

# ENERGIA

SPRING 1999



ENERGIA

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τὸ γὰρ ἔργου τέλος, ἡ δὲ ἐνέργεια  
τὸ ἔργον.  
διὸ καὶ τοῦνομα ἐνέργεια  
λέγεται κατὰ τὸ ἔργον,  
καὶ συντείνει πρὸς τὴν ἐντελέχειαν.

For the end is work, and the work is a  
being-at-work,  
and this is why the phrase being-at-work is  
meant by reference to work and extends to  
being-at-work-staying-complete.

—Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IX, 8 1050a-b, 20-25  
Translated by Joe Sachs

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## Seeing the Light: How Light Illuminates Aristotle's Noetic Theory

Mark Alznauer, A00

Of necessity, there is a certain degree of difficulty in investigating *nous* (or, the intellect). It is not something we directly perceive, but is only intelligible through the things it thinks. And though it is perhaps among the most knowable things there are, it is, because of this distance from sensible things, also among the most unknown. An examination of it must be careful, and not rushed to understand it in its most proper formulation too quickly. One's eyes need to adjust to the metaphoric light.

Adjusting to the light will be, in a way, the focus of this inquiry. And the very quickness with which we are willing to accept such visual imagery as a natural metaphor for acts of the mind suggests that the connection is not an insignificant one. Aristotle makes the connection several times himself, but this essay will focus mainly on his use of it in the fifth chapter of the third book, *De Anima*.

The main goal of this essay, however, is to clarify the workings and foundation of Aristotle's noetic theory, so in that respect our focus on that passage and the light metaphor will be subservient to the greater task of understanding what *nous* is and does. As the subject dealt with is somewhat obscure, the first section of this essay will be an attempt to isolate the function of *nous* in Aristotle's other works. Then, with this preliminary investigation accomplished, I will proceed to the passage mentioned above. In the second section, I will restrict myself to an examination of Aristotle's statements about light. Then, in the third section, I will try to pin down what Aristotle meant by comparing *nous* to light.

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle describes philosophy as being certain concerning the things about which dialectic is tentative. This inquiry, then, could best be described as "dialectical," in that it will not be a straightforward expostulation of the "Aristotelian" position, but rather a tentative attempt to flesh out Aristotle's ideas which will examine many possibilities, only focusing on the analogy of light in an exploratory fashion.

### PART ONE: A PRELIMINARY UNDERSTANDING OF *NOUS*

Before we approach the light analogy to see what it has to add to our understanding of *nous*, it is best that we learn what role Aristotle has designated to *nous* in his other writings, keeping in mind that he might in them be speaking of *nous* in a more restricted (or even looser) sense than he is in *De Anima*. In this reconstruction of the Aristotelian noetic, I will remain mostly within the *Posterior Analytics*. The *Nicomachean Ethics*, in a briefer account, repeats a lot of what is said there, and the *Metaphysics* in many ways surpasses it, both in scope and in complexity. I have taken the middle road. The only major drawback of staying within the *Posterior Analytics* is that it uses largely mathematical illustrations. These can mask some very significant differences between the knowing involved in mathematical and logical studies and the knowing involved in other forms of knowledge. Though the mathematical many times serves as a good analogy for what Aristotle is trying to say, it is often a bad example. This difference will be dealt with in greater detail in the third section of this paper.

At the end of the first book of the *Posterior Analytics* (AP88b36), we are given a compact definition of *nous*. Aristotle calls it the "*arche epistemes*." This has been translated as "the source of knowledge," "the principle of science," and "the starting-point of scientific knowledge." All translations are necessarily vague until a determinate knowledge of the terms a translator employs is worked out. Aristotle has something very definite in mind when he chooses these words and we are well advised not to quickly arrive at a cursory understanding of them. In this section, we will look at each word closely and then see if we can come to a more complete understanding of what *nous* is.

I will start with "*episteme*." Traditionally translated as "knowledge," "*episteme*" is used more narrowly by Aristotle than we use "knowledge." Aristotle in AP71b10 speaks of what he means when he says we know something:

We think we know each [thing] without qualification, but not in the sophistical manner with respect to an attribute, when we think that (a) we know the cause through which the thing exists as being the cause of that thing and that (b) the thing cannot be other than what it is.

This clearly distinguishes *episteme* from other faculties of the rational part of men's souls, such as opinion (by which one apprehends true things of which one does not have the cause) and prudence (which is about changeable particular situations and can thus be other than what it is). The object of knowing appropriate to epistemic knowledge, then, "exists of necessity, and hence is eternal, and what is eternal is ungenerable and indestructible" (NE1139b24).

The only things which meet these qualifications are universals. And knowledge is not just of universals, but *is* universal itself. Aristotle makes this clear in AP88b30: "Knowledge and the knowable object differ from opinion and the object of opinion in this: knowledge is universal and proceeds through necessary [premises], and that which is necessary cannot be other than it is." This is why there cannot be knowledge of Callias or of any other particular, only sensation of them.

Another primary characteristic of *episteme* is that it is teachable and, therefore, can be learned. It is not an experienced facility or a "knack" with things. It is a reasoned understanding. It is in the master craftsman, who knows the "why" of his art, more than in his obedient apprentice. What makes anything learnable is that it is discursive, or follows from what one knows by reason. Aristotle speaks of this following upon reason as syllogistic. That is, it demonstrates the unknown by conclusions drawn from the known according to the dictates of reason. One trait, then, of demonstrable knowledge is that it "must be acquired from primary [premises] which are undemonstrable: otherwise one who has no demonstration of them [i.e. demonstrable principles] will not know" (AP71b27). Those primary premises must be *outside* of epistemic knowledge, in the sense that *episteme* is built upon them.

Without those primary premises being known, there could be no *episteme*. This, Aristotle would contend, is part of the reason Socrates disclaimed *knowing* anything. For a premise is "dialectical if it is any one part of a statement taken indifferently {we might say, "hypothetically"}, but it is demonstrative if it is defi-

nately that part which is true" (AP72a10). This is undoubtedly a more complicated issue when it comes to the Socratic method, but, merely to contrast this method with Aristotle's, it suffices to say that the basic indeterminacy of Socrates' premises (his *archai*) enabled him to continue to explore new possible answers to fundamental questions, while it prevented him (at least on the surface) from coming to a definitive answer. For Aristotle, however, these principles are determinate and knowable enough to build definite, demonstrable knowledge upon. With Aristotle, one can know.

But this knowledge has a questionable foundation until we can come to an understanding of what these principles are and where they come from. They cannot be merely assumed or hypothetically posited without man falling into Socratic ignorance. Aristotle states this in no uncertain terms in the NE:

... it is only when one is both convinced and is familiar with the principles (*archai*) in a certain way that one has knowledge, since he will have knowledge only by accident if he is not convinced of the principles more than the conclusion (1139b33).

And in the AP:

... it is necessary not only to know the primary [principles], whether all or some, prior [to the fact or conclusion] but also know them to a higher degree. ... (72a27)

The *archai* of *episteme* need more certitude than the syllogisms based upon them. We should find out, then, what these *archai* are.

The meaning of "*arche*," however, is no easier to grab hold of than that of "*episteme*." In fact, it is one of the "words used in more than one sense" that is listed in the fifth book of the *Metaphysics*. And the comprehensive definition given there ("... what is common to all sources {*archai*} is to be the first thing from which something is, or comes to be, or is known") is wide enough to encompass almost any usage. It is extremely important to pay close attention to Aristotle's use of "*arche*" in the whole of his philosophy (he uses it in a systematically ambiguous way), but we can get more specific here without sacrificing too much of the word's rich meaning.

In the *Posterior Analytics*, it is reasonably clear



Detroit, Paige Postlewait, A01

that there are three sorts of *archai* on which demonstrative knowledge is based. For various reasons they are never listed together, but they are (a) axioms (*koina*), (b) definitions/terms (*horoi*), and (c) what I have named "existentials" (with thanks to William Jennings for the felicitous term). These three designations effectively describe the extent to which any *episteme* is dependent on *archai*.

Axioms are the most conventionally perceived "first principles." There is usually little doubt that these are *archai* of *episteme*. The most frequently mentioned example of an axiom is the so-called "law of non-contradiction." It is easy to see how premises like this are necessary for knowledge to exist. Further, in Euclid's *Elements* we are deluged with a host of example axioms. There they are called "Common Notions" and all of them meet the criteria clearly: they cannot be demonstrated, cannot be other than they are, and one must surely be convinced of them more than the proofs which are based upon them. The only remotely surprising thing about these principles, is that they are not the *only* principles.

The next category of *archai* are the definitions (or terms) of *episteme*. These, too, have their mathematical counterpart in Euclid: the point which has no part, the length which has no breadth. It is relatively evident that these two and their other counterparts in Euclid are principles. One could not learn geometry without knowing these, and they certainly cannot be proved through some more fundamental knowledge. But definitions are principles in a wider sense than the one Euclid used. The definition of a triangle, for example, is an *arche*. It is both universal and eternal. But there is definitely a difference between definitions of things we must accept and those we can construct out of the former. That difference is made manifest by the third and final category of *archai*.

The last kind of *archai* includes what I ambiguously referred to as the "existentials." Existentials are no more than statements positing some definition's (or term's) existence. One can see how it is necessary to posit the existence of a point, in a way that it is not necessary to posit the existence of a triangle. This is because the triangle can be constructed, or *proved* to exist. The existence of a point, however, must be assumed or posited. So a triangle is an *arche* only in the sense that it is a definition, but a point is an *arche* in two senses: that of the definition and that of the existential. Axioms do not admit of this division because they are states of affairs which must exist (e.g. the law

of non-contradiction), and do not admit of even the possibility of being false.

Now these distinctions are clear in formulation, but their very precision is a little bit misleading. Finding these distinctions in other sciences may prove difficult. But Aristotle gives a list of six qualities all *archai* share that help such a task and neatly summarize our discussion of *archai*.

... it is also necessary for demonstrated knowledge to proceed from [principles which are] (1) true, (2) primary, (3) immediate, and also (4) more known than, (5) prior to, and (6) causes of the conclusion; for it is in this way that the principles will also be appropriate to what is proved. (AP71b20)

They must be true in the sense that knowledge is of unchanging universals. They must be primary and therefore undemonstrable. They must be immediate, which means not known through anything else. And the three qualities they must have in relation to the knowledge based on them are that they are *more knowable* (which explains the mandate that one be more convinced of them), *prior to* (which explains the mandate that one be more familiar with them), and *causes* of their conclusions. That last one will prove very significant. And such are *archai*.

*Nous* is more an enigma. As the variable in our initial formulation (*nous* is the *arches epistemes*), I have left it for last. Aristotle proceeds similarly in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, concluding that *nous* is responsible for providing the *archai* of *episteme* only after trying to account for this dispensation by means of the other faculties of the rational part of man's soul. In the *Posterior Analytics* it makes a late appearance on the stage and is only then unveiled as the foundation for knowledge. The mystery is how *nous* provides us with these principles. Aristotle has left us some clues as to this, and a close reading of his works yields several examples. We will be spending the third part of this essay looking more closely at this phenomenon, so here only a brief sketch of the activity will be given.

We will start in the *Posterior Analytics*. At one point, Aristotle speaks quite comprehensively about the matter at hand. One must keep in mind while reading this that when he says we "learn either by induction or demonstration" that he is speaking *both* of the learning of knowledge proper (*episteme*) and of its principles. But perhaps this is clear from context:

It is also evident that if a faculty of sensation is absent from the start, some corresponding science {*episteme*} must be lacking, seeing that a science cannot be acquired if indeed we learn either by induction {*epagoge*} or by demonstration. Now a demonstration proceeds from universals, whereas an induction proceeds from particulars. But universals cannot be investigated except through induction and even the so-called "things by abstraction" {*aphairesis*}, although not separable [from substances {*ousia*}], are made known to us by induction. . . and it is impossible to learn by induction without the power of sensation. For of individuals [there can be only] sensation, and no knowledge {*episteme*} of them can be acquired; and neither can we demonstrate conclusions from universals without induction, nor can we acquire universals through induction without sensation. (AP81a38-81b9)

There are three things I would like to emphasize from this passage.

First, *nous* attains universals (and therefore *archai*) by *epagoge*. This is not an insight peculiar to the *Posterior Analytics*. In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explicitly states that "it is by induction {*epagoge*} that principles {*archai*} are acquired" (NE1139b31). This is regularly translated "induction" but there are problems with rendering it so. It seems to limit the term to an analytic understanding, or perhaps suggest that one needs a number of lower premises from which one can "induce" a primary premise. Although both of these senses are included in Aristotle's use of "*epagoge*," they do not exhaust it. Joe Sachs suggests translating it as "example," in his translation of Aristotle's *Physics*, suggesting that we learn universals by looking at single instances. This seems to get at the meaning more, for Aristotle seems to use the word every time he describes the culling of a universal from a particular, even in cases where this is done from only one particular or in settings far from analytic.

The second thing I would like to emphasize is the sub-species of *epagoge*, *aphairesis*. "*Aphairesis*" is almost always translated "abstraction" and has the connotation of a subtraction or a taking away. It is used exclusively for mathematical terms. A circle, for example, is abstracted from a beach ball, whereas its *logos* or definition (its ballness) is properly "induced." The difference

between the two is an important one, and I will deal with it in more detail in the third section.

Third, I would like to emphasize the dependence of *epagoge* upon the experience of sensation. All knowledge for Aristotle can be traced back to sensible things. Without sensation we would never know anything. Aristotle is very explicit about this and in the *De Anima* goes as far as to say that we cannot think anything without images (though this is not to be taken without qualification).

Below is an example of the induction of principles:

... it is for our experiences concerning each subject to provide the principles {*archai*}. I mean, for instance, that it is for astronomical experience to provide the principles for the science {*episteme*} of astronomy (for when the appearances had been sufficiently grasped, in this way astronomical demonstrations were discovered; and it is also similar concerning any other art or science whatsoever. (APR46a18)

A similar passage occurs at AP87b40.

This example, with what we have said about *nous* as the "*arche epistemes*" will serve us as our preliminary definition and understanding of Aristotle's noetic. To break new ground, and come to a more fundamental understanding of it, we will look at the ways the light analogy changes or informs our conception of *nous*. Before we can understand the analogy, however, we must look at Aristotle's general account of light.

## SECTION TWO: LIGHT AND THE FACULTY OF VISION IN *DE ANIMA*

Aristotle's comparison between light and *nous* in *De Anima* is brief. It does not even carry a sentence by itself, but instead merely serves as the last clause in a sentence that would be interesting without it. With this in mind, it might seem excessive to give an extended treatment of Aristotle's theory of light in order to explicate it. However, my hope is that the value of such an endeavor will become clear in its application in the third section. The account of sight that I will be explicating can be found primarily in the seventh chapter of the second book of *De Anima*. My recapitulation will be mostly (and without further reference) drawn from that account. Any references to other parts of *De Anima* will be given.

.....

The proper object of sight is the visible, and that is color. By "proper" it is meant that color is not sensed by any other sense than sight, in contrast to things like motion which can be sensed with two or more senses (in the example of motion: sight and touch). It is regarding "proper sensibles" that one has the least chance of being mistaken. Aristotle refers to color as "that to which sight is directed." This directness of sight reminds us that Aristotle describes sight as potency (*dunamis*), and that since potency is in a way stretched out toward its fulfillment or actuality (*energeia*), this fulfillment for sight is in the being-at-work of perceiving color.

Things in the world, he says, are not perceivable because of a certain articulation (*logos*), but because they have their cause of visibility (color) within themselves. That is to say, we do not see a bright blue ball against a dark green wall because of its ballness, but because its surface is colored. The way color affects this perception is by having the "potency {*dunamis*} to set in motion what is actively {*energeia*} transparent." This *dunamis* is the nature of color. The transparent that it sets in motion is the medium of sight; Aristotle's examples of this transparent include air and water. It is the realm of the visible, the place visible things come together and are made manifest. The transparent is in *energeia* when it is lit, and it is in *dunamis* when it is not lit, or dark. "And for that reason it {any color} is not visible without light, but of each thing every color is seen in light." The formula for sight then seems to be as follows: one needs the actively transparent (light) first, then the colored object which is switched from *dunamis* to *energeia* by that light, then the color sets in motion the transparent which causes (as in efficient cause) something visible to be sensed in the eye.

The transparent is not ever seen by itself. It is said of the transparent that light is its "color," but this is only said metaphorically. A lit transparent with no colored objects in it would be invisible. The transparent is not an object of our sight except in that it can be said to be that which is between the colors we see and our eyes. But colored objects without the transparent would also be invisible. Aristotle's example is that an object held directly against the eye is not seen. This is the sense in which the transparent is the realm of sight. It is where sight happens.

To understand this process in a different

respect, we can apply what Aristotle says of sense in general to sight. For sight, as is the case with all senses,

... is receptive of the forms of perceptible things without their material, as wax is receptive of the design of a ring without the iron or gold, and takes up the golden or bronze design, but not as gold or bronze: and similarly the sense of each thing is acted upon by the thing that has color or flavor or sound, but not in virtue of that by which each of those things is the kind of thing it is, but in virtue of that by which it has a certain attribute and according to a ratio {*logos*}. (DA424a19)

First, and most obviously, this passage makes clear that the material of a visible object is not reproduced in the sight, but merely its form, which in this case seems to be color. But this restricted understanding of form's analogue in sight is made questionable by the last phrase in that passage: "according to a ratio {*logos*}."

We stated earlier that the sense of sight is not affected by something because of its "definition," the Greek of which is also "*logos*". This must be a different understanding of the word. Sachs, again, seems to hit on the appropriate translation with "ratio". This indicates that perception, then, is not like a game of "Kick the Can" where our sense organ is the can and the colors are the kickers. For perception is not without *logos*, even though it is physically affected by its respective stimuli. It still retains a sense of perspective, or *proportion*. Without this sense, assembling our perceptions of things around us would be as fruitless as trying to understand the exact topography of a river by examining the chaotic path of a feather floating down it. And so it is in this sense that all perception worthy of the name has a certain *logos*.

This *logos* is both in the perceptible things themselves and also in our sense organs, which explains why extreme ratios in sensible things (colors too bright, pitch too high) can destroy their corresponding sense organs. For the ratios in colors are duplicated by the ratios physically formed in our eyes. And since our eyes have some physicality, and are not pure potency, they can only accommodate a certain range of ratios.

These are the basics of Aristotle's theory of light. As I said before, we will not find this to be a perfect model for intellection (they are, after all, different phenomena), but with luck we should be able to use it to see into the actions of *nous* in a way we could not before,



Arles, France, Vada Mossavat, A00

even if part of the benefit we derive from this stems from contrasting Aristotle's theory of light with his noetic.

### SECTION THREE: HOW *NOUS* IS LIKE LIGHT, ONLY BETTER

It is not the entirety of what we call *nous* that Aristotle compares to light, but *nous poetikos*, the maker mind. Let us look at the passage in which the comparison is made:

But since in all nature one thing is the material {*hulē*} for each kind (this is what is in potency {*dunamis*} in all the particular beings of that kind), but it is something else which is the causal and productive thing by which all of them are formed, as is the case with an art in relation to its material, it is necessary in the soul too that these distinct aspects be present; the one sort is the intellect {*nous*} by becoming all things, the other sort by becoming all things, in the way an active condition such as light does, for in a certain way light too makes colors that are in potency be at work as colors. (DA430a10)

It seems likely from the analogy that the *nous* that becomes all things would be analogous to the sense organ, which becomes the form of all sensible things. But the dichotomy between the maker and *nous* and its counterpart, the material and *nous* (which is in potency), does not line up with light and the sense of vision as cleanly as it might first appear.

Like so many difficult terms in Aristotle, "*dunamis*" is used relatively. Because of this non-static quality of the word, Aristotle finds it more efficacious to define it by analogy. In Met1048a30 Aristotle gives us two examples, corresponding to two degrees, of *dunamis*. His examples are:

Hermes in a block of wood or a half line in a whole, because they can be separated out, or someone who knows, even if he is not contemplating, if he is capable of contemplating.

This is reminiscent of a similar distinction made in DA417a21:

There is something that has knowledge in the way we say any human being is a knower,

because humanity is part of the class that knows and has knowledge, but there is also a sense in which we mean by a knower the one who already has, say, grammatical skill; and each of these is in potency {*dunamis*} but not in the same way, but the former is because his kind and his material {*hulē*} are of such a certain sort, while the latter is because he is capable of contemplating when he wants to, if nothing outside him prevents it.

