event are also conditions for the other event, thereby locally (= on one or more levels) linking the hierarchical tree of conditions of one event with the hierarchical tree of conditions of the second event.

3. Language and Evolution

We believe that it is precisely this type of relation between different structures that can be considered as the basis of figurative language. This implies that our figurative language

actually refers to basic properties of relations of conditions on the ontological level, and is therefore more than just a deviation of discursive and/or literal language. Keynes is not trying to say that probabilities are in principle not comparable, only that sometimes the conditions that would make such a comparison possible are not fulfilled. These will be the cases where figurative language is our *only* way to make knowledge about the world possible. Figurative language then becomes obviously more than just a temporary device to keep us going while we are waiting for a more permanent—more “true”—discursive formulation. Adding the information that we gain through figurative and/or non-verbal language to the body of our knowledge then implies adding to the world available to us, in a way very similar to how, for example, vision adds to the world as it exists for a rock. It increases access to the world and therefore increases the world.

So if non-discursive, non-verbal forms of language can increase our knowledge of the world because they are not just redundant repetitions of discursive verbal language, this implies that they increase the possibility that we will be able to adapt ourselves to certain types of changes by showing us possible strategies that we are in principle unable to deal with in discursive verbal language.

During my research about how dyslexic children can use visual language to overcome some of the problems they have with verbal language, that was exactly what I found to be happening in the visual work of children with a specific language-comprehension impairment that makes it virtually impossible for them to understand or use figurative verbal language, leading them to a fundamentally literal interpretation of verbal language. However, when asked to visualize the figurative verbal language, they were able to solve most of the semantic problems involved, but furthermore they added to the semantic structure that one could expect as the result of a strictly verbal language. And the redundancy between the different types of languages allowed them to get back to the verbal language and deal with the figurative aspects of it in a way that had at first been impossible.

The following is a transcription of a typical conversation that went on during the process of using visual language to get around problems with verbal language. The child involved was at

that time eleven years old. He did not speak at all for more than six months at age three to four although he was perfectly able to speak and understand language, a disorder known as elective mutism, in this case related to a systematic exposure to a second language. His intelligence is definitely above average. He was diagnosed dyslexic at the age of seven and has since been enrolled in a special program but has had almost no systematic experience with visual language. The child tends systematically to a literal interpretation of figurative verbal language. His limited ability to deal with figurative verbal language is based on the memorizing of reductive discursive definitions.

- Do you know what a vein of gold is?
- No. I have no idea.
- You know what gold is, do you? Do you know what a vein is?
- Of course. A vein is where your blood flows through.
- Yes. And you have no idea what a vein of gold is?
- No.



At this point the child is asked to make a drawing.

- And now, what do you think a vein of

gold is?

—Well, you know, from your heart you have two different veins, with blue and red blood. But I am not sure what the difference is. But maybe a vein of gold is a very special vein with something different in it.

—Do we have gold in our bodies?

—No, of course not.

—Where can you find gold?

(silence)—Oh, now I get it. A vein of gold is like something that brings gold from the heart of the earth to all different places where we can find it.

This is merely one example of some of the exciting things that go on when those children use visual language. In this specific case a more or less discursive visual language allowed the child to use a more figurative verbal language and develop a semantic framework that went beyond the one used by children without this language impairment.

Based on what we see happening when these children use different aspects of language to extend their understanding of the world, we would like to claim that what happens when we use language, namely combining elements on several levels of the language, selecting appropriate combinations, and using those as elements on higher levels in order to open up and close off syntactic/semantic possibilities, is exactly what is going on in the evolutionary process, leading us to believe that any language

can be described using the fundamental concepts of evolutionary theory: heredity, combination, and selection. The differences between the types of language (verbal, visual, discursive, figurative, etc.) can then be described in terms of those fundamental concepts.

The different ways to make combinations selections and carry them over to higher levels of syntactic/semantic organization that are involved in the different types of language allow us a different access to the world. We can then see these languages as a population and attribute the survival value to the population rather than to an individual language. The availability of non-verbal languages increases the survival value of the language impaired children. In general, non-verbal and non-discursive language increase our human survival value since they provide us with a pool of possible strategies to deal with different and changing aspects of the environment. Art is *par excellence* where we create this pool, where we keep it alive and available. What the children do with the visual language is exactly the same as what our most valued visual masterpieces are about. They offer and explore alternative epistemological strategies. In the long run, they allow us to survive.□

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Robert Zaller

RITUALS OF DEATH IN POSTWAR AMERICAN FILM

Kirk Douglas. Helluva' movie. You remember that movie, Austin? . . . Ya' hear the horse screamin' at the end of it. Rain's comin' down. Horse is screamin'. Then there's a shot. BLAM! Just a single shot like that. Then nothin' but the sound of rain. And Kirk Douglas is ridin' in the ambulance. Ridin' away from the scene of the accident. And when he hears that shot he knows that his horse has died. He knows. And you see his eyes. And his eyes die. Right inside his face. And then his eyes close. And you know that he's died too. You know that Kirk Douglas has died from the death of his horse.

—True West¹

The representation of death has always been one of the great challenges of art. Each particular form has its own limitations. The great death scenes in literature—in Tolstoy's *Ivan Ilyich*, for example—concentrate on the surrender or withdrawal of the inmost consciousness, on the final failure of words. The plastic arts, by contrast, must of necessity concentrate on the physical surface. They can show the subject living, dying, or dead, or by means of tableau all three; but they cannot show the transition between these states. This can be done, or rather simulated, in drama; but stage deaths are generally the least convincing of all.

In film it is different. The director can bring us as close to death as the twitch of an eyeball, or hold us as far as a sniper's bullet. He can make it as culminating an event as the last scene of an opera, or as casual as the discarding of a cigarette. He can kill not just one but many, can obliterate whole cities and planets if need be, and though we know that, as on stage, the actors will soon get to their feet again, we do not doubt the reality of their death as the celluloid whizzes by. There are many reasons for this, but one is particularly salient. Death in film, even in closeup, occurs at a distance: not just the space between the viewer and the screen, but between the screen and the happening it records. Film is the triumph of the third dimension, an illusory

dimension in space, but a quite real one in time. What we see before us is not event but evidence, and we are in no position to disbelieve. The speed of the frame, moreover, denies us the leisure to reflect critically on what we have seen. The evidence is no sooner presented than it is withdrawn; one must accept it at once or not at all.

In all then, film can represent death more variously, more graphically, and for most purposes more convincingly than any other medium. It might not go too far to say that it represents death better than any other significant human event, that it is the medium of death *par excellence*. It makes us privileged spectators of that event, often with knowledge of what will happen to a character before the character does: the victim lined up in the crosshairs of the assassin's rifle, the coed about to walk into the arms of the sex maniac. Death, too, particularly violent death, is often a shared event on screen, the focus of others' responses, a catalyst for action. Indeed, it is the response to death on the screen that validates it as real and makes it important. Death in film is a moral agency: it reveals the values of the survivors and makes us share and evaluate them. It involves us as spectators just as it involves the characters themselves. It is a communal event, and, like all communal events, when sufficiently repeated it tends to become a ritual, that is to say, a form which reflects and embodies significant cultural

¹Sam Shepard, *Seven Plays* (New York: 1981) 18-19.

values.

In no genre has this ritual been more self-consciously cultivated than in the Western; and among Westerns, few films have been more pivotal than John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1946). Ford took as his subject the clan war of the Earps and the Clantons, previously treated only in Allan Dwan's *Frontier Marshal* (1939).² Later versions, notably John Sturges' *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), would emphasize the similarities between the two clans and the essentially private nature of their feud, but Ford's vision is, quite literally, black and white. The forces of anarchy and violence in Tombstone repeatedly threaten to break out at night, only to be dispelled, time and again, in the light of day. The point is not meant to be lost on us when Clementine Carter says to Wyatt Earp (Henry Fonda), the reformed gunfighter turned marshal and protector of the law: "I love your town in the morning, Marshal. The air is so clean and clear." When Doc Holliday, finally joining forces with the light, asks Earp when the showdown will be, the reply is simply: "Sunup."