Both passages make the same distinction, and it is clear that Hermes in a block of wood has the same degree of potency as the human being who is a knower only in the sense that he is a human being. Both require something outside of themselves to help them into actuality (*energeia*), for both have potency (*dunamis*) as material (*hulē*). Since this potency is furthest removed from actuality, or being-at-work, I will henceforth call it "first potency". The human being who knows grammar already and is merely not thinking about it is in "second potency" as regards his status as a knower. Now material *nous*, both in virtue of its name and its dependence upon maker *nous*, is in first potency.

The problem is that the sense of vision, in contrast, is in second potency. Later, in the same chapter from which the above quotation from *De Anima* was taken, it is explicitly stated that "In the potency {*dunamis*} of perception, the first change comes about by the action of the parent, and when a living thing is born it already has what it takes to perceive, just as it has the capacity for knowledge." That is, a living thing at birth has already undergone the change from first potency to second as regards sight, whereas it only has the capacity (first potency) for knowledge. The baby only has to open his eyes to see, but he still has to learn grammar before he conjugate. This makes the analogy between light and *nous* trickier. It implies, first of all, that light effects a transition in the sense organ from second potency to full actuality (*energeia*), whereas *nous* effects only the change from second potency to first in the mind. As we learned above, these are substantially different changes and they would make the two (light and *nous*) very difficult to compare. One would also have to answer the question of what it is that brings the material *nous* into full actuality, and why it is that whatever that may be is not compared with light.

I propose a sort of compromise based on a reading in the eighth book of the *Metaphysics*. Aristotle gives there examples of the ways in which *energeia*

(actuality, being-at-work, etc.) takes precedence over *dunamis* and establishes that

... it seems impossible to be a house-builder if one has not built any houses, or a harpist if one has not played the harp at all; for the one learning to play the harp learns to play the harp by playing the harp, and similarly with those who learn things.

The harpist is helped into second potency by the same instrument of actuality (a harp) with which he will take himself into full actuality. His case is unlike the baby's, in which development in the womb brings the baby's sight to second potency and a different instrument (light) takes it to full actuality. Aristotle says in this passage that learning works on the harpist model. One does not have the capacity to think of grammar added to one like a memory expansion on a hard drive, and then have the ability to actualize that knowledge or not. Rather, the thought occurs to you (or is presented to you) and then you can think or not think about it. The difference is not in the faculty by which you understand a grammatical concept, but in the agent by which the thought is generated. In the first case, it is a teacher (or the thought, itself) which brings itself to your attention (there is an analogy at the end of the *Posterior Analytics* that makes this especially evident) and then it is you by your will that can think of it. But, in both instances (and regardless of the origin of the act of thinking), your actual conceiving of the grammatical concept is grounded in the maker *nous*.

This is an important difference to understand, and it seems to stem from memory. The one who has never thought of a specific concept cannot will himself into thinking it because it is not an object on his horizon. One who has thought the concept before can open himself up to cognizing them again. (In this way, thinking of something you have already learned is very much like opening your eyes to something.) But in both the case of the person who first comes across a concept and the case of the person who is recalling it for the hundredth time, it is *nous* which perceives the concept. And this understanding makes the light analogy tenable, for it makes the degree of potency to which maker *nous* takes material *nous* unimportant as far as understanding the workings of maker *nous*, because it causes both changes and acts the same in both.

By following that thread we have made significant progress into how we are to read light (it repre-

sents maker *nous*) and the sense organ (which seems to represent material *nous*). But by looking more closely at our experience of the transition from first to second potency we are led to formulate a question about the object of vision, or rather its analogue, the object of thought. I will let Aristotle both formulate and answer the question I am thinking of:

And if one were to inquire why it is possible for a boy to become a mathematician but not wise or a physicist, the answer is: the objects of mathematics exist by abstraction {*aphaíresis*} while the principles {*archai*} of philosophy or physics are acquired from experience; and young men have no conviction of their principles but only use words, while the nature of the objects of physics and of wisdom is not unclear to physicists and to wise men. (NE1142a15)

It is the difference between *aphaíresis* and *epagoge* that was made in the first section that is key to understanding this passage. Apparently, we are more quickly disposed to allow maker *nous* to abstract mathematical objects from our experiences that we are to "induce" through maker *nous* the *archai* of philosophy and other such sciences.

Insight into the difficulty of coming to see the true *archai* of such studies, and how easy it is to come up with vacuous *archai*, can be had from a look at the process Aristotle goes through in *De Anima* to find the characteristics and essence of the soul. There are two ways Aristotle defines the soul there; one he describes as empty and the other, meaningful. The meaningful definition takes into account all of the faculties of a particular kind of soul. It must do this because a truly meaningful definition is about a single kind of soul, something that gets to the essence and thinghood (*ousia*) of a particular being. The empty kind is one that would "fit them all but be appropriate to none" (DA414b24). The meaningful kind of definition takes experience and time to unfold. It is not, like mathematical objects, immediately obvious.

As an afterthought, I would like to add that there seems to be another difference between mathematical and philosophical objects which springs from Aristotle's ontology. Because *ousia* is being in the primary sense, and mathematical objects have a derivative and abstracted being, there is a sense in which mathematical objects do not strive for any *energeia* like

beings in the more primary sense do, but borrow their *energeia* from the particular contemplative thinker (see Met1051a30). Philosophy is the study of living essences, not of the empty and static relations between magnitudes to which math is restricted. Because of their dependence on the thinker they do not stretch themselves out toward (or suggest) "metaphysical" questions, as Aristotle would understand that term. This is what I meant, earlier, when I said that they were a *good analogy* for much of what Aristotle wants to say but a *bad example*.

The failure of the young to see in a clear way the principles of philosophy, and the requirement of time and experience to accomplish that task, seems to contradict something else Aristotle says about the maker *nous*. In DA430a18 he says the maker *nous* is by its thinghood (*ousia*) a being-at-work (*energeia*). And right after that, that it is not the case that "at one time it thinks and that at another time it does not think." If objects of thought are perpetually bathing in the light of *nous*, why do we not see them? Aristotle answers in Met993b5:

... perhaps, ... the cause is not in the things but in us; for in just the same way that the eyes of bats are related to the mid-day, so also is the intellect {*nous*} related to those things which are by nature most evident of all.

It seems that we are too used to seeing things as particulars and not looking for the reasons past where we have already found them, as though we were accustomed to feeling our way around a room with our eyes shut because the lamp-light hurt our eyes and the rooms colors were too bright.

This brings us back to the original analogy and asks what noetic ingredient corresponds to color, and if an answer to that can be found, what corresponds to the transparent. Its equivalent in intellection is probably universals, and they are drawn from images probably in the fashion "universal judgements" are said to develop in the first book of the *Metaphysics*. That is: we have multiple sensations which stick in our memory, and many memories of the same sensation which make our experience possible, and then "out of many conceptions from experience, one universal judgement arises about those that are similar." This also makes the most sense out of the brief elaboration Aristotle gives the analogy (that it is "in a certain way light too makes colors that are in potency be at work as colors") because making one see universals in particulars is equivalent to making things

intelligible (for knowledge is of universals). Maker *nous* makes the potentially thinkable, actually thinkable. And as light is the *energeia* of the transparent, we are tempted to say that maker *nous* is the *energeia* of something like an inner transparent. Perhaps, though, no such analogue for the transparent can be found in the mind because the material *nous* is what it thinks, it "becomes all things," and there is no separation between the thinker and the thought. This seems to be the limit to which this analogy can be stretched.

But before we leave this text, we should see if what we have discerned can help supply an answer to one of the bigger questions about the maker *nous*. Is the maker *nous* also the Maker? It seems unclear whether *nous poetikos* can be considered God or whether it is merely a part of every man. D.W. Hamlyn, in a gloss of his translation seems to think it is not, because (among other reasons) Aristotle would have mentioned something like that. This seems to me to assume that if Aristotle linked our minds to God's through the maker *nous* this would, in the context of his other works, be surprising. But I will try to make a case that there is reason to believe that the maker *nous* is God and that this claim makes sense in relation to Aristotle's other works.

The *Metaphysics* makes this point most clearly.

For what is receptive of the intelligible and of thinghood is the intellect {*nous*}. And it is at work when it has them: therefore it is in being-at-work {*energeia*} rather than in receptivity that the intellect seems god-like, and its contemplation is pleasantest and best. So if the divine being is always in this condition that we are sometimes in, that is to be wondered at; and if it is in it to a greater degree than we are, that is to be wondered at still more. And that is the way it is. But life belongs to it too, for the being-at-work of the intellect is life, and that being is being-at-work, and its being-at-work is in itself the best life and is everlasting. And we say that it is a god who everlastingly lives the best life, so that life and continuous and everlasting duration belong to a god; for this being is god. (Met1072b22)

Now the maker *nous* is always at work in a state of contemplation, it is also continuous and it is also everlasting. And as much as we participate in the *energeia* of the maker *nous* (which is always itself an



Puerto Escondido, Mexico, Abigail Weinberg, A00

*energeia*) we are participating in the divine. It seems that separating the maker *nous* from Aristotle's god is unnecessary. Why, then, is Hamlyn hesitant to do it? Perhaps he thinks this would turn Aristotle, who seems to be an otherwise level-headed philosopher, into a transcendental mystic.

There is no reason to conclude this either, though. Taking Plotinus as our model of mysticism, who, in a mystical moment, is one with the divine only to slip down from intellection back into the discourse of reason, it is clear to see that Aristotle is no mystic. For Aristotle's divine is pre-eminently rational. In fact, it is only in the discourse of reason that the eternal and divine is attained (and it is that {*nous*} in us which is deathless and eternal"). He understands the world as a certain intelligible whole with a beginning (*arche*) and an end (*telos*). Thus his pleasure in contemplation is similar to the pleasure of contemplating a well-written play, not the ecstasy of a religious experience.

The Aristotelian experience of the divine is not even something properly transcendental. For man is the animal with *logos*. Participating in god-like contemplation is *natural* to him. He is fulfilling his *dunamis* by contemplating. And Aristotle even concedes that the difference between man and god is unbridgeable. One can never contemplate perpetually, like the gods do. Men get tired of thinking, and get hungry and need to feed themselves. But inasmuch as they think on eternal notions, they become those notions, and it is that within them that is deathless. It is not the per-

sonality of man that survives, but the intelligible notions his intellect becomes. And it is because these intelligible notions are in substances and things all around him, that his survival in them is no departure to another realm. That is the essential novelty of Aristotle's understanding of objects of thought, as he contrasted it with Plato's (or whoever's doctrine it was that he attributed to the Platonists of his day).

This understanding objects of thought (and by that I mean noetic objects) is primary in two ways to Aristotle's noetic theory. First, since objects of thought are *archai*, they are primary in the sense that they are the principles of all knowledge. This relationship, and the way these *archai* are perceived, was the main theme explored by this essay. The second way this is significant is that understanding the being of objects of thought is necessary before any epistemology or noetic can be formulated. At least on the surface, Aristotle distanced himself from Plato (and Socrates) by coming to a different understanding of the ontological status of these notions. This is then the groundwork for an understanding of how Aristotle saw his place in the tradition. ♦

Thanks to Mrs. Pamela Kraus for advising this paper. All translations are Mr. Joe Sachs'. In cases where he does have a published translation, Mr. Hippocrates G. Apostle's are used. All statements within {} are my own words.

## On Mimesis

Robert Dickson, A00

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle argues that mimesis is natural to humans, both as something to engage in and something to enjoy. Described as one of the engendering causes of poetry, our relationship with mimesis remains unclear as the *Poetics* explains how playwrights should best move us with their craft.

In the first book of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle again speaks of mimesis in passing, recounting the Pythagoreans' understanding of the universe:

So he called this other sort of beings forms, and said the perceptible things were apart from these and all spoken of derivatively from these, for the many things with the same names as the forms were results of participation. He changed only the name participation, for the Pythagoreans said that beings are by what of mimesis of the numbers, but Plato by way of participation, having changed the name. What this participation or mimesis of the forms might be, however, they were in unison in leaving behind to be sought.

[*Metaphysics* 987b8]

Obviously, the word 'mimesis' meant more to Aristotle (or the Pythagoreans) than simply what occurs when we create art. But why would the same word be used for the writing of *Oedipus Rex* and for the relationship between the tangible realm and the eternal? Though Aristotle's thought differs greatly from what the Pythagoreans must have meant by mimesis, his view of our world and of our art gains great clarity when we widen the definition of mimesis to its limit and ask what relevance our art has to our souls and nature itself.

By considering general mimesis, we shall be forced to consider its relation to our souls, our education, our politics, and our universe. Then we may return to the particular mimesis that goes into making art and ask why it is natural for us to imitate what is outside us.

### Mimesis: General and Poetic

Before we can understand how the human soul produces and enjoys mimesis in its arts, we must fully comprehend mimesis in a more general sense, not limited to human creations or even to humans. For clarity, we will speak of mimesis in two ways: the widest way the word allows and the specific kind of mimesis relevant to our inquiry.

By **general mimesis** we mean not the activity by which a thing becomes the same as another (such as when water comes to be air through evaporation) but rather when a thing assumes some defining characteristics of another thing without changing its own nature (such as when water is dyed to look like red wine but remains water). By 'defining characteristics' we mean that if being a given thing means possessing X necessary qualities (such as being red wine means being alcoholic, derived from a grape, red, and tasteful), the mimetic object assumes not all qualities encompassed by X, but rather so many as to appear the same as or closer in relation to the original object (such as water imitating red wine may mean simply being dyed red). We must acknowledge now that general mimesis is not restricted to human perception or creation, evidenced at the least by chameleons and other animals that assume the color of their surroundings seemingly at will.

By **poetic mimesis** we mean general mimesis restricted to that which is ordered by a human to effect emotion in any human who should see it (such as poetry, painting, and music). The observer must know the object to be mimetic; if he or she is fooled into thinking a painting is actually a window, there will be no pleasure particular to poetic mimesis. It is clear why an art like painting fits our definition of general mimesis: it is paint arranged to present the image of an actual thing. But something should be said about what way music and abstract art are mimetic when there is no clearly imitated thing outside the work.

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle states that poetry is more philosophical than history, "since poetry relates more of the universal, while history relates particulars" (*Poetics* 1451b5). There is a way in which history is

generally mimetic, in that it recreates as best it can actual events in new form. But what separates history from poetry is the structure given to events in order to effect emotion, so that what is conveyed from artist to audience is not merely fact but feeling. In this way, it is not only the particulars that are imitated in art, but the more universal human experience of emotional reaction to things. Music does not attempt (usually) to resemble anything outside itself; it is form and motion applied directly to sounds. But contained in a piece of music is mimetic human emotion, a universal more directly imitated through music than even tragic poetry, which must effect emotion through the use of particular names instead of generic notes. A casual listening to a major and a minor scale reveals that music imitates tension, resolution, conflict, brightness and dreariness (feelings entirely present but difficult to articulate) through differently pitched tones while tragedy must imitate the same human feelings by presenting tension, resolution, conflict, happiness and pathos as they occur in our actual lives, as if we are the tones. Thus we understand music to be poetically mimetic not in that it imitates any particular outside itself but because it attempts to reflect universals directly. The same can be said for other art that effects emotion without representing particular things.

### Mimetic Creation

For it is an instinct of human beings, from childhood, to engage in mimesis (indeed, this distinguishes them from other animals: man is the most mimetic of all, and it is through mimesis that he develops his earliest understanding) [*Poetics* 1148b4]

This curious claim described by Aristotle as one of the engendering causes of poetry is difficult to believe when we restrict ourselves to reading "mimesis" as poetic mimesis. For how many children speak in verse? Or gain their earliest understanding through painting? Widening the term to general mimesis reveals how mimetic man truly is.

That we gain our earliest *πρώτας*, better translated as "primary" or "first" understanding through mimesis is a remarkable statement considering that mimesis is not mentioned in *On the Soul* as a distinct faculty of the intellect. But perhaps we again limit ourselves reading mimesis as something independent in the soul: superfluous, mimesis is the soul's

fundamental method of acquisition in all its respects. In their different ways, perception, imagination and intellect are all mimetic faculties. We shall speak of them individually.

Perception, as a potency, is nothing other than what it sees, constantly assuming potentially the actual forms of the things before it. Its being is strictly mimetic, taking upon itself the objects of the senses as they are in outside things. This fits well our definition of general mimesis, as the perceptive potency remains a potency as it beholds a rock, though it assumes the being-at-work visible nature of the rock outside of it.

Intellect is much like perception in its mimesis, though complicated greatly by the fact that there is no clear distinction between the intelligible thing and the intellect thinking it (*OTS* 430a20). How is this mimesis if the intellect not only takes the form of a certain thought but is the form and thought? Without fully exploring the difference between the intellect that becomes all things and that which forms all things, it is enough to recognize that intellect is abstraction from tangible things, an existence that one could say is mimetic of that which can be perceived. "And it [the intellect] is itself intelligible in the same way its intelligible objects are, for in the case of things without material what thinks and what is thought are the same thing, for contemplative knowing and what is known in that way are the same thing. . . but among things having material, each of them is potentially something intelligible, so that there is no intellect present in them (since intellect is a potency to be such things without their material), but there is present in them something intelligible" (*OTS* 430a1). The intellect that becomes all things is the clay of the sculptor, taking upon itself (in fact becoming) the form of something else. The intellect that forms all things is the sculptor of all that follows the order of intellect, causing a formed universe, existing as a being-at-work without which nothing thinks. Intellect is mimetic in the same way it is potential and at-work, as the formed and as the one who forms.

We are left with imagination: "the motion coming about by the action of sense perception while it is at work" (*OTS* 429a1). Its mimetic nature is different from that of perception and intellect, which take on qualities of objects outside the soul. Imagination represents the objects of perception as imaginings for the intellect, in a sense translating the objects of one faculty into those of another. "And for the soul that thinks things through, imaginings are



Architectural detail, 1984 Winter Olympic Museum, Sarajevo, Vada Mossavat, A00

present in the way perceptible things are. . . for this reason the soul never thinks without an image" (*OTS* 431a15). Imagination is the only potency of the human soul that is mimetic of the soul for the soul.

Imagination's mimetic function is especially significant to an inquiry into poetic mimesis. Just as through a synthesis of imaginings we derive something greater with the intellect (*OTS* 431b), in poetic mimesis it is through a synthesis of particulars that the audience is brought to recognize some underlying universal and feel some elevated emotion. Both imagination and poetic mimesis are willed types of mimesis, instances of one person being able to recreate a universe according to some reason. We will see below exactly how related imagination and poetic mimesis are.

Something more should be said about human reason and its mimetic nature. For the intellect is not only mimetic in becoming and forming things, but in articulating what things are. Our words are symbols of impressions in the soul, impressions common to all people, though our words differ (*On Interpretation*, 16a5). Words gain meaning mimetically, the sound of "horse" only meaning something to someone who can attach it to its appropriate thought. Complex statements, such as "All horses have hair," are instances of us unfolding in speech what is already present in what we know simply horses to be. This is mimesis, humans representing simple forms and divisions between things in statements of truth and falsity.

This is significant to our inquiry because our speech only lets us represent thoughts of things, not other impressions in the soul. The word "fear" spoken by one person can conjure the thought of what fear is in another, but not the emotion itself. Poetic mimesis is what allows us to do this: by representing a fear-inspiring thing, an artist can conjure that emotion in another. As λόγος is to thought, poetic mimesis is to emotion. Both are extensions of our political nature, which is further confirmed by the shared pleasure of more than one person responding similarly to the same poetically mimetic object.

Another way in which mimesis is natural to us from childhood is in our acquisition of virtue, which occurs through habituation. Consider:

The virtues. . . we acquire by first having actually practised them, just as we do the arts. We learn an art or craft by doing the things that we shall have to do when we have learnt it: for instance, men become builders by building

houses, harpers by playing on the harp. Similarly we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts. [*Nic. Ethics* 1103b1]

Thus although actions are entitled just and temperate when they are such acts as just and temperate men would do, the agent is just and temperate not when he does these acts merely, but when he does them in the way in which just and temperate men do them [done with knowledge, chosen deliberately and for its own sake, and with the act sprung from a fixed and permanent disposition of character]. [*Nic. Ethics* 1105b5]

In order to become morally virtuous, we do the things that virtuous people do until we do them for their own sake and we take pleasure in the act itself. This is general mimesis continued until it is more, actual change into the thing imitated. Moreover, it is through childhood mimesis that children grow to become full members of family and community: by mimicking parents and neighbors they assume what qualities are specific to their families and communities, such as language, customs, and mannerisms. The link between mimesis and our political nature is strong.

#### Mimetic Enjoyment

. . . and [it is] equally natural that everyone enjoys mimetic objects. A common occurrence indicates this: we enjoy contemplating the most precise images of things whose actual sight is painful to us, such as the forms of vilest animals and of corpses. [*Poetics* 1148b8]

Aristotle here seems to speak mainly of poetic mimesis and our enjoyment of it, though what is said is quite similar to this statement about imagination in *On the Soul*:

When we have the feeling that something is terrifying or frightening we immediately feel the corresponding feeling, and similarly if we think it is something that inspires confidence, but with the imagination we are in the same condition as if we were beholding terrifying or confidence-inspiring things in a painting. [*OTS* 427b23]

This furthers the above claim that imagination is an

instance of general mimesis tied closely to poetic mimesis. Our imagination presents to us an image of, say, a bear, which we do not fear but instead welcome (ξαιρεῖν, translated above as "enjoy"). We are "in the same condition" as when we behold the bear as a poetically mimetic object. Why is imagination so much like poetic mimesis?

As stated above, both imagination and poetic mimesis are willed. They grant humans the god-like ability to create things not merely as they are but according to whatever reason seems best. Both then grant humans the power to study images outside of any time of immediate duty to act. Imagination and poetic mimesis bring us omnipotence and omniscience over tangible things through a divine removal.

But a grand impasse arises when this removal is considered: How, if the removal of the object from us removes us from the corresponding feeling, does tragedy (mimesis of "fearful and pitiable matters") excite us to feel fear and pity? More generally, how exactly does any poetic mimesis move us to emote when the things represented are removed as such from us?

Our answer is in the difference between particulars and universals. Though poetic mimesis removes particulars from our experience, it effectively calls to light universals that are not at all removed from us. In our bear example above, for instance, the painted claws of the bear are removed from us and do not excite fear. But a sudden recognition that some animals are created by nature to do violence to humans would not be at all removed from us, and would excite fear. Even a sudden recognition that we are terror-stricken at irrational creatures would be more generally fear-inspiring than being afraid of a single bear's claw.

The difference between particular and universal should be made clear. The particular represented by poetic mimesis is the apparent object independently existent outside of the mimesis, such as the actual bear in our example above. The universal may be a more general truth articulated through symbols or, more likely, a common human response to a given thing. A play may use particular names and actions to convey the truth that "Courage is a necessary virtue for kings" or it may simply call to light in the audience's minds the happiness that follows from courageous actions. Since poetic mimesis is created primarily to effect emotion, it follows that the primary universal relayed is not a rational truth, but rather a response, such as the connection between action and happiness

that can be described but not relayed through words.

We return to imagination. Aristotle says:

Now the thinking potency grasps in thought the forms that are present in things imagined, and since what is to be pursued or fled from is marked out for it in those imaginings, even apart from sense perception, it is moved when it applies itself to imagined things. For instance, perceiving that a signal light is fire, and observing by what is common to the senses that it is moving, one recognizes that it is an enemy; but sometimes, by means of the imaginings and thoughts in the soul, just as if one were seeing, one reasons out and plans what is going to happen in response to what is present. [OTS 431b2]

The particular imaginings, say of fire and motion, are independently removed from our actions and emotions. But through a synthesis of the imaginings something new arises in us, knowledge that it is an enemy, and we are moved to act or to emote. This mirrors and cannot be far in soul activity from the beholder of poetic mimesis, synthesizing particulars relayed directly to recognize something more general.

The relation between poetic mimesis and imagination does not fully address the main question raised by the above passage: Why do we enjoy mimetic objects?

The explanation of this too is that understanding gives great pleasure not only to philosophers but likewise to others too, though the latter have a smaller share in it. This is why people enjoy looking at images, because through contemplating them it comes about that they understand and infer what each element means, for instance that "this person is so-and-so." For, if one happens not to have seen the subject before, the image will not give pleasure *qua* mimesis but because of its execution of colour, or for some other such reason. [Poetics 1448b12]

The enjoyment of mimetic objects is the enjoyment of knowledge. Yet beholding poetic mimesis is not the same as learning, for it follows from the above passage that poetic mimesis cannot present anything new to the audience: the pleasure would not be that particular to poetic mimesis but rather of the lesser parts of the art (diction, spectacle, color, etc.) But is this restricted to particulars or to universals?

It is the particulars represented that cannot be new to the audience. Without knowing what an apple is, one cannot enjoy a painting of an apple as something relaying a universal. If a language is a common collection of symbols for thoughts, it follows that an artist can no more communicate a universal through an unknown mimetic object than a Greek word can convey a thought to a strictly English speaker.

But the universal relayed through poetic mimesis is different, and does not appear to be the sort of thing that one "knows" like one knows what an apple or a king is. The universals relayed are recognized by the audience through their own activity: "through contemplating them it comes about that they understand and infer what each element means." There is pleasure in coming to understand the particulars of an artwork as elements of something larger, even if the larger truth is something already somehow known to us. This is different from learning, as what is universal must be apparent to everybody. "Recognition" is an appropriate name for what happens in observing poetic mimesis: something known but not acknowledged is brought to light by the audience's response to the object.

### Political Mimesis

Mimesis, general and poetic, has been discussed as closely tied to our political nature in its creation and its enjoyment. As the emotional counterpart to our rational λόγος, it represents the impressions in our soul for others. It is how we are habituated to moral virtue by others, and it is how we become members of communities. But the most striking connection between mimesis and politics is in the most elevated relationship possible, that of two virtuous friends.

Friendship, the bond of the state (*Nic. Ethics* 1155a25), is in its most perfect and complete form when it is between two people who are exceedingly virtuous. The affection between the two is prompted by similarity in virtue (*Nic. Ethics* 1156b20). Aristotle says the following:

Also, when men wish the good of those they love for their own sakes, their goodwill does not depend on emotion but on a fixed disposition. And in loving their friend they love their own good, for the good man in becoming dear to another becomes that other's good. Each party therefore both loves his own good and also makes an equivalent return by wishing the other's good, and by affording him

pleasure; for there is a saying, 'Amity is equality,' and this is most fully realized in the friendships of the good. [*Nic. Ethics* 1157b30]

Though we wish goodwill for our friends, it is our own virtue that we see in their actions. The approval of a virtuous person is self-recognition for the approved one, who cannot fully know himself independently. Happiness follows from a virtuous person's actions, but a virtuous person may not recognize the extent of his or her virtue unless it is reflected in another, someone admired. I believe the difference between being happy from virtue and being aware that you are happy because you are virtuous is what friendship provides and poetic mimesis presents for contemplation.

Is this mimesis? Obviously, there is no true creation of the friend like there is of a poem. But if a sculpture was created of a man, he could see himself through the eyes of another and react to himself in a new way. He could gain insight into not just what he is but how he is to others: he could see himself as a political animal while remaining himself. We are friends with people as much like ourselves as possible, such that our choice of friends is something of a poetic selection. We replace mimesis of ourselves with what actually is us, unimitated, and we behold ourselves as if we are images. The "bond of the state" is akin to poetic mimesis, a recognition of everything outside us as fair or poor reflections.

Before any more can be said about poetic mimesis, we must understand more fully general mimesis in its most universal sense and what causes it.

### ὁρεξις and Mimesis

Consider these passages:

Its [the nutritive/reproductive potency's] work is to beget offspring as well as to use food, since the most natural thing for a living thing to do . . . is to make another like itself, for an animal to make an animal and a plant to make a plant, in order to have a share in what always is and is divine, in the way it is able to do. For all things yearn [ὁρέγεται] for that, and for the sake of it do everything that they do by nature. . . So since it is impossible for them to share continuously in what always is and is divine, since no destructible thing admits of remaining one and the same in number, each of them does share in

it in whatever way it can have a share, one sort more and another less, enduring not as itself but as one like itself, that is one with it not in number but in kind. [OTS 415a25]

There is a certain ceaseless motion that is always moving, and it is in a circle (and this is evident not only to reason but in fact), so that the first heaven would be everlasting. Accordingly, there is also something that moves it. And since what is in motion and causes motion is something intermediate, there is also something that causes motion without being in motion, which is everlasting, an independent thing, and a being-at-work. But what is desired [το ὀρεκτόν] and what is thought cause motion in that way: not being in motion, they cause motion. . . And it [the unmoved mover] causes motion in the manner of something loved, and by means of what is moved moves other things. Now if something is moved, it admits of being other than it is; and so, even if the primary kind of change of place is a being-at-work, insofar as something is moved, it is in that respect at least capable of being otherwise, with respect to place even if not with respect to thinghood. But since there is something that causes motion while being itself motionless, this does not admit of being otherwise than it is in any respect at all. [Metaphysics 1072a20]

In the *On the Soul* passage, Aristotle presents the activities of ensouled, mortal things as imitative of that which does not change, what is eternally itself. In the relation of the fixed stars to the unmoved mover, a circularity is the proper motion of place to mimic the eternal because it is more continuous, more perfect than linear. This is ὀρεξις, translated often as 'desire' or 'appetite.' But it truly means a thing's stretching itself out, a meaning almost captured by the English word "longing."

ὀρεξις is the link between the tangible and the eternal, that which the transient has in its attempt to be as complete as that which does not change and never will. It is also evidence of the most grand mimesis existent, that of all changing things in their efforts to be like the eternal and constant. In fact, the only thing that is never mimetic is that which "does not admit of being otherwise than it is in any respect at

all," the motionless first mover. All motion of coming-to-be, all being-at-work from potency, is mimesis on the part of a changing thing attempting to assume the completion and perfection of the eternal, the unmoved.

If ὀρεξις is a grand cause of motion, and of our general mimesis, what particular relevance does it have to our poetic mimesis? The answer is that it is the same: poetic mimesis is a stretching out to the divine on the part of humans, elevating our practical concerns to the level of the unchanging.

The difference between history and tragedy, discussed above, is that tragedy presents a universal behind its particulars. What's more, the events of tragedy follow strictly according to necessity from each other, whereas history does not present the cause of each action in its scope. All art presents some kind of nature in a frame, a thing with a beginning, middle and end. An observer, as said above, is granted omniscience about a contained image of our practical realm, something we would normally *deliberate* about (as if we were to act), and instead he *contemplates* (*Poetics* I448b15). This is the ὀρεξις of poetic mimesis. Just as the fixed stars stretch their natures to partake in the divine, poetic mimesis stretches the part of the human soul generally reserved for changing things and elevates its function to something akin to contemplation of unchanging things, the most divine activity of the human soul. The true feat is that it does so through an appeal to our emotions, in a sense elevating them as well, allowing us to contemplate them as well as the mimetic objects.

This is not particular to tragedy, though it is illustrated well by it. Beholding any poetically mimetic object allows the human soul to treat the affairs of the transient earth as eternal ideas of contemplation. This is a luxury present because of the structure, the extended λόγος, introduced by the artist to changing things. A person's perception of a bear must be met with deliberation. A person's perception of a painting of a bear is removed from deliberation and will not alter in any way so long as the observer wills. It becomes a thing that can be contemplated like a metaphysical truth, continually. A melody arranges sound so that it all seems present, that what has been heard and what is anticipated are felt together as parts of a thing, something that can be understood as a whole but experienced in parts, and contemplated. I believe this to be a fair way to understand aesthetic beauty: a contemplation of that which, without the added order of a person, could simply not be contemplated. This is the cause and end of poetic mimesis. ♦

## GREEK TRANSLATION PRIZE, 1997-98

### Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus, Lines 668-720

Samuel Garcia, A99

Chorus:

In this land, stranger, renowned for its horses  
you have come to the fairest dwellings of the earth,  
splendid Colonus, there  
the sweet nightingale sings,  
incessantly engaged, from under the green and wooded glens,  
dwelling in the flushed ivy  
and in the god's inviolable foliage,  
hidden from the sun, with countless fruit,  
with neither wind nor wintry storms; where Dionysus,  
ever the reveler, spends his days,  
tending to divine nurses.

And beneath the dew of heavens,  
day after day, the fair-clustering narcissus  
blooms always, ancient crown  
of might goddesses, and so does the  
gold-gleaming crocus; nor do the  
tireless springs from which the wandering  
streams of Cephissus issue forth diminish,  
but ever daily, with water undefiled,  
does that river flow fervently over the plains  
of the broad-swelling earth. The choruses of Muses  
loathe not this place, nor, in turn,  
does Aphrodite of the golden reins.

And there is something the like of which  
the land of Asia has never known;  
nor has it ever yet grown in the great  
Dorian island of Pelops,  
a tree planted not by the hands  
of men, but rather self-produced,  
a terror to hostile spears which  
flourishes mightily in this land:  
the leaf of the gray olive, nurturer of young life.  
This none of the young nor any dwelling  
in old age will ravage nor make barren with their hands;  
for Zeus Morios, with all things ever in his sight,  
gazes upon it and so too does gray-eyed Athena.

And I have yet more praise  
for this city our mother,  
a gift of a powerful divinity,  
the greatest glory of the land,  
glorious for its noble steeds, for their young colts,  
for its prosperity so near the sea.  
For it was you, Son of Kronos, Lord Poseidon,  
you who enthroned her in this glory,  
having brought first to these streets  
the bridle that tames the steed.  
And the much rowed oar of the sea,  
marvelously wrought by the hands,  
leaps in the air, following after the  
hundred-footed Nereids.

Χο εὐίππου, ξένε, τὰδε χώρας  
ἴκου τὰ κράτιστα γὰς ἑπαύλα,  
τὸν ἀργήτα κολωνόν, ἐνθ  
ἀ λίγεια μινύρεται  
θαμίζουσα μάλιστ' ἀη-  
δὼν χλωραῖς ὑπὸ βάσαις,  
τὸν οἰνωπὸν ἔχουσα κισ-  
σὸν καὶ τὰν ἄβατον θεοῦ  
φυλλάδα μυριόκαρπον ἀνάλιον  
ἀνήνεμόν τε πάντων  
χειμώνων· ἴν' ὁ βακχιώ-  
τας ἀεὶ Διόνυσος ἐμβατεύει  
θεαῖαις ἀμφιπολὼν τιθήναις.

θάλλει δ' οὐρανίας ὑπ' ἄ-  
χνας ὁ καλλίβοτρυς κατ' ἡμᾶς αἰεὶ  
νάρκισσος, μεγάλοιν θεοῖν  
ἀρχαῖον στεφάνωμ', ὃ τε  
χρυσανγῆς κρόκος· οὐδ' αὖ-  
πνοι κρῆναι μινύθουσιν  
Κηφισοῦ νομάδες ῥέε-  
θρων, ἀλλ' αἰὲν ἐπ' ἡματι  
ὠκυτόκος πεδίων ἐπινίσσεται  
ἀκηράτῳ σὺν ὁμβρῷ  
στερνούχου χθονός· οὐδὲ Μου-  
σᾶν χοροὶ νιν ἀπεστύγησαν, οὐδ' αὖ  
ἀ χρυσάνιος Ἀφροοσίτα.

εστὶν δ' οἶον ἐγὼ γὰς  
Ἀσίας οὐκ ἐπακούω,  
οὐδ' ἐν τῇ μέλῃ Δωρίδι νάσφ  
Πέλοπος πόποτε βλαστὸν  
φύτευμ' ἀχειρωτὸν αὐτοποιόν,  
ἐγγέων φόβημα δαΐων,  
ο τὰδε θάλλει μέγιστα χώρα,  
γλαυκάς παιδοτρόφου φύλλον ἐλαίας·  
τὸ μὲν τις οὐ νεαρός οὐδὲ γῆρας  
συνναίων ἀλιώσει χερὶ πέρας· ὁ  
γὰρ εἰσαπὲν ὁρῶν κύκλος  
λεύσσει νιν Μορίου Διὸς  
χὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνα.

ἄλλον δ' αἶνον ἔχω μα-  
τροπόλει τὰδε κράτιστον,  
δῶρον τοῦ μεγάλου δαίμονος, εἰπεῖν,  
(χθονός) αὐχημα μέγιστον,  
εὐίππον, εὐπῶλον, εὐθάλασσον.  
ὃ παῖ Κρόνου, σὺ γὰρ νιν ἐς  
τόδ' εἰσας αὐχημ', ἀναξ Ποσειδᾶν,  
ἵπποισιν τὸν ἀκεστήρα χαλινὸν  
πρώταισι ταῖσδε κτίσας ἀγυαῖς.  
ἀ δ' εὐήρετμος ἔκπαγλ' ἀλία χερσὶ  
\*παραπομένα\* πλάτα  
θρόσκει, τῶν ἐκατομπόδων  
Νηρηῶν ἀκόλουθος.

## COMMENTARY

Sam Garcia, A99

*In translating this passage from Greek to English, I began by doing something that may sound peculiar: I rendered it as gracelessly literal as possible. Only after having a basic understanding of the thoughts and images that the original seeks to convey do I feel justified in departing from it, as depart we ultimately must. For, in my opinion, a translation must not simply aspire to beauty, in sonority and arrangement of words, but to beauty and accuracy. If beauty be your only criterion, you may well find yourself composing some beautiful new passage, rather than fashioning a beautiful rendition of an already existing passage. Of course, what you are attempting to translate is also an important consideration. Aristotle's Logic admittedly deserves a different sort of attention than, say, Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal. What seemed most important about this particular Greek passage was the vividness of its imagery. More than anything else, I wanted to preserve that in translation.*

*I will give a brief example of this vividness, which I hold principally responsible for the passage's beauty. In the first stanza, the chorus eulogizes Colonus. A part of what makes the imagery so powerful here is that the descriptions succeed each other very rapidly, building a palpable momentum: "there / the sweet nightingale sings, / incessantly engaged, from under the green and*



Attorney General, Conté on Watercolor Paper,  
Corey Sebastian, A99

*wooded glens, / dwelling in the flushed ivy, / and in the god's inviolable foliage. . ."*

*The word for ivy, κισσον, is modified by a word that often describes a person's complexion, οινωπον, what I translate as "flushed." This word οινωπον is related to the Greek word for wine (οινος). The color, then, of the ivy is obviously being compared to that of wine; but, more interestingly, the ivy's complexion is perhaps being compared to the complexion of a man grown drunk from wine. The ivy, then, is a perfect symbol for an exuberance which, the chorus declares, distinguishes Colonus. This beautiful personification of Colonus' landscape gives this passage a life it would have otherwise lacked.*

*In such a way can poetry, much like paintings, offer us an image of life which seeks not only to capture a moment in time, but the very movement of life. In this passage's case, the images arise not only from the choice of words, but from the structure within which those words are cast. "Flushed ivy" is an example of description bringing life to a passage; but looked at from another perspective, so does the very succession of descriptions surrounding it. The structure of this passage and its individual images offer us a vividly memorable picture I hoped to convey in translation. ♦*



Sarajevo, 1997, Vada Mossovat, A00

## FRENCH TRANSLATION PRIZE, 1997-98

*La Chanson du Mal Aimé*, by Guillaume Apollinaire

Translation by Lauren Connolly, A98

A night of half-fog in London  
A hooligan who resembled  
My love came to meet me  
And the look he threw me  
Made me lower my eyes in shame

I followed this lout  
Who whistled hands in pockets  
We seemed between the houses  
Open wave of the Red Sea  
Him the Hebrews me Pharaoh

Let fall these waves of brick  
If you were not well-loved  
I am the sovereign of Egypt  
Her sister-spouse her army  
If you are not my only love

At the turning of a street burning  
With all the lights of its facades  
Wounds in the bloody haze  
Where the facades were lamenting  
A woman resembling her

It was her look of inhumanity  
The scar on her naked neck  
Drunk leaving a tavern  
At the moment I recognized  
The falsity of love itself

When wise Ulysses returned  
At last to his homeland  
His old dog remembered him  
Beside the cloth which hung shimmering  
His wife was waiting that he might come back