The gunfight itself is staged with classic simplicity. The town, so continually noisy up to this point, is utterly still and silent but for the barking of a dog, which emphasizes the absence of sound. Earp walks down the center of the street, ceremonially alone, while Doc and the others fan out behind him. The action itself, the disorder that threatens the new country's painfully acquired sense of its own possibility, is obscured by the sudden passage of a stagecoach and the freeing of the horses from the corral. The dust clears—it is all very swift—and the necessary people are dead. Earp sends Pa Clanton, bereft of his four sons, out of town like God judging Cain: "I hope you live a hundred years." His brother Morgan, upholding the rather sterner Old Testament values of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, shoots Clanton instead. Wyatt makes no comment: this, too, is justice.

My Darling Clementine was made in 1946, in the aftermath of the great war America had fought to unconditional surrender. While not without its moral complications, the film is informed throughout by the sense that good and evil are finally simple, demonstrable choices, and that the villains can all be shot dead. By 1952, when Fred Zinnemann made *High Noon*,

the Cold War had revealed that evil was neither so simple nor so readily isolated. Zinnemann's scenario is exactly the same as Ford's—the marshal who has brought order and decency to his town and must fight the last atavistic challenge of violence and anarchy to the death—but Will Kane stands alone in his town, representing not an implicit moral consensus but a purely personal sense of honor that is as primitive as what it stands against: the refusal to run from a fight. The ritual of death does not purge the community, reaffirming its values and strengthening its resolve to live by them; rather, it emphasizes the hollowness of those values, and the community's willingness to abandon them. When Kane (Gary Cooper) drops his tin star into the dust at the end of the film—it drops just to the side of his foot, which then turns abruptly away from it in a wonderfully minimal gesture of disdain—he rejects the authority he has represented, the restraint which the hero imposes on himself as well as on the forces of anarchy.

Isolated from the community he serves, however, the hero loses his own compass; his own individualism is not enough to justify him. In later Westerns such as *Lonely Are the Brave* (1962) and *Tom Horn* (1980), we find him reduced to a rather simple-minded drifter, his skills exploited by others and cast off when expedient. George Roy Hill's *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), an enormously popular film, combines the romantic isolation of the outlaw with male bonding. For Butch (Paul Newman) and Sundance (Robert Redford), crime is a point of honor; in a society given over to the Pinkertons, breaking the law is the only moral response. But each assertion of freedom only circumscribes it further until, outgunned 100 to 1, they are cut down in a hail of bullets by the troops who wait on the ramparts above them like a ring of vultures, the film mercifully ending in freeze-frame. There is no longer anything for the hero to do but glory in his own death, a death which serves no redemptive or communal purpose but is merely a *beau geste*. The same point is made, rather more tendentiously, in Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, which also dates from 1969. A band of aging desperadoes led by Pike Bishop (William Holden), pursued by railroad agents, heads south into Mexico, hoping to profit from the anarchy of its revolution. They go, knowingly, from bad to worse: from the closed frontier of the Old West to the brave new world of twentieth-century war, with its mass

²Andrew Sarris, *The John Ford Movie Mystery* (Bloomington: 1975) 117.

violence and unrestrained brutality. This is symbolized, in a scene that may have its origin in *High Noon*, by the savagery of children. In the earlier film, the town's children, acting out the anticipated death of Will Kane, bump into him and are shamed into silence. In *The Wild Bunch*, however, there is no one to restrain the border town children who torture a scorpion with ants and then roast it alive. This image prefigures the torture of Pike's confederate, Angel, who is dragged around a courtyard by a horse while his Mexican captors enjoy a fiesta. In such a world, honor among thieves is the only value left; as Pike says, reducing the Western code to its essentials: "We started together. We'll end together." The film's famous climax, the slow-motion mutual massacre between Pike's men and the Federales, is as elegiacally extended as Ford's shootout scene in *My Darling Clementine* is clipped and laconic: what is shown is not the foundation of a moral order but the final end of one.

The point of the hero in later Westerns is not to redeem or avenge but to die well, or at least in a way that shames one's killers by contrast. Here, the archetypal doomed hero is Billy the Kid. Unlike such ambivalent figures as Wyatt Earp, whose career as outlaw-turned-lawman reflects our continuing national debate over freedom versus domesticity, Billy is always outside the law, and he must always die young, forever beyond the reach of compromise or accommodation. His whole life is thus a ritual preparation for death.

This lends him naturally to interpretation as a failed Christ figure. In Arthur Penn's *The Left-Handed Gun* (1958), we see a wounded Billy (Paul Newman) staggering alone with a saddle over his shoulder in an evident cross image. He is reported dead, and watches his own mock burial by friends. Rejecting the amnesty arranged by Pat Garrett, he exults in tones of resurrection: "I ain't dead any more. I come awake." At the same time, he takes on the inevitability of his real death: "I come to life. . . . I don't stop now. No more stop." (Penn's dialogue is exceptionally laconic, even for a hero.) Billy is finally taken when his hideout (which is plastered with reward posters) is surrounded. He is sentenced to die on a Friday. Escaping, he is tracked down by Pat Garrett and betrayed by the Judas figure of Moe Tripp (Hurd Hatfield). Billy has no new gospel to preach; he is simply unable to live with any of the roles offered him, whether it is the respectability of

Pat Garrett or the media celebrity of Moe Tripp, who brings him press clippings of his exploits (a theme which echoes in *Butch Cassidy* and Penn's own *Bonnie and Clyde*, and finds its apotheosis in the films of Robert Altman). "I go where I want . . . I do what I want," Billy says. "All I know is what I feel." What feels right to Billy is suffering pain. Pain and cleansing are continually associated in the film, the extension of which is that death is the only lasting purgation. Billy's willingness to suffer confers absolution on his acts and leaves him innocent. Pat Garrett has to choose between his existential innocence and his legal guilt, but Billy, who has given away his gun in despair, absolves his friend too. He fakes a draw from his empty holster, and Garrett shoots in self-defense. Billy falls slowly, raising his empty gun hand in a token of pardon and farewell.

Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973) gives equal billing to the two protagonists of the legend. Billy's celebration of freedom is here contrasted with Garrett's opportunism and ambition; as Pat (James Coburn) says, "I aim to live to be rich, old and gray." He has sold out to the land interests who regard Billy's depredations as a threat to the new order of things; the territory is up for statehood, and bad press will be damaging. Garrett forces an old sidekick, Sam Baker (Chill Wills), to ride with him after Billy (Kris Kristofferson). Sam is unwilling, but he is under obligation to Pat, and cannot refuse his offer of gold. His death is strikingly realized. Gutshot, he walks to a nearby creek and sits down to die, while his woman—played by Katy Jurado, Will Kane's Mexican mistress in *High Noon*—walks wordlessly up and down in tears at a distance. In leading Sam to his death, Pat has betrayed a core value of the Old West, or at least Western: male bonding. We are not surprised when he kills Billy cold-bloodedly, in ambush; it is a job to be done, a means to an end. At the end of *The Left-Handed Gun*, Pat Garrett walks away with his new bride, whose wedding Billy has spoiled with a shooting; here domesticity is affirmed as a value, mundane in comparison with Billy's glamorous freedom, but not contemptible. Peckinpah's Garrett rides away alone, representing nothing.

The intimacy between a killer and his victim is part of the appeal of the Pat Garrett/Billy the Kid legend, and part of the ritual of death. The equation can be tilted, as we have seen in the contrasting versions of Peckinpah and Penn, not

only to produce greater or lesser sympathy for either party, but to yield highly disparate moral results. We do not question Wyatt Earp's license to kill in *My Darling Clementine*; we accept it in Penn's Pat Garrett as a tragic necessity; but Peckinpah's Garrett is little more than a sophisticated bounty hunter. Penn himself examined such a type in *The Missouri Breaks* (1976). Robert E. Lee Clayton (Marlon Brando) is a "regulator" employed by the local land baron to clear off rivals. He is met by Tom Logan (Jack Nicholson), who asks, "Isn't a regulator one of those people that shoots people but never gets near them?" This is intended as a deadly insult, but Clayton replies cheerfully, "That's it." Brando's Clayton, with his odd attire and grotesque behavior, sets himself apart from the circumstances of his employment; he is a *professional*, who sets his own rules and does his work in his own way.