The royal house of Sacontale  
Weary of conquering rejoiced  
When he found her pale from  
Waiting and her eyes grown dim with love  
Caressing her male gazelle

I thought of these happy kings  
When false love and the one  
With whom I am still in love  
Colliding with their faithless shadows  
Made me so unhappy

Regrets upon which hell relies  
That a heaven of oblivion would open on my  
wishes  
For her kiss the kings of the world  
Would die the famous poor  
For her might have sold their shadow

I have wintered in my past  
Sun of Easter return  
To warm a heart more frozen  
Than the forty of Sebaste  
Less than my life martyred

My beautiful ship o' my memory  
Have we sailed enough  
In wave bitter to drink  
Have we rambled enough  
From beautiful dawn to sad night

Farewell false love confounded  
With the woman who draws away  
With the one that I lost  
Last year in Germany  
And that I will not meet again

Milky Way o' luminous sister  
Of the white streams of Canaan  
And of the white bodies of loving women  
Will we dead swimmers follow panting  
Your course towards other nebulae

I remembered another year  
It was the dawn of an April day  
I sang my beloved joy  
Sang love with virile voice  
At that moment of love the year

Un soir de demi-brune à Londres  
Un voyou qui ressemblait à  
Mon amour vint à ma rencontre  
Et le regard qu'il me jeta  
Me fit baisser les yeux de honte

Je suivis ce mauvais garçon  
Qui sifflait mains dans les poches  
Nous semblions entre les maisons  
Onde ouverte de la mer Rouge  
Lui les Hébreux moi Pharaon

Que tombent ces vagues de briques  
Si tu ne fus pas bien aimée  
Je suis le souverain d'Égypte  
Sa soeur-épouse son armée  
Si tu n'es pas l'amour unique

Au tournant d'une rue brûlant  
De tous les feux de ses façades  
Plaies du bruillard sanguinolent  
Où se lamentaient les façades  
Une femme lui ressemblant

C'était son regard d'inhumaine  
La cicatrice à son cou nu  
Sortit saule d'une taverne  
Au moment où je reconnus  
La fausseté de l'amour même

Lorsqu'il fut de retour enfin  
Dans sa patrie le sage Ulysse  
Son vieux chien de lui souvint  
Près d'un tapis de haute lisse  
Sa femme attendait qu'il revînt

L'époux royal de Sacontale  
Las de vaincre se réjouit  
Quand il la retrouva plus pâle  
D'attente et d'amour yeux pâlis  
Caressant sa gazelle mâle

J'ai pensé à ces rois heureux  
Lorsque le faux amour et celle  
Dont je suis encore amoureux  
Heutant leurs ombres infidèles  
Me rendirent si malheureux

Regrets sur quoi l'enfer se fonde  
Qu'un ciel d'oubli s'ouvre à mes vœux  
Pour son baiser les rois du monde  
Seraient morts les pauvres fameux  
Pour elle eussent vendu leur ombre

J'ai hiberné dans mon passé  
Revienne le soleil de Pâques  
Pour chauffer un cœur plus glacé  
Que les quarante de Sébaste  
Moins que ma vie martyrisés

Mon beau naïvre ô ma mémoire  
Avons-nous assez navigué  
Dans une onde mauvais à boire  
Avons-nous assez divagué  
De la belle aube au triste soir

Adieux faux amour confondu  
Avec la femme qui s'éloigne  
Avec celle que j'ai perdue  
L'année dernière en Allemagne  
Et que je ne reverrai plus

Voie lactée ô soeur lumineuse  
Des blancs ruisseaux de Chanaan  
Et des corps blancs des amoureuses  
Nageurs morts suivrons-nous d'ahan  
Ton cours ver d'autres nébuleuses

Je me souviens d'une autre année  
C'était l'aube d'un jour d'avril  
J'ai chanté ma joie bien-aimée  
Chanté l'amour à voix virile  
Au moment d'amour de l'année

## Translation of and Commentary on Baudelaire's "Le Crépuscule du Soir"

R. Justice Schunior, A99

### Twilight

Here is the charming evening, friend of the criminal;  
It comes like an accomplice, with a wolf's step; the sky  
Closes slowly like a great alcove,  
And impatient man changes into a musky beast.

Oh evening, lovable evening, desired by the one  
Whose arms, without falsehood, can say: Today  
We have toiled! It is evening which soothes  
Minds that a savage grief devours,  
The stubborn scholar whose forehead weighs him down,  
And the laborer who regains his bed.  
Nevertheless unhealthy demons in the atmosphere  
Awaken heavily, like businessmen,  
And knock the shutters and the awning as they fly.  
Through gaslights that the wind torments  
Prostitution kindles the streets;  
Like an anthill she clears her exits;  
Everywhere she pushes through a secret path,  
Thus as an enemy attempts a night raid;  
She moves to the bosom of the city of filth  
Like a worm that steals from Man what he eats.  
One hears here and there the kitchen hiss,  
The theatres shriek, the orchestras purr;  
The gambling tables, where games cause delights,  
Fill with whores and swindlers, their accomplices,  
And thieves, who have neither mercy nor respite,  
Soon go to begin their work, they also,  
And softly force the doors and the cash boxes  
In order to live some days and clothe their mistresses.

Gather yourself, my soul in this grave moment,  
And close your ear to this roar.  
It is the hour where the pains of the diseased grow bitter!  
The somber Night takes them by the throat; they finish  
Their destiny and go towards the common abyss;  
The hospital fills with their sighs.—More than one  
Will not return to look for his evening soup,  
In the corner by the fire, in the evening, next to a loved soul.

Yet most have never known  
The sweetness of the hearth and have not lived!

### Le Crépuscule Du Soir

Voici le soir charmant, ami du criminel;  
Il vient comme un complice, à pas de loup; le ciel  
Se ferme lentement comme une grande alcôve  
Et l'homme impatient se change en bête fauve.

O soir, aimable soir, désiré par celui  
Dont les bras, sans metir, peuvent dire: Aujourd'hui  
Nous avons travaillé!—C'est le soir qui soulage  
Les esprits que dévore une douleur sauvage,  
Le savant obstiné dont le front s'alourdit,  
Et l'ouvrier courbé qui regagne son lit.  
Cependant des démons malsains dans l'atmosphère  
S'éveillent lourdement, comme des gens d'affaire,  
Et cognent en volets et l'auvent.  
A travers les luciers que tourmente le vent  
La Prostitution s'allume dans les rues;  
Comme une fourmilière elle ouvre ses issues;  
Partout elle se fraye un occulte chemin,  
Ainsi que l'ennemi qui tente un coup de main;  
Elle remue au sein de la cité de fange  
Comme un ver qui dérobe à l'Homme ce qu'il mange.  
On entend ça et là les cuisines siffler,  
Les théâtres glapir, les orchestres ronfler;  
Les tables d'hôte, dont le jeu fait délices,  
S'emplissent de catins et d'escrocs, leurs complices,  
Et les voleurs, qui n'ont ni trêve ni merci,  
Vont bientôt commencer leur travail, eux aussi,  
Et forer doucement les portes et les caisses  
Pour vivre quelques jours et vêtir leurs maîtresses.

Recueille-toi, mon âme, en ce grave moment,  
Et ferme ton oreille à ce rugissement.  
C'est l'heure où les douleurs des malades s'aggravent!  
La sombre Nuit les prend à la gorge; il finissent  
Leur destinée et vont verser le gouffre commun;  
L'hôpital se remplit de leurs soupirs.—Plus d'un  
Ne viendra plus chercher la soupe parfumée,  
Au coin du feu, le soir, auprès d'une âme aimée.

Encore la plupart n'ont-ils jamais connu  
La douceur du foyer et n'ont jamais vécu!

—*Les Fleurs du Mal*, p.277, Godine edition.

Twilight is the transition between day and night. We might imagine Baudelaire stopping on a busy city street to observe this transition in the passers-by, both those who are ending their labors and those who are beginning their night's work. Evening is welcomed differently by different people and these various approaches to the coming night are reflected in the confused and conflicting images of the poem.

Our first image of evening is ominous. Evening is charming in that it puts us under a spell. It bewitches and transforms. Dimming light has the intoxicating power to make us speak and act with greater freedom. Quietly and slowly like a wolf, almost without our looking or noticing it, evening approaches and the light fades away. Evening is a hunter of men and transforms men into hunters. The friend and accomplice of criminals, it covers their work with its darkness. It assists men in their crimes and works its own special magic, giving them the courage to do what they would be ashamed to do in the light. It is as if a great lid is slowly closed over the world, trapping men in together without the watchful eye of the sun.

But evening has another face. Baudelaire does not waste any words on a transition from one image of evening to another. He merely begins the next stanza as if his attention has abruptly turned from evening's sinister aspect to its comforting one. Evening is the greatest joy to those who must toil during the day. For those who have labored long, both physically and mentally, evening is the only time that is truly theirs. The day must be spent in earning a living; the night must be spent in sleeping. Only evening remains for them to enjoy the company of loved ones, a warm dinner, a quiet house. Evening is that moment right before sleep when we can revel in the comforts of home. Evening is the reward, the goal that scholar and workman have been striving for during long hours of tedious work.

While this aspect of evening does exist, Baudelaire only cares to devote six lines to its description. In the next stanza he returns to the seedier side. He is most interested in those that welcome evening as a beginning to their work and particularly in the similarity of this evening beginning to its morning counterpart. In lines 11-13 he describes demons awakening like bats from their daytime slumber. Although we might imagine demons gleefully flying off to midnight revelry, Baudelaire describes them as no different from businessmen who must shake away their sleepiness and trudge to work. Evening is no different from morning in its form; only the kinds of workers vary. Knocking

the shutters and awnings as they fly by is all in a night's work for demons.

One image leads quickly to another. In lines 14-20 we see how one word catalyzes another image to tangle and confuse what we picture. As the demons fly through the street, they stir up a wind that causes the gas lamps to flicker. From this image we are led to Prostitution kindling in the streets like those same flickering lamps. We picture women going to their separate posts below a street lamp, marking out their territory like ants with their scent. The image of the anthill in line 10 portrays prostitution as an insidious force that infests the city. Like the workmen and the business-like demons, ant-like prostitutes march diligently to work. But they are workers of the underworld, and their paths are secret (line 17). This path-clearing activity of Prostitution leads Baudelaire to associate the tunneling of ants with a secret attack on the city, which prostitution treacherously destroys from the inside. It opens the doorway to all crime and leads to a kind of urban decay. Like a worm that causes an apple to rot as it works its way to the core, Prostitution "moves to the bosom of the city of filth" (line 19). Baudelaire's final image of Prostitution is that of a parasitic tapeworm (line 20) that lives off the city and weakens it morally.

One image leads into another. It is almost impossible to separate them. Baudelaire is fascinated and revolted by the life that begins in the evening. It is both like and unlike the activity of those who work during the day. Instead of the force that creates the city with legitimate work, prostitutes, thieves, and gamblers destroy it. There is something pernicious in the underworld of the night. These images pile up one on top of the other and build to a climax. In line 21, approximately the middle of the poem, the noise is overpowering: hissing, shrieking, howling, and purring can be heard all around. We can imagine that as it gets darker the entertainment for the evening begins. Restaurants and cafes open, orchestras begin to play, people laugh and shout. Nighttime confusion fills the streets. These sounds are all the more confused because of the growing darkness. Again Baudelaire sees a similarity between those who begin their work at night with those who begin during the day. In lines 25-28 he describes thieves who must go to work in order to make a living clothe their mistresses, just as any businessman must provide for his family.

I picture Baudelaire watching both the man returning to his hearth and the thief setting out on his

night's work. The thief, prostitute, swindler, and demon interest him more. Their world is bright and bewitching. Yet it is in the midst of this scene of evening activity that Baudelaire stops and speaks directly to his soul (line 29). This is a moral command to gather himself in the face of confusion and chaos. He rebukes himself for being drawn in by the evening's attractions. Evening, as we have seen, is filled with all kinds of pleasures that result in both good and evil. Both returning home after a day's labor and setting out for a night's sinful dissipation are the delights of the evening.

It is this roar of the world that passes us each evening on the streets that Baudelaire wishes to close his ear to. He wants to hear what we cannot hear on the street. Just below the roar of the street is the sound of the sighs of the dying. This sound is horrifying, not fascinating. More than once Baudelaire has noticed that both those who find solace in the evening and those who make their living at night are workers. But there are those who do not work but wait. Evening is not just the time of universal pleasure, it is also the time when life most often comes to an end. In line 31 Baudelaire speaks of the diseased who lie in forgotten corridors of hospitals that no one wishes to visit. Evening ushers in the night that leads them to oblivion. Baudelaire reminds us in lines 34-36 that many will not return to enjoy their evening meal and quiet time by the fire.

The last terrifying couplet of the poem speaks of others yet, others who have no advocate and have no pleasure from evening. Baudelaire seems to consider living as the enjoyment of evening, whether its pleasures are a beginning or an end to work. What

is so frightening about this last couplet is that the people Baudelaire has been describing, scholar, workman, gambler, and prostitute, are all in the minority. All the chaos and noise they create is small compared with the large number that have never known life or any kind of sweetness. The majority are those we do not see and do not want to see. We can easily moralize about the, corrupt nature of the city at night, but we would rather not think about the lost ones. These are the ones facing their last hours alone and in pain. They are led to the common abyss without having known the sweeter pleasures that evening offers. Evening is not only a beginning; it is also an ending. The first few lines of the poem can be seen in a new light after the last couplet. Night closes in not only as a cover over our wicked deeds but also as a coffin lid. It is wolf-like because it comes like a predator to pick off the weak and old among us.

Baudelaire is gifted with the ability to paint a picture of what is before him in words. Yet the moral force of this poem is that he commands his soul to repel the attractive force of what is colorful and fascinating in the night. He focuses on sound, not sight. Our ear is shut to the bustling activity of the night and is directed to quiet murmurs. In this way we are led to consider a world not directly before our eyes. Evening is presented to us both as an end to the day's labors and as a beginning of the night's pleasures, but the final image of evening is the ultimate and lonely finish to sad and unnoticed lives. ♦

## Your Choice Was to Live: Ismene's Resistance to Her Family

Megan Graff, A01

My high school literature teacher once asked our class who were the Antigones and who the Ismenes. I raised my hand with the former group, looked around and proudly labeled us as the Leaders: strong-willed, determined go-getters who were not afraid of sacrificing convention or taking risks to get what they wanted. The latter were the Followers: weak, indecisive, unable to remain firm under pressure and willing to sacrifice their principles for safety. I placed the sisters at two ends of a spectrum and characterized them accordingly: Strong vs. Weak, Daring vs. Cowardly, Heroine vs. Foil.

As with most strictly dualistic partitions, this was an oversimplification. Experience and closer readings have shown me that Antigone is not to be admired in all things, nor is Ismene to be despised. More and more I suspect that Ismene is not the weak and passive character I initially believed her to be.

The story of *Antigone* begins long before the play opens. Oedipus, Antigone and Ismene's father, was king of the city of Thebes until it was revealed that he had murdered his father and married his mother. Upon discovering this, Oedipus blinded himself and left Thebes in his brother/uncle's care until Oedipus' sons, Eteocles and Polyneices, were old enough to rule.

At the beginning of *Antigone*, the audience discovers that Eteocles had stolen the rule of Thebes from his older brother. Polyneices in turn gathered Argive allies to invade Thebes and level it in revenge. The brothers met in battle and killed each other. Now Creon is once again in charge of the city and has issued an edict saying that, although Eteocles is to be buried with full funeral honors, Polyneices' body is to be left to rot. Antigone performs funeral rites for the outcast body and is captured. She is left in a rocky cell outside the city to die of exposure and eventual starvation. Creon's son Haemon, Antigone's betrothed, tries to rescue her, but arrives only to find that she has killed herself; he subsequently falls on his sword. Creon's wife Eurydice also kills herself when she hears the news, and Creon is left a broken man at the end of the play.

Note that Ismene is not mentioned at all in

this summary of *Antigone*. She could have been mentioned; she appears on stage two separate times and has more lines than Haemon. But she is not a source of action. Ismene causes nothing. This is not to say that she does nothing, but it is what she doesn't do that makes her stand out from the rest of her bloodline. Ismene does not participate in the family's doom.

The tragic actions of the House of Laius have three aspects. The first is that the family brings death to those around them. Second, they act in opposition to or perversion of their natural roles. Finally, they act on impulse and out of emotion.

The House of Laius seems to bring death wherever it goes. Oedipus kills his father Laius and the revelation of his true identity causes Jocasta, his wife/mother, to kill herself. *Antigone* continues this course: Eteocles and Polyneices each bring about the other's death; Antigone's death causes Haemon's, which in turn causes Eurydice's death. Haemon and Antigone both recognize the nature of the curse, Haemon when he tells his father, "Then she must die, and in her death destroy another," Antigone when she cries to the memory of her own father, "Alas my brother, illstarred in your marriage, in your death you have undone my life!"<sup>1</sup>

The only two relations of Oedipus left standing after this bloodbath are Ismene and Creon. Ismene is the only living descendant of Oedipus, for she has killed no one nor has she been killed, despite Creon. He at first wants to sentence her with Antigone: "[Antigone] and her kinsfolk shall not avoid a doom most dire; for I charge that other with a like share in the plotting of this burial." Yet he changes his mind, and Ismene is not drawn into death with Antigone after all. Somehow, the curse has passed her by.

The second family characteristic is that no one fits into his/her proper role. The family's fulfillment of these roles is either twisted or perverted. Oedipus was the son of the woman to whom he was also husband. Eteocles and Polyneices fought and killed each other, reversing the ordinary role of brothers to support each other in war.<sup>2</sup> It is Antigone, however, who most strongly exemplifies this inversion of

the proper role, especially in contrast to Ismene.

Antigone's name in Greek is ἀντί-γονή, against-descendant, a variation of which might be ἀντί-γυνή, against-woman. Antigone is, indeed, against womanhood in many ways. She takes action herself and causes others to center their actions around her in a manner more characteristic of Greek men than women. Creon even says of her: "Now verily I am no man, she is the man, if this victory shall rest with her and bring no penalty." Antigone contemptuously dismisses Ismene's objections, which are rooted in femininity. She argues with Creon and dares to confront men on their own terms. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus says, "these girls preserve me, these who are men, not women, in true service."<sup>3</sup>

Oedipus may have considered both Antigone and Ismene to be doing the duty of men, but in truth, Ismene plays the part of a woman. She knows her duty and says that she would help bury Polyneices if it were not that her very nature as a woman prevents her from taking part in the action. She is aware of the futility of impossible tasks and reproves her sister for pursuing such with lack of judgment: "to act beyond nature has nothing in it of reason" (67-68). Unlike the rest of her family, Ismene is exactly what she should be.

The third characteristic is this family's tendency toward hot-tempered impulsivity. As Antigone is being taken to her death, the Chorus tells her:

You have rushed forward to the utmost verge of daring, and against that throne where Justice sits on high you have fallen, my daughter, with a grievous fall.

She is not alone in her rashness. The Chorus continues: "But in this ordeal you are paying, perchance, for your father's sin." The sin they refer to is Oedipus' ill-starred marriage. He, too, showed signs of imprudence. His killing of Laius, his marriage to Jocasta, his decree that the man causing the plague on Thebes must be immediately exiled: each of these actions was taken without any pause for reflection.

Antigone shows a similar lack of consideration. Upon hearing of Creon's edict, she immediately begins forming plans to bury Polyneices which defy all self-preservation. She does not make any attempt to compromise—to talk to Creon, to bribe the guards. When Ismene refuses to help, instead of enlisting others to aid her, Antigone undertakes the rites herself.

When they are undone on Creon's orders, she goes again to cover the body and does not bother to hide herself; the guard reports that "she cried aloud with the sharp cry of a bird in its bitterness". She is not upset at being captured.

In the opening dialogue between Antigone and Ismene, Antigone reveals that her devotion is to what is καλόν: good, noble, and beautiful. Ismene, instead, is focused on φρόνεσις and νοῦς: consideration, or judgment, and mind. Antigone acts from her heart, as Ismene points out when she says to her sister, "You have a warm heart for such cold things" (88). Ismene remains practical in thinking about the implications of her actions, considering their impact on her present situation instead of joining in Antigone's obsession with the thoughts and feelings of those in the underworld. While she does serve as the perfect dramatic foil for Antigone by playing the part of the chiding parent with whom no self-respecting rebel child would agree, it takes a kind of strength to retain one's mind in such a situation.

Ismene is by her nature an uncharacteristic member of her family. By the end of the play, she is not seen as a member of the family at all. Ismene is completely dismissed from the minds of Antigone and the Chorus, so much so that it is taken for granted that Antigone is the last surviving descendant of the House of Laius. What has happened in this time to accomplish Ismene's complete alienation from her unfortunate family?

The answer lies in the opening dialogue between Antigone and Ismene, in words we can read in English without hearing an untranslatable feature of Greek, its little-used dual person. The dual is used when two things are together in a special way, a matched pair of sorts. In line 13, Ismene refers to herself and Antigone as a dual and to their brothers as another dual. When she does set herself apart, as in line 39, she makes a special point of it by using the emphatic pronoun ἐγώ. Ismene, at least, believes that she and Antigone are bound together.

Antigone has different ideas. While she starts out addressing the "shared sister head" of Ismene (I), I suspect that she may have been trying to wheedle her sister into agreement. In raging against Creon's proclamation, Antigone says, "They say the good Creon has proclaimed such things to you and to me, I say even to me. . ." (31-32). The last clause implies that it is one thing to issue such a proclamation to Ismene, but quite another for it to apply to Antigone as well. Aside

from being rather rude to Ismene, the specification implies a partition between the sisters, that they act under different restrictions.

Ismene continues to use the dual, this time in a possessive referring to Oedipus as "our hateful and infamous father." She also uses the dual to include Antigone in her statement that their nature requires them to bow to Creon's demand:

But it is necessary to consider that we were indeed born [dual ἐφύμεν] women; it is not for us to fight alongside men; and therefore for that reason we are led by those more powerful, and to hear and obey these things and even ones more grievous than these. (61-64)

Without realizing it, Ismene has in this speech destroyed any chance she might have had to be linked with Antigone. She has refused to join her sister in burying Polyneices.

From this point forward, neither sister uses the dual; rather, the speech is now peppered with the emphatic personal pronoun. Both of the following speeches are Ismene's:

So then I [ἐγώ] am begging those below the earth to have understanding, as I am forced in these matters, for I will obey those who stand in authority; for to act beyond nature has nothing in it of reason. (65-68)

I indeed [ἐγώ] do not do dishonorable things, yet I am by nature [ἐφύην; singular<sup>4</sup>] without means to act with force against the city. (78-79)

Antigone rejects her sister after her refusal, using not only the first person pronoun but also the second person, even adding a μέν. . .δέ construction to complete the separation: "You [σύ], for one [μέν], may use these things as a pretext; I [ἐγώ], on the other hand [δέ], will go to heap up a funeral for my dearest brother" (80-81).

Ismene's alienation is almost complete. By choosing not to help Antigone, she cements the setting-apart that nature itself had begun. Now Antigone and even the Chorus deny Ismene a place in the family. Antigone claims to go alone and friendless to her death, ignoring Ismene. She presents herself to the Chorus as "the last daughter of the house of your kings". The Chorus says of Antigone: "that hope of

which the light had been spread above the last root of the house of Oedipus—that hope, in turn, is brought low". It is Antigone who is the "last root," while Ismene has disappeared from the minds of the characters. She is not mentioned, nor does she appear after she has left the stage the second time. At the end of the play, the Chorus comments compassionately on Creon's grief at having lost a wife and son to his pride, but Ismene's grief at having lost two brothers, a father, and a sister within a short time is not mentioned.

Consideration of these things leads me to wonder which of the two sisters has the real strength. Is it Antigone, who dares her life and sacrifices her hope of a future to take care of the dead, who also confronts the ruler of her city with his flaws? Or is it Ismene, who endures with the flexible tenacity of a reed?

I used to admire Antigone for her principles, for her fine drama in dying gloriously. But at seventeen, I had never seen the death of a family member. I had yet to observe the spirit that can resist the power of despair. I know now the courage required to continue living daily in the face of grief—and I know that I do not have it. My greater admiration goes to Ismene, who has been abandoned to fill the void left by her doomed family. It took more strength to live than to die. ♦

#### Notes:

1. Note on translation: translations that do not include line numbers are taken from the 1967 publication of Sir Richard Claverhouse Jebb's translation. Passages that include line numbers are the author's own class translations.
2. As, for example, in the case of Menelaus and Agamemnon.
3. Also the Jebb translation.
4. Contrast to the use of dual ἐφύμεν in line 62.

# MATH PRIZE, 1997-98

## Geometry

Piroska Kopar, A99

### 1. Prove that the quadrilateral so formed is a square. (Figure 1)

First, let us draw in the diagonals of the squares on the sides of the parallelogram. In each square the center of the square is where the diagonals cross each other. From the four sets of diagonals and from the four sides of the big quadrilateral figure (the one that results from the connecting the centers; ABCD on the figure) we get four triangles. If I can prove that four hypotenuses of these triangles are equal and that the angles that the four sides cut around the centers of the squares are right angles, I have proven that our quadrilateral ABCD is a square.

I say that the four triangles described above (AEB, BFC, CGD, DHA), are congruent, and hence their hypotenuses are equal. For let us take two of them that are not symmetrically situated around the parallelogram: triangle ABE and triangle ADH. Since their two sides are the half of the diagonals of the squares on the sides,  $AE = AH$  and  $EB = HD$ . (Since the opposite sides are the half of the diagonals of the squares built upon them will also be equal.) Now we also know that the diagonal of a square cuts its right angle into half a right angle. Therefore if we call the acute angle of the parallelogram  $\alpha$ , angle AHD will be  $\alpha + 45 + 45$ ; that is,  $\alpha + 90$ . But the obtuse angle of the parallelogram is  $180 - \alpha$ . Thus the angle AEB is  $360 - (180 - \alpha) - 45 - 45 = \alpha + 90$ . We now have triangles with two equal sides and one equal angle, so we can conclude that they are congruent. Similarly in the case of the other two triangles.

It remains to be shown that the angles of this equal sided quadrilateral are each 90 degrees. Since the four triangles are congruent, all their corresponding angles are equal. Thus  $BAE = DAH$ ,  $ABE = ADH$ ,  $AEB = AHD$ , ETC. Now since the diagonals of a square when crossing each other cut two right angles, (such as EAH), we can say that the angle composed of EAH and HAI is a right angle. But HAI is the same as DAH, which is equal to BAE, so the angle composed of DAE and EAB is also equal to a right angle. And similarly in the other three cases.

The quadrilateral thus constructed is therefore a square. Q.E.D.

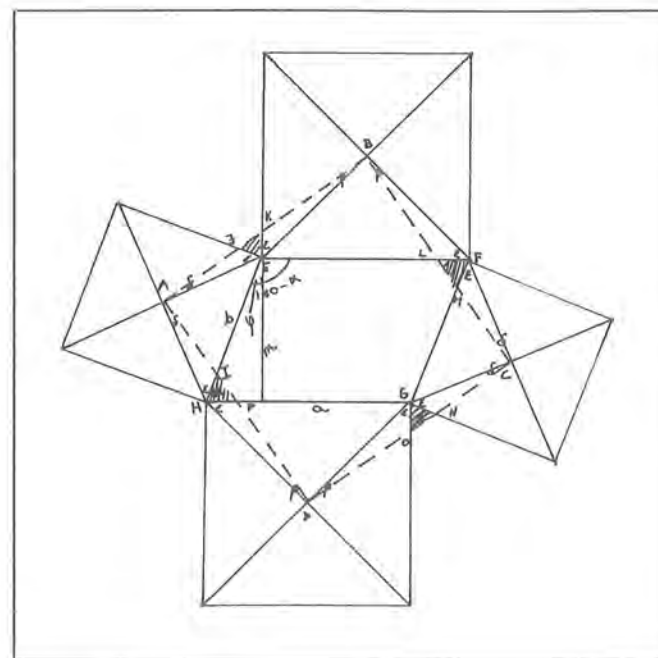


figure 1

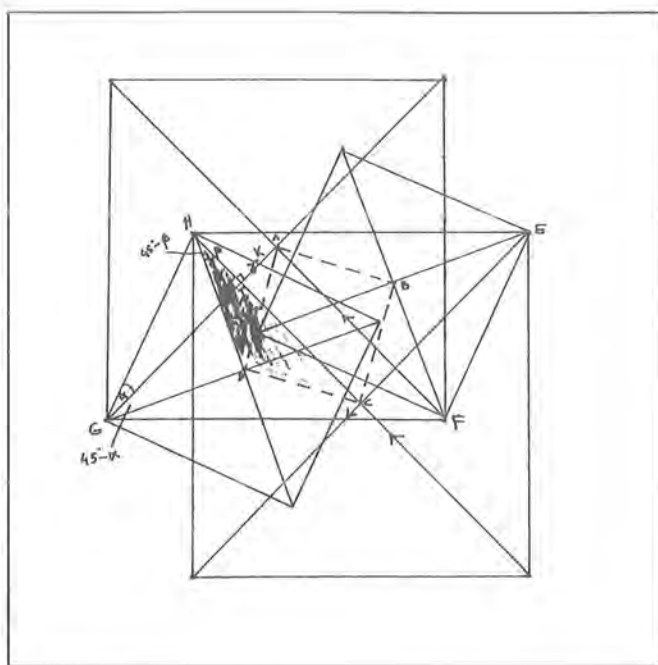


figure 2

### 2. Prove that the 4 triangles that are shaded on the figure are congruent.

If we dissect each of the triangles AEB, BFC, CGD, DHA above to three triangles as shown on the figure (just by shading in those little triangles). We get 12 new triangles. I say that these 12 are but three sets of congruent triangles; each set containing four triangles. For the triangles AJC, FMC, CGN, HAI all have one side that is half of the diagonal of the small square, and we already know from the previous proof that the angle denoted by  $\delta$  are equal, and that the angles marked by  $\epsilon$  are 45 degrees. Thus all these triangles are congruent. Similarly triangles EKB, BFL, DGO, HDP have one sided that is half the diagonal of the bigger square and two equal angles  $\beta$  and  $\epsilon$ . Each of the big triangles AEB, etc., then, is made up of three smaller triangles, two of which I have shown to be congruent with the corresponding two triangles of the other bigger triangles. Therefore the remaining, shaded triangles are congruent as well. Q.E.D.

### 3. Can the same square result from other parallelograms? If so, from which parallelograms will it be constructed? If not, why not?

Let us look at our first figure again. The area of the big square is composed of the following:

- the area of the parallelogram:  $\alpha \cdot \mu$  (since the shaded triangles are congruent, we can reposition them so that we substitute the two that are part of the parallelogram but not part of the square for the two that are part of the square but not part of the parallelogram)

- twice the area of the isosceles triangle with base  $a$  and sides that are half of the diagonal of the bigger square:  $a/2$  (because of their congruency we can substitute triangle HPD for DGO, and triangle BFL for BKE)

- twice the area of the isosceles triangle with base  $b$  and sides that are half of the diagonal of the small square:  $b/2$  (we can substitute triangle HAI in for AJE, and triangle FMC for GCN)

But  $\alpha \cdot \mu$  can be written as  $ab \cos \phi$ , thus if we call the side of the big square  $c$ , we can say that:

$$2c = a + b + 2ab \cos \phi$$

Using the law of cosines in the triangle AEB, where the two sides of the triangle are halves of the diagonals of the squares we can write:  $c = a + b - 2ab \cos \text{angle of AEB}$ .

And since the angle AEB is  $360 - 45 - \phi - 90 - 45 = 180 - \phi$  and since the cosine of  $(180 - \phi)$  is the same as  $-\cos \phi$ , we can now write the law of cosines thus:  $2c = a + b + 2ab \cos \phi$ .

Now to find the parallelogram that will have the same square as the original one, we simply pick two sides and solve for the angle. This angle will tell us how to construct our new parallelogram. We have one restriction, however. When we look at the equation and the figure we see that  $a$ ,  $b$ , and  $c$ , are sides of one triangle. Since we want to find a parallelogram that will give us the same square as the first parallelogram, (our  $c$  is already given), we must pick our sides  $a$  and  $b$  so that when added together, their sum will be greater than the length of the third side. Q.E.I.

### Corollary 1

From this it is evident that if any angle  $\phi$  is 0; that is, if any angle between the sides is a right angle, the equality of the resulting square will depend only on the length of the sides. Hence rectangles will equal perimeters will yield the same square.

### Corollary 2

It is also obvious that if our original parallelogram is a square, the resulting square will be twice the original.

### 4. What figure results if the squares are drawn inward? Prove your claim. (Figure 2)

I say that the resulting figure will be a square. For just as in the first case, if we can show that the triangles resulting from the diagonals of the inward squares are congruent and that the equal sides of the figure meet at right angles, we have proven what we wished to prove. The triangles thus formed on the sides of the square are triangles BCE, DCH, ADG, ABF. All of these have one side equal to the half of the diagonal of the small square and one side equal to half of the diagonal of the big square. As in the case of Figure 1, let us take two triangles that are not symmetrically situated, say triangle DCH and DGA. Since angle AGB is  $45 - \alpha$  and angle DHC is  $45 - \beta$ , if I can show that  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  are equal, I have shown the congruence of these triangles. Now angle AIH is a right angle, because its sides are the perpendicular diagonals of the two big squares (and it makes no difference that one diagonal belongs to one of the big squares and the other one to the other, since we built these squares on parallel sides

of the parallelogram). So the angles in the triangle HIK are a right angle,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ , while in triangle GHK the angles are a right angle  $\alpha$  and  $\gamma$ .  $\beta$  and  $\alpha$  are therefore equal. And similarly with the other two triangles.

It remains to be shown that the angles of the equilateral figure in the middle are equal to two right angles. Angle GDA is composed of a right angle (because of the crossing diagonals) and of angle ADH. Since the triangles GAD and HDC are congruent, angle GDA = angle HDC. Now the angle HDC is also composed of two angles; of angle ADH and ADC. Angle ADC therefore has to be a right angle

and similarly with the other three angles of the quadrilateral. The quadrilateral so constructed is therefore a square. Q.E.D.

5. Without necessarily proving your claim, state a problem about any triangle, rather than any parallelogram, with figures drawn outward, such that their centers when joined form an equilateral triangle.

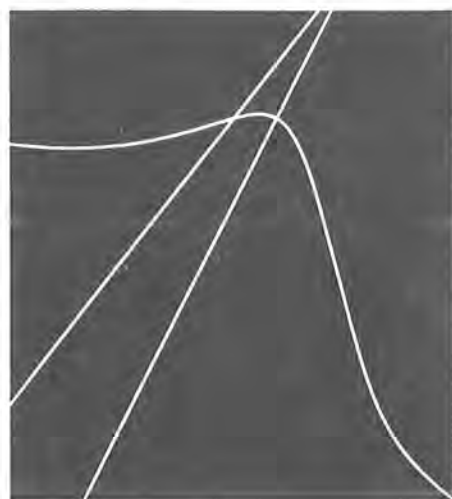
If on the sides of any triangle we draw equilateral triangles (similarly as in the case of the parallelogram when we drew squares), the centers of the triangles joined will also form an equilateral triangle. ♦

## COMMENTARY

Piroska Kopar, A99

**M**y goal was to solve each step in a way that might enable us to see the proof as a single picture. In order to do this I was trying to keep the connection between steps very tight. I wanted to convey the simplicity of the proof, and the beauty arising from this simplicity, the way it appeared to me. To me the entire proof consists in the rotation and the repositioning of a single triangle that is defined by halves of the diagonals of the squares built on the sides of parallelograms, and the angle in between them (which varies depending on the construction.)

I am always suspicious when we are faced with a surprising mathematical result. How can a mathematical result be surprising? The way the



system is set up (in this case Euclid's), these results are necessary and contained in the composing figures, before we perform the construction. We have

come up with a closed system that we believe we understand quite well, and we are still faced with surprises. I believe that if not in all, yet in most cases of Euclidean geometry, if we were only able to have a greater imagination, a greater ability to see things as one, the proofs could be reduced to a single picture in our minds. I am very fond of exercises that help us see at least a section of this geometry as a single picture, as a self-

contained entity. I saw this proof as such an exercise, and tried to show its single picture.

## MATH PRIZE, 1997-98

### Trigonometry Daniel Braithwaite, A01

#### Parts I and II

Let triangle ABC be right and isosceles with hypotenuse AC=6. Let F be the midpoint of AC, and place E on AC so that AE=2.

Connect BF and BE, and draw the parallel to BC through E. Note that BF is perpendicular to AC.

Then, triangle ADE is right and isosceles, similar to triangle ABC, and in particular

$$\tan \text{angle DEA} = 1$$

$$\tan \text{angle BED} = DB/DE = DB/DA = EC/EA = 2$$

$$\tan \text{angle DBE} = 1/\tan \text{angle BED} = 1/2.$$

Moreover, triangle BFC is right and isosceles, so that BF=3, and thus

$$\tan \text{angle FBC} = 1$$

$$\tan \text{angle EBF} = 1/3$$

$$\tan \text{angle FEB} = 1/\tan \text{angle EBF} = 3.$$

Therefore,

$$\arctan 1 + \arctan 2 + \arctan 3 = \text{angle DEA} + \text{angle BED} + \text{angle FEB} = \pi$$

$$\arctan 1 + \arctan \frac{1}{2} + \arctan \frac{1}{3} = \text{angle FBC} + \text{angle DBE} + \text{angle EBF} = \pi/2$$

#### Part III

For convenience, let  $\alpha = \pi/7$  throughout.

Let triangle ABC be isosceles with base angles measuring  $2\alpha$  and legs of length 1.

Let CD bisect angle BCA. Then angle ADC =  $3\alpha$ , so triangle ADC is isosceles and in particular DC = 1.

Draw perpendiculars to BC from D and A. Then, EC =  $\cos \alpha$  and FC =  $\cos 2\alpha$ , so that EF =  $\cos \alpha - \cos 2\alpha$ .

Draw the parallel BC through D. Then, DG = 2DH = 2EF =  $2\cos \alpha - 2\cos 2\alpha$ . Moreover, angle ADG =  $2\alpha$ , which subtracted from angle ADC =  $3\alpha$  gives angle GDC =  $\alpha$ , so that triangle GDC is isosceles. Thus GC = DG.

If we imagine the perpendicular drawn from C to AD, it becomes clear that AD =  $2\cos 3\alpha$ .

But AG = AD, so that

$$2\cos \alpha - 2\cos 2\alpha + 2\cos 3\alpha = GC + AG = AC = 1$$

$$\cos \alpha - \cos 2\alpha + \cos 3\alpha = 1/2.$$

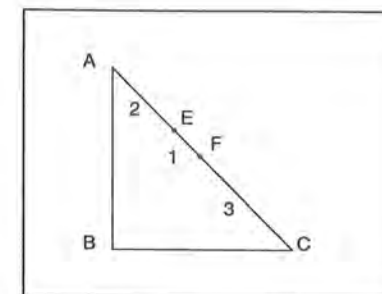


Figure 1

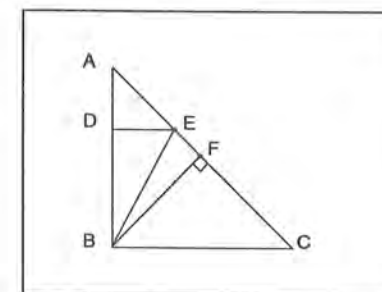


Figure 2

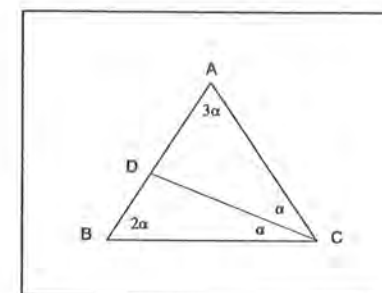


Figure 3

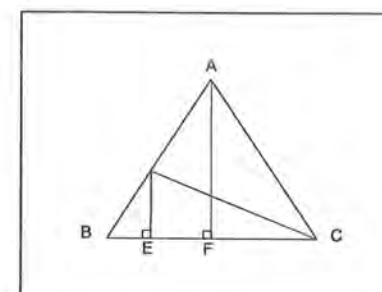


Figure 4

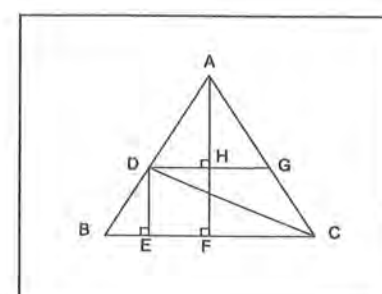


Figure 5

## COMMENTARY

## What is Trigonometry?

Daniel Braithwaite, A01

Propositions 4, 8, and 26 of the first book of the Elements state that from the equality of certain corresponding parts of two triangles, equality of the remaining parts follows necessarily. For example, according to Proposition 26, if two triangles each have a 9 inch side lying between 30 degrees and 40 degrees angles, then the two triangles are in fact equal in every respect.