In the last analysis, both the cynicism of Peckinpah's Pat Garrett and the style of Clayton are acts of self-deception; there are no victors in the game of death, only victims. In Lamont Johnson's *A Gunfight* (1971), two aging gunfighters, Will Tanqueray (Kirk Douglas) and Abe Ross (Johnny Cash), are pitted against each other in a bullring by a wealthy entrepreneur, Alvarez (Raf Vallone). Will, who has settled down with a wife (Jane Alexander) and child, represents a failed attempt at domesticity. Abe, the unregenerate gunfighter, sees no reason to turn down a profitable wager. In flash-forwards, first Abe and then Will is shown as the victor; but in either case the survivor's life is ultimately forfeit too, for future challengers lie in wait. In the event, it is Abe who wins. Black-clad, he rides out of town, exchanging an expressionless glance with Will's wife, Nora, while her young son stares after the man who has incomprehensibly destroyed his world.

The bloodlust of the townspeople in *A Gunfight* is the final negation of the image of nation-building offered by *My Darling Clementine*, just as the gladiatorial combat of Will and Abe negates the purgative violence of Ford's showdown between the Earps and the Clantons. There is only a terminal corruption that degrades all concerned. Even Nora, who pleads with Will to refuse the fight, is seen cynically. She tries to bushwhack Abe, a scene which parodies the moment in *High Noon* when Kane's pacifist bride overcomes her scruples and shoots to save her man. In the sequence in which Will survives, he is shown leaving town,

ostracized by the people. Nora refuses to accompany him, and a bystander asks Abe's mistress, Jenny (Karen Black), whether Nora will go back to her former lover, Alvarez. "No," comes the reply, "not right away."

The cynicism of *A Gunfight* appeared to portend the exhaustion of the Western as a genre. There seemed nothing left but satire and travesty, which had already arrived in Elliot Silverstein's *Cat Ballou* (1965), and reached its apogee (or nadir) in Mel Brooks' *Blazing Saddles* (1974). But its true epitaph, at least for the present, is Robert Altman's *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* (1976). Altman's Bill (Paul Newman) is a retired hero turned carnival pitchman who plays matinees of himself chasing down Sitting Bull (Frank Kaquitts) and his tribe in a tableau of genocide. That is to say, Bill is making the first Western, a point underscored by Altman in his credits, where the film's actual personages (Bill, Sitting Bull, Nate Salisbury, Ned Buntline, Annie Oakley) are referred to by their generic titles: the Star, the Indian, the Producer, the Legend-Maker, the Sure Shot. Altman sees Bill as a crucial transitional figure in American culture, a "real" Westerner who deliberately transforms himself into a mythical one, the first Western star. Unlike the heroes of *Butch Cassidy* and *The Wild Bunch*, he is no romantic living out a doomed ethos to the end, but an entrepreneur rapidly mastering the arts of survival in a new world. "I'm generous and flexible," he says to himself, making up the new code as he goes along, "—that's it, generous and flexible." Bill is master of his three-ring world, in which everything has become the debased image of itself. "Custer could die," he reflects before the show goes on. "[Sitting] Bull's just going to get humiliated."

The magnifying mirror in this self-reflexive world is supplied by the press. In *The Left-Handed Gun*, Paul Newman's Billy the Kid reads of his fame before his death; in *Butch Cassidy*, Newman's Butch is a connoisseur of his own press clippings. In *Buffalo Bill*, the price of fame is not death; fame exists instead of death. When Ned Buntline (Burt Lancaster) greets Bill by saying, "You ain't changed a bit," Bill replies, "I ain't supposed to." But the matter is more complex. What produces fame is the simulation of death, the daily reenactment of Sitting Bull's massacre. As Bill's *tableau vivant* is the first Western, lacking only the technology of the camera to record it, so the travesty of the massacre is both the precursor of all cinematic

death scenes and their final parody. The only "real" death that occurs in the film is that of Brown Horse, a Shoshone who is accidentally injured in the massacre and dies, anticlimactically, fifteen minutes later into the film. Bill passes it off with a flippant remark; this, too, affirms his immortality. Death is for stuntmen.

The Western was the paradigm genre of the postwar period, and its formulae are clearly visible in a range of films from *Death Wish* to *Star Wars*. Similarly, the failure of redemptive violence which it exemplified can be seen across the entire genre spectrum. Whether in war, crime, detective, or spy films, violence degenerated from a communal act to a private or corporate one. At the same time it became more stylized as well, and for much the same reason increasingly pervasive, no longer the crux or climax of a film's action but its "continuity," an end in itself. At one extreme, this led to a pornography of violence, exemplified by low-budget exploitation films such as the ubiquitous cult favorite *The Texas Chain-Saw Massacre*, while on a slightly more respectable level, it produced a new special-effects virtuosity, as filmmakers vied to achieve the most graphically explicit collisions and dismemberments.

More generally, the debasement of violence produced a cinema of alienation in the 1960s and 1970s that was far removed from both the hard-boiled G-man films of the 1930s and the cynicism of *film noir*. This sensibility was perhaps first made fully explicit in John Boorman's *Point Blank* (1966), in which an escaped convict, Walker (Lee Marvin), stalks and is stalked by the nameless syndicate that has swindled him. The theme of the embattled loner triumphing over odds is an American cliché; what distinguishes *Point Blank* is that its violence is neither a means of action nor even its end, but its total context. *Point Blank* offers us a world reduced to the bare essential: killers victimizing other killers. The cycle of violence is thus perfected, and no other explanation is necessary to rationalize the film's action.

The hero of this new cinema is the assassin, be he a freelance operator, political terrorist, or licensed agent. Like the Western loner from whom he is lineally descended, he prefers anonymity. Whereas a few films such as *The Killer Elite* glorified a kind of fascist brotherhood of violence, the true killer worked modestly and alone. When, in *Magnum Force* (1973), Clint Eastwood's Harry Callahan discovers a band of

avenging angels on the San Francisco police force, he ostensibly roots them out in the name of law and order. But his real objection seems to be professional, if not aesthetic: guys like that, making a cult of their work, give killing a bad name.

There is a hierarchy among assassins, or as we should perhaps call them, privileged killers—their privilege consisting in the implied or explicit claim that they, or those who license them, possess the unquestioned right to take life: or better, the right to ignore such questions as irrelevant. At the bottom of the hierarchy are terrorists, unreliable and unprofessional because they regard their work as a means to an end rather than an end itself. Vigilante types, like Paul Kersey in *Death Wish* (1974), are a cut above, but still amateurs. Hit men are the lowest rung of the professional ladder; stolid and proficient, they are feudal retainers, lacking imagination or independence. Contract killers are closer to aristocracy, but spies are *hors de combat* because they prey on each other. The princes are the free-lance operators who can sell their services to the highest bidder, where the bidders themselves are screened and obliged to submit references.

For the sake of brevity, we will focus on the elite. In S. Lee Pogostin's *Hard Contract* (1969), Jonathan Cunningham (James Coburn) works for a syndicate he knows only through a contact, Ramsey (Burgess Meredith). Ramsey likes to reminisce about the Spanish Civil War, where he lost what he calls his "idealism." He is a philosopher whose aim, he says, is to write "the history of murder from Cain to Cunningham . . . it gets more and more careful, till there seems to be no crime at all."

What Ramsey means is that murder has become a clinical art, devoid of moral significance. Standing before Goya's famous depiction of a massacre, *The Third of May*, he expands on this to Cunningham's love interest, Sheila Metcalf (Lee Remick). "There's no such thing as punishment anymore," he says. "There's no such thing as crime anymore. There's something else." This something else is a moral immunity to the killing of our own kind that leads directly to genocide. We have killed thousands at once, says Ramsey, and we are prepared "for tens of millions." But, says Sheila, this is "immoral." Ramsey picks the theme up eagerly: "Of course it's immoral . . . it's just not *that* immoral. It's wrong. . . . Yes, of course it's wrong. But in our time it's not *that* wrong."

Sheila's companion, Adrienne Bedford (Lili Palmer), turns to her in horror at this: "That's not true, is it?" Sheila reflects: "No, it's not true. But it's not that untrue."

Cunningham's last contract involves Carlson (Sterling Hayden), a former operative of the syndicate who has taken early retirement against his employer's wishes. But Cunningham too is slowing up, his instincts going awry, and when he finds Carlson, the latter's refusal to resist disarms him. Carlson describes murder as a sacred experience of evil; when one comes out on the other side, one is proof against the temptation to kill forever. Nothing, he asserts, not self-defense, not the defense of his wife, not even of his grandchildren, would induce him to do it again. Cunningham, after a half-suicidal car ride, decides to join him, in a parody of male bonding in the Western. "Murder is obsolete!" he shouts at Ramsey, breaking his contract. "Why don't you write me a letter when death is obsolete?" Ramsey replies.