It follows straightforwardly that in a single triangle composed of a 9 inch side between angles of 30 and 40 degrees, the remaining parts are uniquely determined. That is to say, the measures of the remaining angle and two sides are not subject to any variability. (This would not be so if it were only known that the triangle had a 9 inch side bordering on a 30 degree angle – infinitely many different triangles fit this description). Well then, how large is that angle, and how long are those sides?

The angle is easy: Since the angles of a triangle together must sum 180 degrees (Proposition I. 32), it must be 180 degrees - 30 degrees - 40 degrees = 110 degrees. It's not so clear how to figure out the sides. Of course anyone could just draw the triangle, whip out a ruler, and measure them, but that's the wrong spirit. What's needed is a method of calculating the side lengths from the known side angles.

Trigonometry is the solution to this problem. A precise account of it took 2000 years to develop and is pretty complicated, but it was approximated by Ptolemy and can be imagined in Euclidean terms, as follows. With any acute angle, a right angle can be constructed, and the ratio of the side subtending that angle to the hypotenuse must be taken. In this way, a sort of table is made, associating a certain ratio to every acute angle. For example, the ratio  $BC:AC$  is matched with 17 degrees (figure 1). This table

is known as the sine function and is the heart of trigonometry.

The sine function solves the earlier problem:

Given the triangle as described above, simply draw a perpendicular to  $AB$  through  $C$  (figure 2). Obtain, from the sine function, the ratio corresponding to 40 degrees – this is equal to this ratio  $CD:AC$  by its very definition. Then, since  $AC$  and the ratio  $CD:AC$  are known,  $CD$  can be calculated. Finally, the ratio  $CD, BC$  is the sine of 70 degrees, and since  $CD$  has been calculated, so can be  $BC$ . A similar process yields  $AB$ .

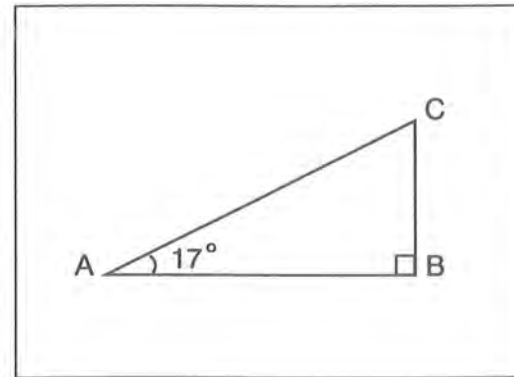


Figure 1

But the missing piece in this account is the determination of the sine function. How are those ratios that it associates to angles actually obtained? Not by making the triangle and measuring; that's still cheating. Finding a way, in figure 1, to derive the ratio  $BC:AC$  from the measurement 17 degrees alone is what took 2000 years. (And in fact, because the sides are incommensurable, the calculation is an interminable process). Much earlier, Ptolemy's table of chords served the same

role as the sine function, but his figures were only approximate.

Although certain ideas in Book II of the Elements bear a conceptual resemblance to the sine function, Euclid's geometry is essentially different from trigonometry. This is because problems of measurement, from which trigonometry is born, are entirely absent from Euclid. Perplexing, then, that the definition of the sine is purely geometric.

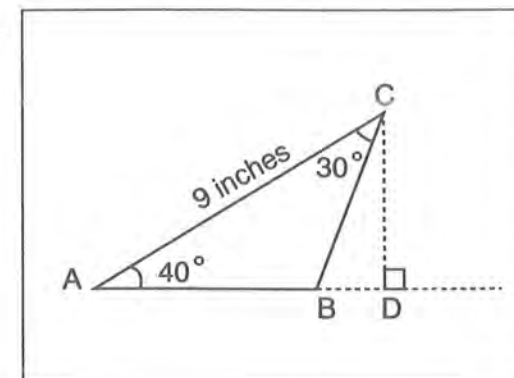


Figure 2

Tension has always existed in mathematics between its visible and invisible objects. The discipline treating the first is geometry. The discipline treating the second has no adequate name, but could be called calculation or algebra. The two might exist independently, but in fact measurement links them, and origins of trigonometry exemplify the oddity of their relation. ♦

## Lobachevski

Not for me this gift  
this jewel whose quickened facets  
flicker with inconstant fire  
and flow like molten ice.  
Let go its mutable beauty  
and take up the gifts  
left by an ancient suitor:  
a claw, a rock, a shell,  
a bone.

Wendy Braithwaite, AGI

# SOPHOMORE ESSAY PRIZE, 1997-98

## Striving For Harmony: A Reading of The Book of Job

Michael Goodrum, A00

**T**he *Book of Job* is an experiential book. Because its premise is unreasonable (a blameless man has his family and possessions destroyed and is made to suffer "for no good reason," as God puts it (2:30)<sup>1</sup>), Job's suffering and the uncertainty regarding the nature of justice and wisdom that arises from it cannot be settled by the rational intellectual meditation of Plato or Aristotle. Greek philosophy does not apply: Job's troubles must be settled by experience. The people that populate the book bear witness to their experiences in order to resolve what is happening. For Job's human inhabitants, the uncertainty that develops over the course of the book is relieved by God, the source of justice and wisdom. While the reader cannot witness the events of the book directly, and experiences Job's theophany second hand, the reader has a personal experience which draws him into the book's poetry and reaches beyond the mere examination of text. The reader must summon this experience to relieve his uncertainty regarding the questions that Job poses. The fundamental question for the reader is not "What is?" but rather, "What happened?" In order for one to understand justice and wisdom, one must understand the experiences of those who witness Job's affliction, because each witness gives an account of wisdom, justice, and the nature of God.

Experience in *The Book of Job* is defined primarily in terms of seeing and hearing. The most compelling example of this is Job's final response to God:

I had heard You with my ears,  
But now I see You with my eyes;  
Therefore, I recant and relent,  
Being but dust and ashes.  
(42:5-6)

Seeing is the most important of the two modes of experience, because seeing brings a thing into being in a much more substantial and convincing way than hearing can. Seeing God, Job has relief and resolution.

In opposition, if a thing is obscured in dark-

ness, its being is in doubt, as when Job curses the day of his birth, wishing that it had never existed:

May that day be darkness;  
May God above have no concern for it;  
May light not shine on it;  
May darkness and deep gloom look after it;  
May a pall lie over it;  
May what blackens the day terrify it.  
(3:4-5)

If the day of Job's birth is taken out of light into darkness, out of the realm of sight, it might never have existed, and thus Job might never have existed.

But Job *does* exist, seeing and hearing, as do the rest of the witnesses to his affliction. By properly examining the seeing and hearing of the book's inhabitants, one can be led to an understanding of their experience, opening the door to an understanding of justice and wisdom.

The book is framed with prose narration. The narrative prose guides the reader, telling of the dialogue between God and the Adversary, and relating the events in Job's life that give one a sense of who he is both before and after his affliction. Through the narration, one receives the four assertions that focus one's perception of the book more than any others. First, at the beginning of the book, we are told that Job is "blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil" (1:1). The fact of Job's blamelessness is restated twice, by God, when he speaks to the Adversary (1:8, 2:3). Second, both the destruction of Job's community and his physical affliction, while effected by the Adversary, are carried out with God's permission: "See, he is in your power" (1:12, 2:6). God allows the Adversary to tear down the protective fence that He has built around Job and his household. Third, Job is made to suffer "for no good reason" (2:30). Fourth, at the end of the book, God tells Job's comforters twice that He is incensed with them, "for you have not spoken the truth about Me as did My servant Job" (42:7, 8). Without these crucial facts, *The Book of Job* would be an entirely different, less compelling book. Unless it

were established that Job is a blameless man, that God allows his suffering, that it is unreasonable, and that Job's speech about God is true, the questions regarding the nature of justice and wisdom that one is presented with would not be so difficult to settle, because Job's experience and claims could be easily dismissed. There would be no way to discriminate between truth and falsity, making it convenient for the reader to join with one of Job's accusers in condemning him.

After the prose prologue, seven days and nights of silence ensue, in which Job must be mulling over his dilemma. Job understands that there is no reasonable cause for his suffering (9:17). As a result, he is powerless: Job has nothing to repent for, there is no damage he has done to God that he can repair. It seems to Job that his suffering can end only if he ceases to exist. Suicide is not an option; Job is a created being, and his life is not his to take (12:10). Because he is blameless, Job will not "blaspheme God and die" (2:9), as his wife demands. When his possessions were destroyed and his children were murdered, Job responded by saying, "The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:21). Even when the things most precious to Job were taken from him, Job maintained his blamelessness. If Job were to blaspheme now, he would marginalize the value of his children, an impossibility for such a loving father (1:5).

The only possibility left for Job is never to have existed. Job does not embrace the notion of non-being for its own sake; he makes his desire to live apparent (19:26-27). Rather, Job embraces the notion of non-being because he believes it is his only means of escape from suffering. The very fabric of creation must be altered for Job to be taken out of existence. God must uncreate Job and the time of his birth for Job and his suffering to cease from being. Job does not command God to do this, but rather wishes that it were done; by wishing he maintains his piety:

Perish the day on which I was born,  
And the night it was announced,  
"A male has been conceived!"  
May that day be darkness . . .  
Because it did not block my mother's womb,  
And hide trouble from my eyes.  
(3:3-4, 10)

When God created the world, He saw that it was very good (Genesis 1:31). When Job asks God to alter the fabric of His creation, it is apparent that Job

sees otherwise: "Why does He give light to the sufferer / And life to the bitter in spirit?" (3:20). Job questions God, asking for help; Job needs God to reconcile how the world, and Job's existence in it, is good (a notion that Job, as a blameless man is bound to accept), with the pain and bitterness that Job's existence has become to him. For this to come about, God must reconcile the good that He sees with the apparent evil that Job sees and feels. The notions of justice and wisdom hang in the balance of this questioning.

After the curse, Job's three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, the "comforters") speak in turn, and make several attempts to resolve Job's questions and assertions about justice and wisdom. Because the reader eventually knows that they do not speak the truth about God, no analysis of the truth of the testimony of the comforters is necessary. God makes it clear that they are untrue witnesses to the divine. The question, then, is not "Is their testimony true?" but rather, "Where do they go wrong?" What makes their testimony untrue? This is a difficult question; the comforters are not liars who can be easily dismissed. Much of what they say is literally true within the proper context. The downfall of the comforters lies in the fact that they take literal truths and apply them recklessly to Job. Job's friends do not take his situation into account, and refuse to listen to him. In doing so, they rob the truth of its spirit, twisting it into falsehood.

Eliphaz is the first of Job's friends to speak. In his part of the first "round" of comfort (Chapters 4-14), Eliphaz refers to three separate visual experiences. The first proclaims the fate of evil men: "As I have seen, those who plow evil / And sow mischief reap them. / They perish by a blast from God" (4:8-9). The second is of "thought-filled visions of the night" (4:13). The third regards foolish men: "I myself saw a fool who had struck roots; / Impulsively, I cursed his home" (5:3).

Clearly, it is Eliphaz's sight that is primary to his experience, and it is his sight that leads him down the path of untrue testimony, as his "thought-filled visions of the night" show:

A wind passed by me,  
Making the hair of my flesh bristle.  
It halted; its appearance was strange to me;  
A form loomed before my eyes;  
I heard a murmur, a voice,  
"Can mortals be acquitted by God?  
Can man be cleared by his Maker?"

If he cannot trust His own servants,  
And casts reproach on His angels,  
How much less those who dwell in  
houses of clay,  
Whose origin is dust,  
Who are crushed like the moth,  
Shattered between daybreak and evening,  
Perishing forever, unnoticed.  
Their cord is pulled up  
And they die, and not with wisdom."  
(4:15-21)

Eliphaz, by using his vision of reproach to attack Job's questioning of God's methods, assumes that his vision is from God, that the form of strange appearance he sees is the Lord or one of His angels, although this is improbable. Man does not perish unnoticed, as the source of the vision would have it, because God is the "watcher of men" (7:20), and Job makes this clear in his reply to Eliphaz. God pays close attention to man, "inspect[ing] him every morning, / Examin[ing] him every minute" (7:18). The source of Eliphaz's vision is unknown. If God is the source of his vision, then God is intentionally misleading Eliphaz. Either way, Eliphaz's unreliable sight, his primary source of experience, is what makes him an untrue witness to the divine, calling into question all of his future visual references and the predictions that he generates from them.

In his portion of the second round of comfort (Ch. 15-21), Eliphaz alludes to his vision (15:14-16), makes the ironic assertion that Job's eyes have failed him (15:12), and carries on about what he claims to have seen regarding the fate of wicked men. Eliphaz has no right to make claims about the fate of others; only God can determine such things (12:10). Eliphaz is rationalizing the things he has seen in order to make them appear reasonable. Job responds to Eliphaz's dubious testimony by saying, "Surely mocking men keep me company, / And with their provocations I close my eyes" (17:2). Instead of offering Job consolation, Eliphaz, and the comforters in general, vex him with a rational world view that must disregard his suffering in order to be consistent, and Job will not bear witness to it.

Having had his sight attacked, Eliphaz in the third and final round of comfort makes a full-out assault on Job, claiming that Job finds even God's sight questionable: "You [Job] say, 'What can God know? / Can He govern through the dense cloud? / The clouds

screen Him so He cannot see / As he moves about the circuit of heaven'" (22:13-14). Job does question God's sight, but only in incredulous disbelief (10:4). Job knows that his suffering is not made to continue by some fault in God's vision, but rather because he cannot see God, and thus does not know how to reach Him:

But if I go East—He is not there;  
West—I still do not perceive Him;  
North—since He is concealed, I do not  
behold Him;  
South—He is hidden, and I cannot see Him.  
But He knows the way I take.  
(23:8-10)

If only he knew where to look to find God, Job would have his questions settled. Eliphaz can offer Job no help in this regard: even if Eliphaz's vision were trustworthy, he would be of no use, because Eliphaz is not looking for God. Eliphaz has no reason to look for Him: when Eliphaz rationalizes about God's creation, he implicitly posits that God must be reasonable, which is untrue (2:30). In doing so, Eliphaz makes the erroneous claim that the only substantive difference between God and man is that God is immortal, while man is mortal. Because man's mortality is a barrier that he cannot overcome, Eliphaz sees no need to look for God; he has nothing to gain by it.

Bildad is the next of Job's friends to speak. At no point does Bildad claim to have seen anything with his own eyes. What he understands has come only by the hearing of the ear via the reports of others. He discounts Job's vision and suffering, claiming that learning by report is the proper path to understanding, as he explains to Job in the first round:

Ask the generation past,  
Study what their fathers have searched out  
—For we are of yesterday and know nothing;  
Our days on earth are a shadow—  
Surely they will teach you and tell you,  
Speaking out of their understanding.  
(8:8-10)

Bildad would have Job deny his experience—the divinely decreed suffering that he knows and the things he has seen—for the sake of the words of men long dead. For Job, this is impossible, as he says in reply:

If I say, "I will forget my complaint;

Abandon my sorrow and be diverted,"  
I remain in dread of all my suffering;  
I know that You [God] will not acquit me.  
(9:27-28)

Job cannot divert himself from the Now, for the sake of studying the past of others, or for any other reason. The Now is consuming Job. He cannot reflect on the past until his suffering is resolved. An understanding of the generation past is not immediately relevant—Job must understand his own existence before he can account for the teachings of dead patriarchs, who are unable to defend themselves in the face of the comforters' misrepresentations of their understanding.

The second round brings Bildad's most powerful speech. Job has been lamenting his future, wondering what will happen when he descends to Sheol, and Bildad angrily retorts with a litany of death and destruction, cataloging the terrors that befall wicked men:

His progeny hunger;  
Disaster awaits his wife.  
The tendons under his skin are consumed. . .  
[Terror] lodges in his desolate tent;  
Sulphur is strewn upon his home.  
His roots below dry up,  
And above, his branches wither.  
(18:12-13, 15-16)

Job defends himself against this verbal abuse by asking "How long will you grieve my spirit, / And crush me with words?" (19:2). Relying on the "wisdom" of the ages as he does, Bildad can only speak of death. But Job would have life, as he exclaims: "I would behold God while still in my flesh, / I myself, not another, would behold Him" (19:26-27). Bildad continues to be irrelevant. His crush of words serves no pertinent purpose, because justice and wisdom are of no account to dead men.

There is something eerie about Bildad's speech here, a sense that what Bildad is saying has been said before. It proves to be a reformulation of Eliphaz's statement about the happiness of "The man whom God reproves" (5:17). Eliphaz was demanding that Job admit to sin to recover God's good graces (which would have reduced Job's relationship with God to the level of simple transactions, an absurd proposition given what has transpired), and promised Job a happy fate if he did so:

You will know that all is well in your tent;

When you visit your wife you will never fail.  
You will see that your offspring are many,  
Your descendants like the grass of the earth.  
(5:24-25)

Claiming no visual experience of his own, Bildad is forced to rely on the report of Eliphaz. This proves to be Bildad's undoing as a viable witness to the divine. Bildad's third round speech is another reformulation of Eliphaz's words:

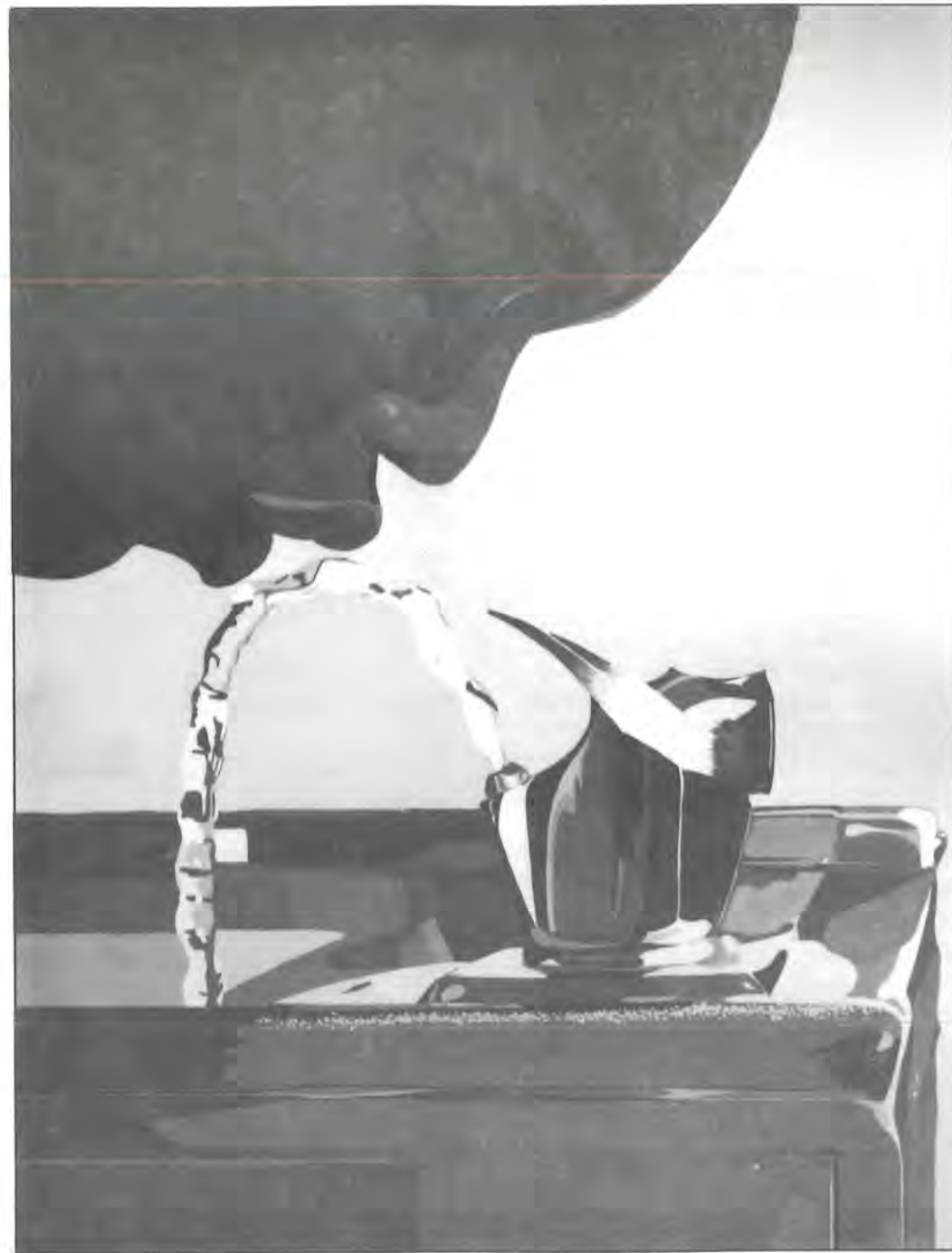
How can man be in the right before God?  
How can one born of woman be cleared of guilt?  
Even the moon is not bright,  
And the stars are not pure in His sight.  
(25:4-5)

Bildad derives his words from the report Eliphaz gave of his "visions of the night." Looking through Eliphaz's eyes, Bildad is subject to Eliphaz's faulty vision and his consistent, convenient, unfitting world view; Bildad's testimony of the divine cannot help but be untrue.