Michael Winner's *The Mechanic* (1972) presents a far more developed relationship between an older contract killer, Bishop (Charles Bronson), and a worshipful apprentice (Jan Michael Vincent), whose first contract is to kill his mentor. Bronson's *Mechanic* also waxes philosophical about his calling: "Money is paid. But that isn't the motive. It has something to do with standing outside it all . . . on your own." The classic frontier virtue of self-reliance is thus adapted to the new frontier of bureaucratic assassination, as the old craft relation of apprenticeship is adapted to the new mechanics of murder. Like Brando's regulator and Coburn's Cunningham, Arthur Bishop prides himself on following his own austere code of survival, which he calls his "rules." Like them, he is fetishistic about their observance, and resents being hurried by his employers. McKenna, his young disciple, decides that his weakness is working for anybody at all: "He needs a license." McKenna will live by his own rules alone; if he accepts the contract on Bishop, it is because it accords with his own desire. In a surprise ending, both men manage to kill each other. They have both made the cardinal mistake of their profession: never underestimate your victim.

The master assassin of all is portrayed in Fred Zinnemann's *The Day of the Jackal* (1971), and his intended victim is the prince of all princes, Charles de Gaulle. The Jackal—he has so completely erased his traces that he has no other

name—is approached by the OAS, which wishes to assassinate de Gaulle to forestall Algerian independence. The Jackal, needless to say, is utterly indifferent to these colonial ideologues and their passionate grievance, but the opportunity to kill the greatest man in Europe in an orderly, well-financed way is a cap to a great career that cannot be resisted. When informed about the plot, de Gaulle refuses to cancel a major public appearance or alter his schedule in any way. Assassination is one of the risks of power, and protecting his life is the task of underlings. The entire film assembles itself about the moment when the Jackal has de Gaulle in his sights as carefully and elegantly as a symphony converging on a single chord; the ritual of death is reduced to a great game of chess between two grand masters who play without ever meeting each other. De Gaulle and the Jackal are two of the same kind, the opposed embodiments of power, the one representing the massed violence of the state, the other the disciplined evil of the individual will.

Between these virtuosos of death, the ordinary man has little to choose; he is helpless against either. Beneath the veneer of civilization, the game of anonymous, seemingly random killing seems society's only real business. In Stanley Kramer's *The Domino Principle* (1977), Roy Tucker (Gene Hackman) complains to his ex-lawyer, Schnabel, about the murder of a friend. "Roy," Schnabel says, "I'm an attorney and I see this all the time. That's the way things are": meaning, officially sanctioned killings in which the victims disappear without a trace. As one might expect, Schnabel is the next to vanish, and the film ends in freeze frame with Roy in the telescopic sights of a rifle. Occasionally one of the innocent bystanders, getting caught up in the game, shows enough talent to become a player. In Sydney Pollack's *Three Days of the Condor* (1975), Joe Turner (Robert Redford) narrowly escapes a gangland-style assassination (as the opening credits go up, his name is being slowly crossed off a list), the gang in this case being a rogue outfit operating within the CIA. As Turner fights to remain alive, he earns the professional respect of his assigned killer, Joubert (Max von Sydow), who suggests that he might take up the trade himself. Instead, in a post-Watergate fantasy ending, he decides to tell his story to *The New York Times*.

In a world divided into killers, victims, and bystanders, everyone is potentially fair game. This may account in part for the popularity of

Mafia films in the early 1970s, climaxed by Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972). *The Godfather* is a veritable fugue of death, shown in the most graphic detail and culminating in the massacre of the rival Barzini clan, a scene intercut with the baptism of Michael Corleone's son. Yet these deaths seem less threatening. They are all in the family, a closed system of mayhem that we can observe with the same security and detachment we enjoy in watching a costume drama. Indeed, in a world otherwise populated with mechanics and jackals, the feudal values of a Vito Corleone are reassuring. Here is a family, after all, that takes care of its own problems, and we might almost be reminded of Wyatt Earp's rejection of outside assistance on the eve of his showdown with the Clantons in *My Darling Clementine*: "This is a family affair."

The difference between Ford and Coppola is the difference between clan violence subjugated to the larger interests of community and such violence as destructive not only of community but, reflexively, of the clan itself. This theme of mutual destruction—of feudal violence corrupted by the impersonality of the society it preys on—is the subject of *The Godfather II* (1974). But Coppola's vision remains a nostalgic one, rooted in a "heroic" past and its decline. Robert Altman's *Nashville* (1975) offers a far more incisive view of the relationship between violence and the dissolution of community. The film's assorted characters are studies in dissociation. Its central figure, Barbara Jean (Ronee Blakley), is a Country singer attempting a comeback from a series of nervous breakdowns. Hospitalized shortly after her triumphal return to Nashville, she encounters Mr. Green (Keenan Wynn), who is nursing his terminally ill wife, Martha, L. A. Joan (Shelley Duvall), his niece, who hangs around the hospital for pickups, and Kenny (David Hayward), her eventual assassin, a young runaway who has more or less attached himself to Mr. Green. All these characters are in search of love and, by means of it, identity; what they find instead is an anomic and ruthlessly competitive world in which lovelessness manifests itself in the Country-Western cult of personality of which Barbara Jean is herself both the chief exemplar and the chief victim.

Formally, *Nashville* is a film about the failure of narrative, a failure that reflects the collapse of social structure at large. The death of Martha nicely illustrates this twin relation. As Barbara Jean leaves the hospital, she sees Mr. Green and

wishes Martha luck. A moment later, a nurse tells him that Martha has died. As Mr. Green struggles with his grief, Kenny runs up to him, bubbling over with a trivial piece of news. When L. A. Joan, who had refused to visit Martha in the hospital, fails to appear at her funeral, Mr. Green is so incensed that he stalks off to find her, thereby abandoning his wife as well. Martha's death, far from serving as a catalyst for narrative action or moral response, is significant only in its final lack of significance for anyone. It is a nonevent that occurs to a nonperson—"Martha" is never shown—and the mourners at her grave represent only a knot of humanity peering at a hole in the ground.

The film's other death, that of Barbara Jean, is far more cinematically resonant, but equally void of significance. Barbara Jean returns to Nashville in bridal white and steps out onto a red carpet, and brilliant reds—the freshly cut watermelon held by the Country-Western patriarch, Haven Hamilton (Henry Gibson), the flaming hair of his wife, Lady Pearl (Barbara Baxley), the giant NASHVILLE banner above a stock car rally—are the signature color of the film. The shocking, "virginal" spatter of Barbara Jean's blood as she sings onstage of the joys of family is thus the visual culmination of the entire film, a textbook example of narrative technique. But there is no narrative for this splendid armature to support. Barbara Jean is a sacrificial lamb, clearly marked for slaughter, but there is no meaning to her death, and no reason is offered for Kenny rather than anyone else in the anonymous crowd to stand up and shoot her. In this sense, it is a collective act without becoming a social one, no more significant than the bolt of lightning from an ionized cloud that strikes the nearest object.

It is precisely this absence of meaning that is Altman's subject. Though the rise of the assassin as the anti-hero of American film in the 1960s and 1970s clearly reflected the climate of political violence in the country, *Nashville* was the only film to respond seriously to the major assassinations themselves, from the death of John F. Kennedy to the shooting of George Wallace. Lady Pearl reminisces about the Kennedy assassination, and Opal (Geraldine Chaplin), another groupie of the Nashville scene, soliloquizes about it in an auto graveyard. The concert at which Barbara Jean is killed is a rally for a third-party presidential candidate, Hal Phillip Walker, who like Martha is described but never depicted. As she falls, Haven

Hamilton tries to hold the panicking crowd together by shouting, "This isn't Dallas! This is Nashville!" But of course it is Dallas, and Memphis, and Los Angeles; and it is Altman's very refusal to provide pat explanations (the right-wing conspiracy theory, for example, of a film such as *Executive Action*) that makes *Nashville* so successful an evocation of the shadowy menace and final irreducible absurdity of America's era of assassinations.

Altman and Coppola were the most significant American directors to emerge in the 1970s, and their last projects of the decade, *Apocalypse Now* and *Quintet* (both released in 1979), provide, in their very different ways, a capstone to our discussion. Coppola's work, with the exception of *The Conversation* (1974), is, as we have noted, rooted in narrative, and *Apocalypse Now* boldly appropriates one of the last great narratives of the nineteenth-century tradition, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Like Conrad, Coppola attempts to achieve through narrative a vision of imperialism as an image of narcissistic consciousness, a projection of ego beyond the bounds of community that leads to its own destruction. But Coppola goes beyond his source to suggest a fundamental breakdown in the collectivity itself, manifested in the technological insanity of Vietnam. His vision of America at war is of a society totalizing itself as ego, locked in a nightmare of narcissism from which there is neither individual nor collective redemption. This is the final logic of imperialism, a death machine that can possess its object only by destroying it: by apocalypse. The most striking personification of this collective ego is not the renegade Kurtz (who prefigures its final, decadent phase) but the manic Kilgore (Robert Duvall), who wages war as a Wagnerian spectacle and exposes himself to enemy fire like a hero confident that his death will come only at the appointed time. If, indeed, we regard Kilgore and Kurtz as dissociated halves of the collective ego, then the long slow ritual of Kurtz's death is Kilgore's too. The film's most famous line, however, belongs not to

Kurtz, ruminating on his Eliot, but to Kilgore: "I love the smell of napalm in the morning." That line too sets up an echo, though one that has travelled a very great distance from its source. It is Clementine Carter's to Wyatt Earp: "I love your town in the morning, Marshal. The air is so clean and clear."

Altman's vision in *Quintet* is not of a society bent on outward destruction but of one devouring itself from within. *Quintet* is set in a futuristic ice age. The world is slowly dying. Its cities are mere frozen shells, and its inhabitants, rendered mysteriously sterile, are the last human generation. Essex (Paul Newman) arrives in one such city with the miraculously pregnant Vivia (Brigitte Fossey), who carries what will be the world's last child. The sole occupation of the dying town, as Essex discovers, is a game called "quintet," into which, as one of its adepts explains, the entire essence of art and philosophy has been distilled. Its rules are never explained, but its stakes, as soon become apparent, are human life. In a world where all are condemned to death, dying last is the only goal, the right to kill is the last privilege, and the ritual of death is the only art form, the sole repository of meaning and value.

Together, the terminal visions of *Apocalypse Now* and *Quintet* bring postwar American film full circle. In one, the world will end in fire, in the other, with ice. It is easy to read *Quintet* now as a parable of nuclear winter, and as a reminder of how often artistic metaphor precedes scientific fact. *Apocalypse Now* is no less preoccupied with the implications of our capacity for total destruction. As both films remind us, that destructiveness lies not in our weapons but in ourselves. In a world reduced to killers and victims, there is no longer any claim to innocence.□

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Kerry Shawn Keys

A POEM BROKEN IN PARTS

—for Mike Jennings

One Same Song for the Deaf and Blind

The hands are like the leaves
of aspen.
And speech most remarkable
is the wind
that has found them.

These Bones

So far from the blood
that once was their ocean,
these bones
in the pouring rain.

So far from the flesh
that once was their tarpaulin,
these bones
like fallen aspen
on a mountain,
these bones that bore us
what we bring now to bear
home to nowhere at last.

Jacqueline R. Smetak

CONTINUUM OR BREAK? DIVINE HORSEMEN AND THE FILMS OF MAYA DEREN

In 1947 Maya Deren, a New York based filmmaker, received the first Guggenheim Fellowship awarded for creative work in the field of motion pictures. The result of this, however, was not a film but a book, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*. Deren's original intention had been to go to Haiti to film indigenous dance. She had, as she says in the preface to the book, "deliberately refrained from learning anything about the underlying meaning of the dance movements, so that such knowledge should not prejudice [her] evaluation of their purely visual impact." But she soon discovered that "the dance could not be considered independently of the mythology," and she was thus forced to spend most of the eight months she stayed in Haiti learning about the culture.¹

The book, an anthropological study of Voudoun culture, is the work of an amateur. Deren admits that she had "no anthropological background" (7), yet her background as an artist "provided an alternative mode of communication and perception: the subjective level which is the particular province of artistic statement" (8).² She says:

But my detailed and precise interpretations

¹Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*, foreword by Joseph Campbell (New York: McPherson & Co., 1953) 7. The footage she shot was posthumously edited using her own notes. The film is available from Cheryl Ito, 106 Bedford Street, New York, N.Y. 10014.

²Deren's remarks here seem to have been intended as an answer to those of anthropologist Gregory Bateson in his book *Naven: A Survey of the Problems suggested by a Composite Picture of the Culture of a New Guinea Tribe drawn from Three Points of View* (Cambridge: At the Univ. Press, 1936) ch. 1. Deren had enlisted the aid of both Margaret Mead and Bateson in applying for the Guggenheim grant, and their exhibition of South Seas ritual objects at the New York Museum of Modern Art apparently had had considerable influence on Deren's conception of her project. Deren acknowledges her debt to Bateson in her preface, p. 12.

were derived specifically from the fact that, as an artist, my predominant professional concern was with *form*. An artist usually recognizes the integrity of a form, whether or not he agrees with it, if only because he would do unto others as he would desperately hope to have them do unto him. (10)

The implication here is that she saw what she saw without prejudice, without pre-conceived notions which would have warped her observations. Yet her book is not a break from her earlier work but a continuum because what she saw was influenced by ideas she had already formed and expressed through her films made before she went to Haiti.³ The overall organization of her book reflects what she says about the essential character of the photographic medium in her essay "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality," where she states that this medium is "so amorphous that it is not merely unobstrusive but virtually transparent."⁴ Her function, as she saw it, was to be as transparent as a camera:

I, having no . . . commitment, nor professional or intellectual urgency, could permit the culture and the myth to emerge gradually in its own terms and in its own form.

(*Horsemen* 7)

³Detailed descriptions of Deren's films may be found in P. Adam Sitney, *Visionary Film* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979).

⁴Maya Deren, "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality," in *The Avant-Garde: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adam Sitney (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1978) 60. This essay was originally published in 1960, long after Deren's trip, but it echoes a similar statement made in *An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film* (Yonkers, N.Y.: The Alicat Book Shop Press, 1946), where she characterizes photography as the "immaculate observation of reality" (22).

In keeping with this, her book begins at the beginning. And as in the beginning was the Word, she starts with the Word: "Myth is the twilight speech of an old man to a boy" (21). Our introduction to Voudoun takes the form of an initiation as she first explains the mysteries underlying all myth, the specific forms the mysteries take in this myth, and then allows us to observe, but only observe, a ritual we are not yet ready to understand. The book follows this pattern as she first teaches us the forms and their meanings, then takes us through the actual rituals, each building on each until, at the end, we are ready to participate, to be possessed by the loa as she herself was possessed, through dance.

But the idea that dance exists as a ritual by means of which one could be possessed by something other than one's self was not something she hadn't thought about before. As film critic Parker Tyler notes, "Maya Deren found in dancing a possession by a transcendent spirit," and he felt that her film "Ritual in Transfigured Time" (1945-46) used dance and "its power to confer power, to promote revelation, to initiate the individual into final harmony with the world of nature."⁵ Deren's own program notes for this film substantiate Tyler's observation:

The quality of the movement is not a merely decorative factor; it is the meaning itself of the movement. In this sense, this film is a dance . . . the film confers dance upon the non-dancer . . . the elements of the whole derive their meaning from a pattern which they did not themselves consciously create, just as a ritual . . . fuses all individual elements into a transcendent tribal power toward the achievement of some extraordinary grace.

(*Filmwise* 2 38)

Also, the fact that she was possessed by the loa Erzulie, the loa of Eros, should come as no surprise. In both "Meshes of the Afternoon" (1943) and "Ritual in Transfigured Time," the female subject (played in "Meshes" by Deren herself) is as if possessed by the force of Eros. In "Meshes," this possession leads to suicide as one manifestation of the subject kills her body. In "Ritual," the subject, escaping the male

embodiment of Eros, plunges into the sea, the widow become bride as the film goes into negative.

But "Ritual" is not that easy to read. The widow does run from the male dancer whose attitude toward her is clearly one of courtship, but Deren's program notes for the film indicate that some sort of transference or transformation has occurred:

Such efforts [that of ritual] are reserved for the accomplishment of some ritual metamorphosis, and above all, for some inversion towards life; the passage from sterile winter into fertile spring; or, as in this film, the widow into bride.