Zophar is the last of the comforters to speak. Zophar speaks only twice, and does not relate a personal experience of any sort. He does not rely on experience (and speaks of its fleeting and problematic nature (20:8)), but rather on wisdom, which he claims to possess:

But would that God might speak,  
And talk to you Himself.  
He would tell you the secrets of wisdom,  
For there are many sides to sagacity.  
(11:5-6)

Zophar presents himself as one who knows the secrets of wisdom. Does he have any basis for this claim? To understand this, one must have a definition of wisdom. Job, in Chapter Twenty-eight, supplies a definition, given by God: "He said to man, / 'See! Fear of the Lord is wisdom; / To shun evil is understanding'" (28:28). Zophar does not seem to fear the Lord. Zophar claims to be in a privileged position that precludes him from truly fearing the Lord. This limits Zophar's relationship with God, blinding Zophar to the truth about wisdom that sits in front of him. In reply, Job mocks Zophar, saying "Indeed you are the voice of the people, / And wisdom will die with you" (12:2). Job then refutes Zophar, stating that wisdom is God's alone:



*Amendment XV*, Gouache on Paperboard, Corey Sebastian, A99

Is wisdom in the aged  
And understanding in the long-lived?  
With Him are wisdom and courage;  
His are counsel and understanding.

(12:12-13)

Given the definition of wisdom that God has supplied, and what the narrative frame tells us about Job, it is clear that Job is in possession of wisdom and understanding. Why then does he say that God is the sole possessor of wisdom? Because the wisdom that Job possesses is the part of wisdom that God has measured out for men, its beginning, and what Job seeks is wisdom in full, divine wisdom, and an understanding of divine justice. Zophar cannot supply this; only God can show the way to it.

Since his first exchange with Eliphaz, Job has understood that the comforters do not consider him to be blameless and upright, and do not believe that God allows both the pure and the wicked to suffer. Thus Job tells Zophar to rely not on the testimony of men, but on the testimony of the rest of God's creation: "Ask the beasts, and they will teach you; / The birds of the sky, they will tell you, / Or speak to the earth, it will teach you" (12:7-8). Job has a sense of the world as a whole that reaches beyond the rational world of man, which the comforters are bound up in. Job has acquired this sense of things by taking notice of the wild and unreasonable ways of nature. Here Job is appealing to the comforters to look beyond their world, to bear witness to the testimony of nature, so they can understand that what is at stake lies far beyond their judgement. They fail to do this, and fail Job in the process. The testimony of God's creation will later play a crucial role in Job's experience of divine wisdom.

In his second and final speech, Zophar himself casts doubt on his claims by telling Job that "A spirit out of my understanding makes me reply" (20:3). This sounds like something parallel to Eliphaz's experience, his vision from an unsubstantiated source. It raises further doubts about the nature of Zophar's testimony. How can he know that God is the source of his reply? Indeed, Zophar would have God "loose his burning anger at [the wicked man]" (20:23). But this does not happen, because as Job says, God cannot be instructed (21:22). Even if Zophar possesses the wisdom of men (which he does not) he cannot claim to have divine wisdom, and his witness to God is therefore untrue: "Of your replies only the perfidy remains" (21:34).

After the comforters, who "would help with-

out having the strength" (26:2) have finished speaking, Job presents his argument against God, unhindered by untrue accusations. The rational question that the comforters have been asking is "What sin did you commit that has caused God to punish you?" Both Job and the reader know that this is the wrong question to ask. The proper question is "Why have you allowed a blameless man to suffer?"

In asking this question, Job lays bare the great problem of the book. As a blameless man, Job knows that God is just, and yet he suffers. There is no way for Job to rationally reconcile his notion of justice with his experience; because the comforters can do no more than rationalize, they do not have the strength to help Job. Just how excruciating it is to exist in a world where God appears to be just and unjust in the same way at the same time, Job expresses with a fatal wish: "May [God] my enemy be as the wicked; / My assailant as the wrongdoer" (27:7). If God showed himself to be in the wrong, as the wicked are, the world would be a consistent, understandable and insufferable place, a place without hope. Job, whose sons were "marked for the sword" (27:14), is sharing in the portion of evil men, a portion that he believes is not rightfully his. Job challenges God to "weigh me on the scale of righteousness, / Let God ascertain my integrity" (31:6). Certain of his blamelessness and the just nature of his claim against God, Job demands punishment from Him, should Job be found to have committed sin:

If I raised my hand against the fatherless,  
Looking to my supporters at the gate,  
May my arm drop off my shoulder,  
My forearm break off at the elbow.

(31:21-22)

One must remember that Job has not lost faith in God. Job remembers that he is a part of God's creation: "In His hand is every living soul / And the breath of all mankind" (12:10). Job recognizes that he is ultimately defenseless against the wrath of God. Job also recognizes that, troubling as the idea may be to him, God cannot be in the wrong, because God has allowed Job a measure of hope: "Shaddai has terrified me. / Yet I am not cut off by the darkness; / He has concealed the thick gloom from me" (23:17). The world is not a hopeless place; God has given Job the will to live.

This is very bewildering. While God is assaulting him, Job can see that God is also acting

benevolently toward him, adding strength to the notion that God's being is contradictory. What is happening? What does God intend Job to see, that he is 'concealing the thick gloom' from Job? Only God has the wisdom required to answer such a question, for it is "hidden from the eyes of all living" (28:21). Only God can see that this is the question that needs to be answered. This is why no human reason will suffice to comfort Job; this is why Job so desperately needs to present himself in God's court: "O that Shaddai would reply to my writ, / Or my accuser draw up a true bill!" (31:35).

Having finished presenting his argument, Job waits quietly, looking for God. What he finds is Elihu. Elihu, the narration tells us, has been silently watching the proceedings, waiting patiently for Job and the comforters, his elders, to finish speaking. When they have done so, he rises to speak, "angry at Job because he thought himself right against God. He was angry as well at his three friends, because they could not reply, but merely condemned Job" (32:2-3). Elihu is the most problematic witness to the divine in *The Book of Job*. God does not make any statement about the nature of Elihu's testimony of him, as he does with Job and the comforters. There is, in fact, no interaction of any kind between Elihu and anyone else in the book, in spite of Elihu's attempts to engage the comforters and make Job answer him. God appears immediately after Elihu finishes speaking, but the narration makes it plain that God is addressing Job, not Elihu (38:1). What is the nature of Elihu's testimony of God? Is Elihu speaking the truth about Him?

Job has asked for a hearing with God, and Elihu claims to be God's emissary: "If you [Job] can, answer me; / Argue against me, take your stand" (33:5). Whether or not Elihu is a messenger from God, Job cannot trust him, because Elihu misquotes Job at several points. The first instance of this occurs not long after Elihu begins speaking:

I heard the words spoken [by Job],  
"I am guiltless, free from transgression;  
I am innocent, without iniquity.  
But He finds reasons to oppose me,  
Considers me His enemy."  
(33:8-10)

This is what Job actually said:

How many are my iniquities and sins?

Advise me of my transgression and sin.  
Why do You hide Your face,  
And treat me like an enemy?  
(13:23-24)

Job proclaimed his innocence, but not at this point. Here, Job was asking God to grant him an audience, and cure Job of his ignorance should he have committed sin without knowing it. The most important discrepancy between what Job said and what Elihu here claims he said lies in the lines "But He finds reasons to oppose me / Considers me His enemy." God has not found reasons to oppose Job, as he told the Adversary (2:30). Job knows that God's actions are unreasonable, and he has said as much (9:17). Further, while God is treating Job like an unjust man would treat an enemy, and Job calls God his enemy (27:7), God does not consider Job to be His enemy. Job is God's servant, as He tells the comforters (42:7, 8). These are fine, yet crucial distinctions. Elihu, in his youthful arrogance, misrepresents both Job and God in one fell swoop, making his account of both human and divine testimony null and void. Elihu cannot be an emissary from God.

Of course, just what it means to be God's servant is uncertain; perhaps one ought to give Elihu the benefit of the doubt with regard to his account of God. However, even if one pardons Elihu with regard to his representation of the particulars, one must convict Elihu of being untrue to God in his main assertion: "Let us decide for ourselves what is just," he asks of Job and the comforters, "Let us know among ourselves what is good" (34:4). Though they disagree on almost every detail regarding justice, on this Job and the comforters agree: justice comes from God, not men. In addition, Job knows that if that part of justice bequeathed to men by God could bring resolution, Job would have the power to relieve his affliction on his own. There would be no reason for Job and the comforters to argue, no need for Job to have an audience with God. Everything that has taken place up to this point in the book would be moot, and need not have happened. Indeed, rendering the experiences of Job and the comforters nugatory is Elihu's intention: if he can do so, his own lack of experience will not be a factor, and he will be able to speak as an authority. Elihu is thwarted in this enterprise: God appears, making Elihu irrelevant.

Who is this who darkens counsel,  
Speaking without knowledge?  
(38:2)

God questions Job from within a tempest, beginning the theophany. God is rebuking Job, not for sinning, but rather for asking God to alter the fabric of His world. If Job had sinned, he would not have been granted an audience with God: "[This] is my salvation: / That no impious man can come into His presence" (13:16). Job has not given an untrue account of God and His creation; he has not mistaken the relevance of the unreasonable and terrifying aspects of the world, as Elihu and the comforters have. Job's problem is that his vision is limited by his perspective as a suffering human being. In order to gain divine wisdom and understanding with regard to God's justice, the sense of the world as a whole that Job has must become more than just a sense: it must be known as a whole. In order for Job to know the world as a whole, he must see it as a whole.

If Job is to see the world as a whole, and gain divine wisdom and an understanding of divine justice, he must undergo a shift in perspective, and see the world as God sees it, with divine vision. God allows Job this vision when He shows Job His creation, "draw[ing] mysteries out of darkness / And bring[ing] obscurities to light" (12:22). When God appears to Job, He does not give Job a report of the world, but rather speaks it into being, as He did in the beginning (Genesis 1:1-31). The world is not physically recreated; God does not scale down His carefully measured creation so that it fits into a space that Job's unassisted eyes can take in. Instead, God communicates His perspective by means of an epiphany, so that Job can see as God sees, looking down on the whole, while still being a part of creation. This heightening of Job's vision must be what allows him to see God with his eyes. Because God communicates directly to Job, Elihu and the comforters are rightfully prevented from seeing God's creation as a whole. Because Elihu and the comforters did not look and listen properly, because they did not question God about his creation, they do not have the experience necessary to see things from God's perspective.

Echoing Genesis, God brings the mysteries of creation to light gradually, moving from small to great, so that Job is prepared to face divine wisdom. God begins by showing Job how carefully He has measured the foundations of the earth, setting its limits (38:4-7). Job knows that he is a created being, and that God is greater than him, but in striving with God, Job has shown that he is unclear about his own limits. Earlier Job asked God, "Am I the sea or the Dragon, / That

You have set a watch over me?" (7:12). Speaking of the sea, God begins his response to this question:

... I made breakers My limit for it,  
And set up its bar and doors,  
And said, "You may come so far and no farther;  
Here your surging waves will stop."  
(38:10-11)

It is clear that Job is greater than the sea; Job has the breath of life, and is capable of looking beyond himself, unlike the sea. However, the notion that everything in God's world has, from His perspective, a well-measured place, is crucial to Job's new view of the world: his understanding of divine justice depends on it. These things will come into sharper focus when Leviathan, the Dragon, appears.

Which path leads to where light dwells,  
And where is the place of darkness,  
That you may take it to its domain  
And know the way to its home?  
Surely you know, for you were born then,  
And the number of your years is many!  
(38:19-21)

Job does not know, and cannot give an answer. God is mocking Job. Not only is it impossible for Job to instruct God, it is folly for Job to request of Him that He remove a day from His creation when Job does not even know where light and darkness reside. God shows Job the rest of the non-living, elemental part of His creation (storms, constellations, etc.) so that Job can see that what he would have to contend with to remove his birth and its time from the world is far beyond his capacity as a human being.

Next God presents a parade of animals to Job. The animals fall into two distinct classes: those that God has given men dominion over (Genesis 1:28), and those that answer only to God. In the class that God has given men dominion over, the group of animals that are lesser creatures than Job, the two that are most important with respect to shifting Job's view of the world are the hind and the ostrich.

Can you mark the time when the hinds calve?  
Can you count the months they must complete?  
Do you know the season they give birth,  
When they couch to bring forth their offspring,  
To deliver their young?  
(39:1-3)

God shows Job the hind to change Job's perception of birth. Job sees his birth as a bitter curse, the source of his pain and trouble. God shows the hind in the midst of calving, an image of tenderness. When He does this, God is commanding Job to look and see that the delivery of young, in which nature has its share of God's creative power, is not only good, but beautiful, even though it is painful. Through this Job sees that all of God's world is invested with an inherent measure of beauty and goodness, and that his own birth is intrinsically good.

Of all of God's lesser creatures, the ostrich is the most vexing, for both Job and the reader. In his final speech, Job said that he had become "a companion to ostriches" (30:29). God presents the ostrich in an unsavory light:

She leaves her eggs on the ground,  
Letting them warm in the dirt,  
Forgetting they may be crushed underfoot,  
Or trampled by a wild beast.  
Her young are cruelly abandoned as if they  
were not hers;  
Her labor is in vain for lack of concern.  
For God deprived her of wisdom,  
Gave her no share in understanding.  
(39:14-17)

There are strong parallels here. Like the ostrich, Job has had his children trampled underfoot. Like the ostrich, Job believes himself to be without wisdom and understanding. But God has given Job a share of wisdom and understanding, albeit not the kind that Job seeks. And Job's children were not killed for Job's lack of concern; there is no good reason for their death. Here God is showing Job that while the protective action that he took on behalf of his children (the sacrifices he made for them (1:5)) is important, because it is the most important distinction between Job and the ostrich, Job's community will be preserved or destroyed according to God's wisdom alone, and not according to Job's will. Job's dependence on God is absolute.

Job acknowledges his ignorance and lack of power when he complies with God's demand that he respond to the question that God is asking, namely, "Do you see where you belong in My world?":

See, I am of small worth; what can I  
answer You?

I clap my hand to my mouth.  
I have spoken once, and will not reply;  
Twice, and will do so no more.  
(40:4-5)

At this point God asks Job, "Would you impugn My justice? / Would you condemn Me that you may be right?" (40:8). Job cannot condemn God as he earlier wished (27:7), because God's justice is unassailable: Job does not have the experience necessary to define either divine wisdom or divine justice. Their definitions lie beyond the capacity of human speech, and they must be seen to be known.

Job's response to God's question was inconclusive, simply an active silence, which is why God shows Job Behemoth, the first of His two great creatures. Behemoth reveals to Job his place in the world, leaving Job no doubt about where he belongs. Earlier, Job made it known to the comforters that he wanted God to kill him, citing his weakness as a reason for God to end Job's life: "What strength have I, that I should endure? / . . . Is my strength the strength of rock? / Is my flesh bronze?" (6:11, 12). Behemoth, "the first of God's works" (40:19), proves to be stronger, and thus greater than Job: "His bones are like tubes of bronze, / His limbs like iron rods" (40:18). Behemoth is the insurmountable hedge that lies in Job's path (3:23).

Finally, God reveals to Job His greatest creature, Leviathan:

See, any hope of capturing him must be  
disappointed;  
One is prostrated at the very sight of him.  
There is no one so fierce as to rouse him;  
Who then can stand up to Me? . . .  
I will not be silent concerning him  
Or the praise of his martial exploits . . .  
Divine beings are in dread as he rears up;  
as he crashes down, they cringe.  
(41:1-2, 4, 17)

The wisdom of men, the fear of the Lord, is made manifest in Leviathan. God has given Leviathan the freedom to inflict dread upon anything that crosses his path, even divine beings. God praises Leviathan's martial exploits; to God, Leviathan, who causes suffering, is beautiful. Because he sees, for a fleeting moment, as God sees, Job can recognize this beauty. Seeing God's greatest creature Job has a glimpse of divine wisdom. Job understands that there is a place for terror and

suffering in God's world, that it is a natural part of the fabric of God's creation. To call Job's suffering just or unjust would be folly; it is a reasonable distinction appropriate only to the world of men and the relationships that exist within it, and not to the whole of creation or to the relationship between man and God: its meaning crumbles in the face of Leviathan's awful presence. God's creation is far too great to be contained by the boundaries of such an easy conclusion. By creating an unreasonable world in which blameless men are allowed to suffer, in which the hind knows pain and the ostrich lacks understanding, God gives His creation a measure of freedom that would not be available in a logically consistent world which knew no suffering. Each creature in God's world is granted the freedom to be an individual, to act according to its own will and limitations. Seeing this, Job learns that he must continue to reach beyond the rational, because the world view that falls out of strict rationality is not really a view of the world. Rather, it is a vain attempt by man to create his own world, which must be incomplete and would not allow life to be lived fully, if it could be lived at all. To be fully human, and a true servant of God, Job must face the complexities and apparent contradictions of the world, not for the sake of reconciling and understanding them, but in order that he may appreciate their harsh beauty and strive to live in harmony with them. This striving is what makes life compelling. In this striving Job can achieve harmony with God.

Job has been striving for harmony with God from the first. Now that he has seen his boundaries and knows the terms under which he must search for it, Job understands that his desire for a full explanation of divine wisdom and justice was improper:

I know that You can do everything,  
That no plan is impossible for You.  
Who is this who obscures counsel  
without knowledge?

Indeed, I spoke without understanding  
Of things beyond me, which I did not know.  
Hear now, and I will speak;  
I will ask and You will inform me.  
I had heard you with my ears,  
but now I see you with my eyes;  
Therefore I recant and relent,  
Being but dust and ashes.

(42:2-6)

Job knows that his suffering was not unjust, and he now possesses the wisdom he needs to find his way in the world. Job reached out to God, and God touched him, giving Job a sense of awe and wonder at the greatness of His creation. Any further understanding of divine wisdom and justice is beyond Job; it belongs only to God.

"Thus the Lord blessed the latter years of Job's life more than the former" (42:12). Having had a glimpse of divine wisdom, Job is a changed man. Before his suffering, Job was a man alone: he watched over his family with a cautious eye, but did not take part in it. A caring but aloof father, Job did not feast with his children at the houses of his sons, but made sacrifices on their behalf (1:4-5). After his affliction, Job understands that if he is to live in harmony with the world, he must live in harmony with his own community. Job must not be a distant spectator; rather, he must take an active role within his family. Job acknowledges this by holding a feast at his own house, where he is surrounded with and consoled by his family and friends.