(*Filmwise* 2 38)

The conclusion of the film, however, the plunge into water, is ambiguous because the image of water itself is ambiguous. As Joseph Campbell, who served as mentor for *Divine Horsemen*, notes in his own book, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*:

Every threshold passage . . . is comparable to a birth and has been ritually represented, practically everywhere, through an imagery of re-entry into the womb. . . . The water image in mythology is intimately associated with this motif, and the goddesses, mermaids . . . Ladies of the Lake and other water nixies, may represent either its life-threatening or its life-furthering aspects.⁶

Thus her plunge is either into a new state of being (as the program notes say) or into death, a suicide that resolves all conflicts.

In "Meshes," water is clearly a death image. During the course of a dream, the subject splits into three selves, one of which will emerge from the sea to walk across a vast expanse of time and kill the body of the three selves. The self who kills seems to be a projection of the unconscious. Deren comments:

⁵Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1979) 62. Mircea Eliade comments in *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958) that immersion in water represents "the 'second death' of the soul. . . . But, whether at the cosmic or the anthropological level, immersion in water does not mean final extinction but simply a temporary reintegration into the formless, which will be followed by a new creation" (212).

⁶Parker Tyler, "Maya Deren as Film-maker," *Filmwise* 2, ed. P. Adam Sitney (New York: Cinema 16, n.d.) 5.

As the girl with the knife rises, there is a close-up of her foot as she begins striding. The first step is in sand (with suggestion of sea behind), the second stride . . . is in grass, third is on the rug, and then the camera cuts up to her head with the hand with the knife descending towards the sleeping girl. What I meant when I planned that four stride sequence was that you have to come a long way—from the very beginning of time—to kill yourself, like the first life emerging from the primeval waters.⁷

(Sitney, *Visionary* 22)

But even here the death image contains within itself a core of ambiguity because the film was meant to depict an inner reality and an inner experience. Deren says:

This film is concerned with the interior experiences of an individual. It does not record an event which could be witnessed by other persons. Rather, it reproduces the way in which the sub-conscious of the individual will develop, interpret and elaborate an apparently simple and casual incident into a critical emotional experience. . . . Part of the achievement of this film consists in the manner in which cinematic techniques are employed to give a malevolent vitality to inanimate objects. This film is culminated by a double-ending in which it would *seem* that the imagined achieved, for her, such force that it became reality.

("Notes" 9; italics mine)

In *Divine Horsemen*, death itself has this kind of ambiguity. In "Meshes," the sea is emblematic of death or perhaps a death wish, Thanatos. In *Divine Horsemen*, however, the sea is the source of all beginnings:

The microscopic egg rides the red tides of the womb which, like the green tides, still rise and recede with the moon; the latest life, like the first, flows with the sea's chemistry. . . is beached in a surf, its heart reverberates a life-time with the pounding momentum of the primal sea pulse.⁸

(22)

⁷From Maya Deren, "Notes, Essays, Letters," *Film Culture* 39 (Winter 1965), as qtd. in Sitney, *Visionary Film* 22.

⁸See also Eliade ch. 5.

No one has witnessed the beginning of life, but death is not so hidden. It is "life's first and final definition," and, as such, it is death that has "first informed the ancestral elders" and has given them "the common inspiration of their common fanfare for origins, their common fiction of initiation, their common metaphors of metamorphous":

The fictions of the old men are their final fecundity. As their flesh once labored to bring forth flesh, so the minds of the elders labor, with a like passion, to bring forth a mind. By rites of initiation they would accomplish the metamorphosis of matter into man, the evolution of a mind for meaning in the animal which is the issue of their flesh. . . . The rites of this second birth, into the metaphysical cosmos, everywhere mime the conditions of the first physical birth. The novice is purified of past, relieved of possessions, made innocent, placed nascent in the womb solitude of a dark room . . . a man emerges by ordeal, to be newly named, newly rejoiced in.⁹

(23)

In other words, the fact of death makes possible the second birth, the animal reborn as a human being. This process of transformation is given form in myth which "is the voyage of exploration in this metaphysical space . . . between the quick and the dead":

To enter a new myth is a moment of initiation. . . . It is to enter, in one's mind, the room which is both tomb and womb, to become innocent of everything except the motivation for myth, the natural passion of the human mind for meaning.

(24)

To note that the fact of death is the motive for and marks the beginning of the myth-making process is not an idea original to Deren. Susanne Langer in *Philosophy in a New Key* defines myth as "a story of the birth, passion, and defeat by death which is man's common fate."¹⁰ Joseph Campbell connects myth to dream: "Through dreams a door is opened to mythology, since

⁹See also Campbell, *The Masks of God* 88ff.

¹⁰Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: NAL, 1942) 153.

myths are of the nature of dream, and that as dreams arise from an inward world unknown to waking consciousness, so do myths."¹¹ Freud, using a similar analogy, is more specific:

But the dream-work knows how to select a condition that will turn even that dreaded event [death] into a wish-fulfillment. . . . In the same way, a man makes forces of nature . . . into gods [whose function is to] reconcile men to the cruelty of fate, particularly as it is shown in death."¹²

Given this context, the origin and function of myth and the function of water in myth, the suicide at the end of both "Meshes" and "Ritual" acquires another meaning. In both cases the highly ritualized self-murder marks not literal death but a transition as both women cross a threshold into another state of being. The old self has died so that the new self may be born. This is clearly the intent in "Ritual" as widow becomes bride, but in "Meshes" the rebirth is displaced. The realization that will enable the subject to cross the threshold is not the subject's but ours as we discover the dangers inherent in denying and repressing the impulses of the unconscious. Deren comments that "'Meshes' is, one might say, almost expressionistic; it externalizes an inner world to the point where it is confounded with the external one" ("Notes" 31). Deren's reaction to watching her own film is one of realization displaced on to the viewer:

The important thing for me is that, as I used to sit there and watch the film when it was projected for friends in those early days, that one short sequence [the four steps] always rang a bell or buzzed a buzzer in my head. It was like a crack letting the light of another world gleam through. I kept saying to myself, "The walls of this room are solid except right there. That leads to something. There's a door there leading to something. I've got to get it open because through there I can go through to someplace instead of leaving here by the same way I came in."
(*"Notes"* 23)

¹¹Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Image* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974) xi.

¹²Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Anchor Books, 1961) 23-24.

Since both films deal with the female subject's feelings of repulsion and attraction toward Eros, it could be argued that they represent a continuum, an attempt to resolve certain conflicts within the artist herself. This is, however, a tenuous position to take because a psychoanalytic approach to art cannot be easily transferred to a psychoanalysis of the person who produced the art.¹³ Art itself is a cultural censorship mechanism and thus cannot be taken as a purely personal expression of anything. Besides, these films, particularly "Meshes," were products of collaboration, and P. Adam Sitney argues that "Meshes" is as much Alexander Hamid's film as it is Maya Deren's:

In recent years commentators on this film have tended to neglect the collaboration of Alexander Hamid, to consider him a technical assistant rather than an author. We should remember that he photographed the whole film. Maya Deren simply pushed the button on the camera for the two scenes in which he appeared. The general fluidity of the camera style, the free movements, and the surrealistic effects . . . are his contribution. If "Meshes of the Afternoon" is, in the words of Parker Tyler . . . , "The death of her narcissistic youth," it is also Hamid's portrait of his young wife.

(*Visionary* 9-10)

But if a thread may be established, it could be said that "Meshes" is about a woman who fails to resolve her conflicting feelings and that "Ritual" is about one who has managed to find a means, that of ritual, toward resolution. Given this context, "At Land" (1944) may be seen as an allegory about a woman, newly emerged or born from the sea, empowering herself by snatching the symbol of power, a chess piece. "At Land" is, however, problematic because the woman (played by Deren, which would encourage a confusion between the fictive woman and the artist herself) snatches power from other women. If the chess piece is taken to have erotic significance—it is phallic—this would lead to a reading that would see the

¹³Deren herself would have objected to such an approach because it "implies that the artist does not create out of the nature of his instrument but that it's used merely to convey some reality independent of all art. It implies that there is not such thing as art at all, but merely more or less accurate self-expression" (*Anagram* 28). Note also her description of the Voudoun drummers (*Horsemen* 228).

power of Eros, for women, as essentially matrilineal. Feminine sexuality is not something women get from men even though the dominant culture may define female sexuality from a male point of view. It is something women get from, win from, earn from, learn from other women who, given the configuration of the characters in this scene, guard rather than share the secret. It is not, in other words, a power to be taken lightly, nor is it easily obtained. The snatching of the chess piece may thus be taken as an initiation ritual, the second birth of the woman first born from the sea.¹⁴

If these three films are taken as different steps toward a resolution of inner conflicts regarding sexuality, the final resolution of these conflicts occurs in the last chapter of *Divine Horsemen*, "The White Darkness." *Divine Horsemen* was intended as an anthropological study, that is, a study of another culture, not an expression of the artist's own personal concerns. As Deren says:

I had begun as an artist, as one who would manipulate the elements of a reality into a work of art in the image of my creative integrity; I end by recording, as humbly as I can, the logics of a reality which has forced me to recognize its integrity, and to abandon my manipulations. . . . I feel that that fact that I was defeated in my original intention assures, to a considerable degree, that what I have here recorded reflects not on my own integrity which, as an artist's had been overcome, but that of the reality that had mastered it.

(*Horsemen* 6)

She had gone there, tabula rasa, but quickly found that that approach was not going to

¹⁴It is difficult to read Deren's films without hedging because her vocabulary, though using universal archetypes, remains highly personal. As Gordon Hitchens comments in "An Evaluation of Maya Deren," "Her strength was in her prodigious labor and her daring experimentalism. Her weakness was . . . her private language" (*Filmwise* 2 13). However, according to Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1973), myth goes through three phases: the mythopoetic or primary stage, the Romantic, and the consummatory. This last is an effort to return to the first stage, to slough off the highly artificial and conventionalized forms of the Romantic stage and return to what is essential (6-14). If Deren's work is an attempt to return to phase one, then those of us accustomed to the language of the Romantic phase must find her language very private indeed.

work.¹⁵ She had intended to make a "creative" film but found herself, though she does not discuss this, moving toward a documentary.

Documentaries have their own problems, problems of which she was fully aware and discussed at length in *An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film*:

But the documentary film maker is not permitted the emotional freedom of other artists, or the full access to the means and techniques of this form. . . . He is further limited by a set of conventions which originate in the methods of the scientific film. He must photograph "on the scene" . . . even when material circumstances . . . force him to select the accessible rather than the significant.

(33-34)

Thus Deren was forced to change the premise of her project. She could not photograph except what was accessible unless she knew what was significant, but if she knew the culture well enough to know what was significant, her knowledge would prevent her from seeing the Haitian dances as pure form. She would run the risk of creating something not quite art since, for her, art is defined in terms of its form. Further, the documentary, as a form, exists in limbo between the objective and the creative for, as she says, "in order to achieve a 'realism' of effect, it is often necessary to be imaginative in method" (35). The project pulled in two directions, and the tensions of this pull resulted in not a film but a book, a documentary in words of the cultural context of the dance she had originally intended to film.

While the book, *Divine Horsemen*, is impressive as a study of Haitian culture, it also exists as a creative piece which further developed themes and ideas already expressed in the films Deren had made prior to 1947. The three films I have discussed seem to have something to do with erotic power (her personal language makes it difficult to state anything definitively), either possessing it or being possessed by it. "The White Darkness" chapter in *Divine Horsemen* is a description of actual

¹⁵There are some contradictions in the preface concerning this. She went to Haiti deliberately ignorant of the culture, but she apparently had definite ideas, vis-à-vis form, before she left New York. Refer to pp. 10-11. She also acknowledges the prior influence of anthropologist Gregory Bateson and the subsequent influence of critic Joseph Campbell (12).

possession. She says, "I have left possession until the end, for it is the center toward which all roads of Voudoun converge" (247). This is also something which could be said of her previous work; that it converges toward the possession she has left for last.

Possession comes through dance, and to prepare us, she preceeds the last chapter with one on the drums. Drums are central to the ritual but not so the drummer. He is a craftsman and "has no position whatsoever in the hounfor [temple]." His music is not a personal expression but that of the tradition:

The form is the total statement; and its distinctive quality is that reverent dedication which man brings only to divinity . . . it is therefore characterized by a quality of selflessness, discipline and even of depersonalization. The performer becomes as if anonymous.

(228)

This is also how she has described herself as an artist. In Voudoun, which she sometimes explains using analogies with American artists and their world, the reason for this anonymity is functional and a function of the religion (7-90):

A collective religion cannot depend on the vagaries of individual aptitude and persuasion; on the contrary, it must stabilize these vagaries and protect the participants against their own weaknesses, failures and inadequacies. It must provide the generally uncreative, often distracted individual with a prescribed movement and attitude, the very performance of which gradually involves, and perhaps inspires him. . . . The tradition must support the individuals, give them security beyond personal indecision, lift them beyond their own individual creative powers.

(228)

There is much here that echoes her own aesthetic theories, and perhaps her break with colleague Stan Brakhage could be explained by the distaste she expresses in this passage for art that exists as pure personal expression. The passage also explains what underlies her belief in the power of dance. This power of dance has been noted by others. Susanne Langer, for example, in *Feeling and Form* felt dance to be "the envisagement of a world beyond the spot and

moment of one's animal existence" and that the first move of dance was "the creation of a realm of virtual power." Ecstasy, she further states, "is nothing else than the feeling of entering such a realm. There are dance forms that serve mainly to sever the bonds of actuality and establish the 'otherworldly' atmosphere in which illusory forces operate."¹⁶ Langer uses words such as "virtual" and "illusory" to establish the difference between this world and that other. For Deren, there is a boundary to be crossed, but that other world is neither "virtual" nor "illusory." It is as real and as concrete as this one. For Deren, the loa were not virtual projections of a "primitive" mind but as actual as the person who experienced possession by them.

Deren's description of the dance nevertheless, the final dance in which possession occurs, takes a specific myth-like form which reiterates that of her book as a whole. As life starts with water and as creation myths and initiation rituals foreground this motif so too does her description of this dance:

Hardly has hearing plunged to encompass this dark dimension, then the high clang of the iron *ogan* [musical instrument] sets in. . . . This towering architecture of sound . . . seems to advance without movement like a tidal wave so vast that no marker exists to scale its progress for the eye. Then a chorus of voices, having, it would seem, accumulated its force in the trough concealed behind the towering crest, hurls forward over that crest, and the whole structure crashes like a cosmic surf over one's head. . . . Now it is the dance which suggests water.

(251-52)

The actual possession comes suddenly and in two phases. The first is communal:

What secret source of power flows to them, rocks them and revolves them . . . ? I have but to rise, to step forward, become part of this glorious movement, flowing with it, its motion becoming mine, as the roll of the sea might become the undulation of my own body.

(252-53)

¹⁶Susanne Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953) 192.

The second phase is frightening, a sudden blow from which she, like the women in her films, flees. She is shaken:

These are the warning auras of possession,
One knows oneself vulnerable. I begin to
repeat to myself; "Hold together, hold,
hold."

(253)

She leaves the dancing but then returns,
becomes part of it, never stopping until

This sound will drown me! Why don't they
stop! Why don't they stop! I cannot wrench
my leg free. I am caught. . . . There is
nothing anywhere except this. There is no
way out. The white darkness moves up. . . .
It is too much, too bright, too white for me;
this is its darkness. "Mercy!" I scream
within me. . . . "Erzulie!" The bright
darkness floods up through my body,
reaches my head, engulfs me. I am sucked
down and exploded upward at once. That is
all.

(260)

This is followed by an image in which all
oppositions are reconciled, all divisions made
whole:

The sun-door and the tree-root are the same
thing in the same place, seen from below
and now from above and named by the
seer, for the moment of seeing.

(260)

If the subjects of the films are seen as characters
suffering from inner division caused by
conflicting desires, if "At Land" is seen as one
possible solution to these conflicts, the subject
aggressively siezing that which could, if others
have it, cause division and conflict, then *Divine
Horsemen* may be seen as the final resolution.
Either Deren is projecting her own psychic
conflicts and resolving them through her art or
this was a topic that interested her and was
finally exhausted in her book. In either case, the
nature of her film work changed after her trip to
Haiti. She became interested only in form,
making, in "Meditation on Violence" (1948) and
"The Very Eye of Night" (1952), the film she did
not make of Haiti. From her program notes:

[The camera can] be the meditating mind

turned inward upon an idea of movement,
and this idea, being an abstraction, takes
place nowhere or, as it were, in the very
center of space. [Meditation on Violence]

The laws of macro- and microcosm are
alike. Travel in the interior is a voyage in
outer space: We must in each case cut loose
from the anchorage of an absolute, fixed
center, enter worlds where the relationship
of parts is the sole gravity. [The Very Eye of
Night]

(Filmwise 2 38-39)

Her program notes use language similar to that
used in *Divine Horsemen* when she attempts to
describe what she "saw" as a result of
possession. It is as if the film "The Very Eye of
Night" were intended as a visual projection of
that experience.

She made no films after that, and while this
can be explained by the fact that she both ran
out of money and got herself embroiled in so
many other projects that she ran out of time as
well, it is also a fact that her work exists of a
piece. If her work is taken as a purely personal
expression of purely personal problems (a
tenuous but sometimes productive approach),
then William James's comments in *Varieties of
Religious Experience* on the religious experiences
of the divided self are helpful. He says:

[Religion is characterized by] the contrast
between the two ways of looking at life
which are characteristic respectively of
what we have called the healthy-minded,
who need be born only once, and of the sick
souls, who must be twice born in order to
be happy.¹⁷

The sick soul is one which is heterogeneous,
divided within and against itself. This definition
is essentially Freudian (though James was
working within his own system), and, like
Freud, James saw religion as one of those
maneuvers (from which he, like Freud, was
distanced) by which some people come to some
sort of resolution of their problems. Religious
conversion could unify the divided self, a
comment that is more Jungian (though James
pre-dates Jung) than Freudian. Jung felt that the
divided self could be made whole (or at least the

¹⁷William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York:
Longmans, Green & Co., 1902) 166.

impulse of the divided soul was always in that direction), whereas Freud thought that the divided self could achieve only a simulacrum of wholeness through repression, sublimation, reaction formation, and similar tactics.¹⁸

From this angle, Deren's films could be seen as an effort to achieve wholeness through artistic expression. She made no more films after "The Very Eye of Night" because she no longer needed to. She had already achieved wholeness in Haiti, and her last two films exist as an expression of her interest in form rather than as an expression of personal concerns and problems.¹⁹ On the other hand, since her subsequent life was marked by problems and her personality remained as aggressive and, presumably, as divided as ever, the wholeness she achieved could perhaps better be seen as aesthetic rather than emotional. The idea of conflicting desires was one which interested her, but, with the trip to Haiti, it seems to have run its course. She said no more about it because she may have had nothing more about it to say.

Interestingly enough, however, her book itself is divided against itself because she uses two opposing psychoanalytic approaches. Her definition of myth—"Myth is the facts of the mind made manifest in a fiction of matter"—is Jungian, for what underlies it is the assumption of a collective unconscious. This mind isn't any mind but all minds: "It is to meditate upon the common human experience which is the origin of the human effort to comprehend the human condition" (24). Her approach, however, to the specific culture of Haiti (she makes of Haiti a discrete situation by overlooking Voudoun cultures in Louisiana and Brazil) is Freudian.²⁰

¹⁸See Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*; and Carl Jung, *Psychology and Religion*.

¹⁹This interpretation has certain problems because the loa does not become one with the person possessed but displaces that person. She says, "To understand that the self must leave if the loa is to enter, is to understand that one cannot be man and god at once" (249). Yet her words describing her experience indicate that a unity and a wholeness have been achieved: "How clear the world looks in the first total light. How purely form it is, without, for the moment, the shadow of meaning. I see everything all at once" (261). Note again how form is privileged.

²⁰This may be due to the conflicting influences of her father, a Freudian psychoanalyst, and Joseph Campbell, whose approach is more Jungian, who helped her write this book.

Her observations are empirical and specific, inductive rather than deductive, and her explanation of the reasons for Voudoun makes use of Freudian ideas of displacement and sublimation:

Petro was born out of . . . rage. It is not evil; it is the rage against the evil fate which the African suffered, the brutality of his displacement and his enslavement.²¹

(61)

and:

Our general tendency is to regard the psychosomatic act of transferring a difficulty from the psychic to the physical system as "bad." This evaluation reflects . . . a moral dislike of "dishonesty" and a scientific rejection of "untruth." But an organism cares little for such abstract criteria. It is concerned with self-preservation. . . . When a situation is temporarily or permanently and irremediably brutal, the organism behaves like a clever boxer: it shields the mind from the blows which would only destroy it, and absorbs the shock in the muscular and durable flesh.

(169)

These are explanations which she both believes and does not believe because, for her, the loa are real. From her first description of a ritual in which the "voices" of the dead are treated as actual and not explained away to her final description of the dance (49ff)—

I turn back toward the dancers, and join them. I sing, converse with Ogoun [Warrior Hero loa]. Nothing is shaken within me. After many dances Ogoun announces that he is content with the dance, and that now he will leave.

(256)

—she speaks as one who has been "born again" and believes totally in the religion she describes. Yet she makes no overt attempt to convert her reader. She wants us to accept the validity of the

²¹Deren tells us that "Petro" is a "nachon" or cult grouping of loa and also refers to the drum beat or the dance associated with this group. Petro loa are the patrons of aggressive action.

beliefs of these people much as we accept the validity of any religion, but whether we believe or not does not concern her.

She walks a tightrope, much like the hougan (shamen or "priest"), pulled in one direction by the demands of her culture to be scientific, objective, rational, and in the other by the demands of her aesthetics and personal religious beliefs to commit herself totally to the matter at hand. The book itself moves between, balancing its scholarly apparatus against personal anecdote. Her method of citation reflects this balance for, as she explains in the introduction, notes of interest to the layman are at the bottom of the page, those of interest to the scholar segregated to the back.

This balance could, perhaps, be explained as a defense mechanism because the book is, finally, a personal statement of personal belief, a belief that perhaps she feared might strike the rest of us as odd:

As the souls of the dead did, so have I, too, come back. I have returned. But the journey around is long and hard, alike for the strong horse, alike for the great rider.

(262)

But within its proper context, the journey and what it means is not at all odd. It is, as Joseph Campbell says in the forward to this book, an epiphany, a "crisis of becoming." Deren's experience, her "countertransference" to another culture, may be nothing more than a projection of personal fantasies; it certainly intersects rather neatly with her other work, but there are too many parallels to similar experiences in many other cultures. It could be argued that since she knew something about such experiences before she went, that she, in spite of her best intentions, was imposing her own desires on what she encountered, forcing these into the a priori mold of her aesthetic theories, but then again, the universality of such experiences would work against such a pat dismissal. She saw what she saw. And if we do not believe, that is our problem not hers.□

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FEATURED ARTISTS

Andrée Chedid was born and educated in Egypt but has been a French citizen since 1946. Best known as a poet, she is also a dramatist, novelist, and short story writer. "The Flute" appeared in *L'étroite peau*, published with *Les corps et le temps* in 1978. In 1979 she was awarded the Prix Goncourt for the "nouvelle" for the latter collection.

Zoe Filipkowski has previously published her poetry in *The Centennial Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, and the *New Orleans Review*.

Kerry Shawn Keys is a poet and a translator from the Portuguese.

Robert Hill Long is the author of *The Power to Die*, a collection of prose and poems published in 1987.

Carlo Marcucci studied painting with Nona Trythall and sculpture with Peter Rockwell. He has paintings in private collections in Europe and the United States.

Meng Chiao, 751-814, was a didactic poet who explored the harsh moral ground of nature in order to address human responsibility.

Elizabeth Gamble Miller is a Spanish professor at Southern Methodist University. She is a specialist in Salvadoran literature and has published her translations of works by Hugo Lindo, David Escobar Galindo, Carlos Ernesto García, Miguel Huezo Mixto, and Matilde Elena Lopez.

Judith Radke teaches translation and twentieth-century French literature at Arizona State University.

Alfonso Quijada Urías is a Salvadoran author in exile. "To Tell the Story" is a translation of "Para contar el cuento," from *Para mirarte mejor* (Honduras: Editorial Guaymuras, 1977).

James A. Wilson has completed a book-length study of Ezra Pound's translations of medieval French and Chinese lyrics. He teaches at the University of California, Santa Cruz.