"[Job] had seven sons and three daughters. The first he named Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch" (42:13-14). Having seen the beauty of the hind in labor, Job knows that women, the bearers of children, are the handmaidens of God's creation, and as the curers of loneliness (Genesis 2:18-24), they are also the creators of human community. The beauty of his daughters serves as a visual reminder to Job of the exalted place God has given them in His world. With these things in mind, Job gives his daughters a share in his possessions along with their brothers (42:15). When he gives his daughters estates, Job relinquishes his control over their lives and care, granting each of them the freedom to find their own way in the world.

"So Job died old and contented" (42:17). ♦

*Thanks to Ms. Nancy Buchenauer—advisor, mentor, trusted friend.*

#### Notes:

I. *The Book of Job*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980. References are to chapter and verse.



Sarajevo, 1997, Vada Mosavaat, A00

## SENIOR ESSAY PRIZE, 1997-98

### Understanding the Mythical Nature of the Wilderness and its Role in Isaac McCaslin's Repudiation in "The Bear"

Aaron Pease, A98

**T**he Bear," by William Faulkner, contains mythical elements. Both the bear, Old Ben, and the wilderness in which he lives become larger than life. They are not merely personified, but raised to a level which seems more than human. Their grandeur is contrasted to the triviality and smallness of the human stage and its passions, prides, and tragedies. It seems at first that it is only in their presence that man can become fully human. However, the continuing development of this story, along with the themes and issues dealt with in "The Old People" and "Delta Autumn," reveals an underlying complexity which muddles the purity of our expectations, and forces us to question how we have understood the myth. It is not that the myth becomes diminished in our sight but that it must share our vision with other themes.

It seems necessary, in order to gain a fuller understanding of the novella, to examine carefully the mythical elements and their effect on young Isaac McCaslin, the sensitive boy for whom the myth has the most impact. We must then examine Isaac's repudiation, and how that one decision and its aftermath affects our reading of his youthful encounter with Old Ben.

The bear is described in three ways. He is a mortal being who will one day die. He is a legend, the stuff not of tall tales but the measured, deliberate stories delivered in a serious, almost disbelieving tone which guarantees the listener that the apparently incredible conclusion is not hyperbole. Finally, the bear is "epitome," "phantom," and "apotheosis out of the old wild life."<sup>1</sup> He is an anachronism, from an old dead time when all our land was wilderness and man was merely another creature slinking through the woods. How can we link these three descriptions? To what form can we fit them so that the three-sided figure will give us a complete picture?

The story leaves us in no doubt that the bear is a mortal being. Boon kills him with the aid of Lion. However, Old Ben has such a hold on the minds of the characters, especially Isaac, that it is fair to ask whether the grandeur of the bear is a human construction, a foisting of nobility upon an irrational beast from some sort of psychological need, or rather the

inspired chronicling of an actual being who incites man to wonder, awe, and a dread of his fragility?

The question arises from Isaac's realization in Chapter One that the bear which had:

run in his listening and loomed in his dreams since before he could remember and which therefore must have existed in the listening and the dreams of his cousin and Major de Spain. . . before they began to remember in their turn, was a mortal animal and that they . . . had no actual intention of slaying it, not because it could not be slain but because so far they had no actual hope of being able to. (p.192)<sup>2</sup>

This seems to combine all three elements mentioned before confusedly: mortal, legend, and apotheosis. This bear, this mortal being, has been present in the pre-conscious minds of the ten year old Isaac McCaslin, his 26 year old cousin, McCaslin Edmonds, and the elderly (or at least middleaged) Major de Spain. If this is due merely to the recounting of Old Ben's exploits by the hunters who vainly sought him, then the bear must have been living at least 60 years, at least twice a normal lifespan. This seems to suggest that the bear is really the stuff of legends and fables, an unattainable goal that every generation of hunters needs: a cunning, almost human creature who consistently outwits his pursuers. Perhaps we must investigate further the notion of its being an anachronism out of an old dead time. We must take seriously the possibility that the bear, though a mortal being, may possess slightly more than mortal powers, as if aided by gods.

First let us try to see with more precision how the bear "runs in the listening and looms in the dreams" of the hunters. The first seems relatively simple. From their earliest childhood, in the company of their elders, gathered around the fire in the libraries of town houses or trophy rooms of plantations, they have heard the best of all listening, stories of Old Ben. They give him a name like a man's because he has foiled their best attempts to catch him. Using clever-

ness or brute force when necessary, he has earned himself a place among humans, if not for his power of reasoning than for proving how ineffective the best human plans can be. These stories seem to be a constant; that is, the same stories never seem to grow old upon retelling and perhaps even become more vigorous and robust each time they are repeated. Why are they the best of all listening?

The first answer that comes to mind is that they are about the wilderness, but that begs the question. Let us instead grant that because they are of the wilderness, they have the best of all settings. What is the appeal of the bear? The earlier suggestion, that the bear represents the unattainable goal, the almost human creature who outwits his pursuers, seems to fit. But again we must ask, why do hunters need this unattainable goal? What does this fact tell us about human nature in general and especially in the post-Reconstruction South in 1877?

Perhaps we can generalize to say that any story, to be a story, needs an element of wonder. It must contain a motive, action, or being which defies our understanding or categorization. Even if the story has as pedestrian a purpose as imparting a moral lesson, it is often portrayed in a fanciful setting with magical characters. Perhaps the story is offering an explanation of something incomprehensible which stuns our intellects. If this is so, then the bear not only satisfies a requirement of storytelling but the need of the listener as well. This may be where the second part, the looming in the dreams, comes in.

At first glance this seems to have a simple explanation. After a night of listening to stories about Old Ben, the children go to bed and dream of him. Some nights they have nightmares, in which he chases them through the dark wood; other nights they are hunting him and bring him to bay. They assuredly daydream about him while going about the humdrum business of school. Yet the phrasing seems to indicate more. The use of "looms" in this story is strange; it has an ominous connotation yet does not fully convey danger. Rather, the "looming" indicates an everpresence which never fully steps out of the shadow of subconsciousness, so that its motives or effect are never clear.

Is it fair to speculate that the bear may be a part of human nature? The hold Old Ben has on the hunters suggests that the hunt is not just the vain pursuit of that which refuses to submit to humanity, but that it may also be a chase after a part of man which he has lost through the course of history. In this sense

the attributes of Old Ben are not alien to human nature, but may actually be essential to being a human. The looming in the dreams seems to locate the bear in the minds of the listeners. He seizes their imagination, but it seems he is merely ascending a throne already prepared for him.

What then is the nature of the bear? With the previous analysis we are in danger of reducing him to an abstraction. He is first of all big, too big for the hunters and all their accessories, even for the country which was his constricting territory. In the first instance the bigness seems to deal with sheer massiveness; the dogs and bullets are ineffectual, the horses are too slow. But how is Old Ben too big for man? and for the country? The bigness in relation to man seems not a mere ratio of physical size. Man, with his reason, has reached up to the stars and comprehended their motions; he has set into motion a chain of events which will lead to him surveying the earth from the vantage point of the moon. Yet Old Ben is too big for man. Does this mean man cannot comprehend him? If so, this story is a critique of modern man in contrast with the sublime character of Old Ben. Man certainly cannot corner this quarry. Is this a figurative way of saying that he is beyond the scope of man's comprehension? To hunt is to seek out. Certainly when we use our discursive reason we are seeking out something, whether it be Truth, Beauty, or Euler's  $e$ . The fact that Old Ben eludes his pursuers apparently not by cunning or guile but merely by sheer bigness seems to place him among the objects which cannot be grasped by our reason. Our reason can bump against these objects, but cannot embrace them or define their boundaries. If it could, it would be able to cut them up into parts and render them easily analyzable.

Old Ben is also too big for the country, the backdrop against which his drama is played out. This certainly includes the wilderness, but it also must include the surrounding farms, mills, and plantations. As these are the works of man, it is no surprise that he is too big (or merely very disproportional) for them, even though they are steadily reducing the extent of the wilderness. Yet is this bigness one of appetite, that Old Ben cannot coexist with the creations of man, because they demand the same sustenance and there isn't enough for the two of them? Or is it one of right, where two opposing claims to the land must clash for supremacy? If it is the first, then it is the wilderness we are talking about. It provides the deer and berries as well as bed and home for Old Ben.

Likewise it provides the raw material for the ever expanding plantations and mills which daily become more efficient and productive. Therefore it seems natural that these two opposing forces should fight over the same territory. The legend of Old Ben chronicles the devastation he wreaks upon the livestock and stored food of the farms that lie on the fringe of the wilderness. Are these simply the forays of a bear whose habitat is being steadily diminished and thus needs to carry off pigs and calves and rifle the corncribs because the wilderness no longer can feed him? Is it the revenge of the wilderness upon the encroaching farms, a grim reminder that their holdings are mere scratches in the surface of the large and fecund earth? In either case we are forced to see that more than just the land is at stake; the values these opposing forces represent lie at the heart of the conflict.

The bear is characterized as having the ruthless and irresistible deliberation of a locomotive. Yet it is the locomotive which is the crowning industrial achievement of the men who have turned the land into mills and farms. This comparison gives one a sense of the bear's power but also buttresses the reader's suspicion: that despite the characterization of the farms and other signs of civilization and industry which surround the wilderness as puny gnawings and hackings, it is this smallness which will prevail and the great wilderness which will disappear. Two visions claim the land, both powerful and seemingly inexorable, but one which is big, the other which is puny. This description seems more qualitative than quantitative. The wilderness, however much it diminishes, will always be big, and the commercial land, no matter how extensive, will always be puny. Let us try to understand further how the bear stands as the "apotheosis" of the old wild life which lives on in the wilderness.

The old wild life is presumably emblematic of the time when the Chickasaw warriors, Sam Fathers's ancestors on his father's side, roamed the forest, which was unsullied by farms and mills. Not only was the land pristine and untrammelled, but the values of the people who used it kept it that way. It was not until the white man arrived that the thought of ownership of the land was introduced to the wild and free men, and they succumbed to the notion as if it were a disease to which they had no immunity. Perhaps Old Ben represents the old wild life in the freedom that he possesses. His is not merely the freedom from capture but the freedom to take what he pleases. It seems that the people who lived in that older time could claim a

greater degree of freedom than the people nowadays. Although they lived together in tribes, they were not bound by others to till the soil or work a mill. They lived by hunting, and while it is unrealistic to suppose their existence was utopian, they had readily accessible to them the experience of the wilderness. Perhaps their vices and passions were muted by its "soaring and sombre solitude" (174); its presence served to ennoble them just as we see Old Ben ennobling McCaslin, Major de Spain, etc. They were not tainted by the urge to dispossess and own, and they could do as they pleased within the framework of the wilderness and be happy. Old Ben epitomizes this life not only because he is one with the wilderness and possesses all of its virtues, but because he can dispossess and subjugate man, who in this new time has become the ultimate dispossessor and subjugator. He dispossesses man of his property, and subjugates man's will and imagination to emulation of him.

How can we understand the bear in relation to the wilderness? If the bear is big, then the presence of the wilderness is even bigger: "tremendous, attentive, impartial, omniscient" (p.174), and "the same solitude, the same loneliness through which frail and timorous man had merely passed without altering it" (p.194). The bear is always in action, the protagonist of stories, the infiltrator of dreams, brazen and huge. The wilderness is immobility and sentience. Yet one cannot be found without the other. Isaac, upon hearing of Old Ben, divines the wilderness; likewise, on first hearing the sounds of the dogs reluctantly following Old Ben's scent, it is not Old Ben who is ahead of them but the wilderness. And it is the wilderness, not Old Ben, who lightly pats the bitch for her temerity.

Should we think of the bear as a personification of the wilderness or as a metaphor for it? Old Ben is definitely a part of the wilderness, but it is also clear that man's encroachment upon the wilderness has been slowed by the presence of Old Ben. He discourages squatters and farmers from living too close to the wilderness. He also holds the hunters in his power, and their hunting of him serves to keep the wilderness intact a little while longer. He carries an appeal to the men, who despite their fragility and smallness in juxtaposition to the wilderness, also hold the wilderness in a life or death grip. They hunt Old Ben, but they hunt him according to the rules of the wilderness. They are not the squatters and sharecroppers who impinge on the wilderness and are at the mercy of Old Ben. They do not want revenge; they could easily get rid of Old

Ben by setting the Big Woods afire or selling it off to a lumber company. They keep pure the hunter-hunted relationship, and imitate Old Ben when hunting him. They apparently have an unspoken agreement with Old Ben which both have kept in good faith.

In this sense Old Ben appears as a mediator between the wilderness and the men who hunt Old Ben and so unwittingly preserve it. The wilderness not only inspires awe, but abhorrence and fear. Perhaps most men are not comfortable with the almost palpable presence of the wilderness. In any case, its immobility and brooding sentience are much harder for man to appreciate or contemplate, and the active, roaming figure of Old Ben is much easier to understand. Motion is a common characteristic of those things that we can comprehend, while supreme immobility is often predicated of God, the Unknowable. Further, not only is the bear a moving figure, but through the hunt man is also able to be in motion, as our reason is always in motion when seeking out the truth. It appears that the presence of the wilderness, which only Isaac and Sam Fathers seem to appreciate fully, must rely on its manifestation within the bear to affect the rest of the hunters. This seems to support the idea that Old Ben is a metaphor for the wilderness. The freedom that he so aggressively asserts and revels in, is perhaps parallel to the "soaring and sombre solitude" of the wilderness, where man can experience an inner freedom which, uncluttered by small and puny desires and hopes, can expand his soul in contemplation of the mysteries of the wilderness.

What are the mysteries of the wilderness? The wilderness is composed of myriad life. Yet each part is somehow joined together to create a single presence which seems to possess a soul or at least an intellect. Perhaps it is akin to a rapidly vibrating string which gives an impression of solidity within the diameter of its vibration. The change of seasons, the growth of plants and trees, the passing of the sun and rain, run together to form a seamless, timeless whole which extends beyond the senses. It is forever adding to itself, not only with the physical growth, but with the many lives which have quitted physical existence. For it is here that Sam Fathers sees the majestic buck who apparently is the incarnation of his grandfather, Issetibeha, and Isaac sees the snake who is Old Carothers. Here Isaac believes Sam, Lion, and Old Ben to live on, not dead but translated into the myriad life of the wilderness and thus into its soul. Here there is no death, only a natural transition to become a part of

the wilderness's presence. Isaac's observation when standing in the cane brake that the woods are exactly the way they were when the Chickasaw warriors roamed it is not a wish or a supposition but a fact.

There doesn't seem even to be any such thing as sin or punishment for sin within the wilderness. The noble Issetibeha lives on, just as vile Old Carothers, who has done more than most to bring on the ruin of the wilderness. Somehow the constant renewing of life which characterizes the wilderness has even revived Old Carothers, although the wilderness is not completely lacking in a sense of justice. Old Carothers is a snake, and harmful only to those who do not know the wilderness. One could even argue that the brooding sentience of the wilderness contemplates things much bigger than itself and thus to it man's evils appear trivial and fleeting.

The presence of the wilderness profoundly affects Isaac. While composed of the "myriad life which printed the dark mold of these secret and sunless spaces with delicate fairy tracks. . . which watched him from beyond every twig and leaf" (p. 313), the effect on Isaac is almost always one of solitude and loneliness. How can we reconcile these two experiences?

Man's natural desire to know forces him to try to understand the wilderness and the awe it inspires within him. However, the wilderness is disproportionately big, not just in comparison to his physical size but with regards to the smallness of his intellect. He can find no analogies or comparisons to which he can make a ratio to its massiveness. Therefore man comes to feel loneliness and solitude because none of his concepts are adequate to accompany him into this contemplation. He becomes aware, rather, of its presence which he perceives, though not just through the senses. It impresses upon him a sense of being which does not fill him but which rather reminds him of the being he possesses.

That is why the boy, to whom Isaac is compared, recognizes the existence of love and passion from entering the presence of a woman (p.195). He is filled with an emptiness and a temporary despair because his life is so empty of the fullness which the woman has experienced in loving and being the beloved. However, this emptiness, once it is recognized, gives him hope that one day it can be filled, that the realization of emptiness is better than never knowing how much he could lack. He desires to know of the men she has loved or who have loved her, of their excellence and their deeds which made them

deserving of her. In short, he seeks to create an imagined life which will provide him with a model of emulation so that he too will one day be worthy to love that woman.

The wilderness contains the memories of untold eras and peoples and beasts. It stands over man, who to prolong his short life's memory can merely construct edifices and monuments which will barely outlive him. These too pale in comparison with the wilderness, which had stood for millennia before the white man even thought to seek out a New World. Its presence implies a history which contains greater deeds, nobler men, and more horrific monsters than anything the white man has heard of or imagined. Yet it stands silent, brooding, sentient, as if contemplating something else, something even bigger than itself (perhaps its own fate).

Yet the wilderness is vulnerable. It cannot resist the puny gnawings and hackings, which, multiplied a thousandfold, steadily diminish it. This indicates that it is somehow subservient to man, that it must depend on man for its current existence. It is man who for now, as slave of the modern profit driven world, holds power of life or death over it, albeit ambiguously because he is not its master. Only recently has the wilderness become threatened. Most men live outside of the wilderness and have no regular experience of it. It seems that the experience is key, whether simply with the wilderness or as mediated through the chase of Old Ben. Without any experience, there seems to be nothing which can give man a sense of a presence outside of him. It seems analogous to a cathedral, which is designed to give one a sense of the majesty of God. However, a cathedral is man-made and filled with symbols which lead one to see the cathedral itself as a symbol. It even contains pictures or statues of the God who inspired it. In the wilderness, its natural symbolism, if it possesses one at all, is inaccessible to man and points to a God or Principle even more awe-inspiring than itself. Considering the presence it has, and its effect, it might as well be considered an end in itself.

The wilderness is doomed, and Old Ben is a mortal being and so must die. It is Old Ben's death which spells the beginning of the end of the wilderness. After Old Ben there is nothing to keep men from transforming the wilderness into raw material for their mills, homes, and farms. But the manner in which Old Ben is brought down points toward a deepening complexity which suggests to the reader that his death is not the tragedy it might at first seem to be.

What is needed is a dog who can hold Old Ben at bay. In what seems an incredible piece of luck they find the dog in the wilderness. He is wild, more fearsome than a wolf because he doesn't care enough about men to be afraid of them. He possesses "a cold and almost impersonal malignance like some natural force." His hide is blue-tinted and similar to the color of metal, so that he seems to be like a bullet in silent pursuit when fired at his target. He is employed by the hunters in the hunt for Old Ben, but they do not own him. He seems similar to the machines and technologies that man employs for his own ends but which take on a life of their own and come to dominate man, their creator.

The day comes that is inevitable once Lion has been found. It will be when, as Isaac realizes, "Even he [Old Ben] don't want it to last any longer" (p.204). It is like a festival. Both townspeople and the poorest sharecroppers have come to witness it. They process into the woods, which to the first is merely foreign, and to the other both foreign and antagonistic. They are led by a dog whose blue hide infers not just "courage and all else that went to make up the will and desire to pursue and kill but endurance, the will and desire to endure beyond all imaginable limits of flesh to overtake and slay" (p.227). Soon after, Lion finally brings Old Ben to bay. The dogs mill about uncertainly, but Lion does not hesitate. He attacks and jumps for Old Ben's throat; Old Ben catches him in an embrace and falls backward. It seems that even Lion is not enough, until Boon leaps to his rescue and buries his knife deep in Old Ben's neck. Old Ben is at last brought down both by a dog who cares for nothing and the man who loves him. It was also an act of redemption, for previously Lion brought Old Ben to bay and Boon missed him five times with his pump gun. Old Ben seems to embrace his fate by embracing Lion. Turning at bay is a the symbolic gesture of defeat. There is nowhere (or no reason) to run, nowhere to hide, and while his ability to fend off the dogs alone makes the kill a dicey proposition, it plays into the hands of the hunters, who prefer an unmoving target. It is a tactic out of the old wild life, where once the chase has ended and the fight has begun, the beast with the most courage and endurance will win out. It has no place in the modern, levelling world of machines and the mere fact that it is resorted to spells doom for Old Ben.

However, Old Ben is not brought down by bullets. He is killed by Boon, who risks life and limb

to save Lion. In effect it is an act of love that brings down Old Ben, a man's love for a dog that is not even his. Perhaps this is why Isaac knows that he will not grieve when Old Ben dies.

How are we to understand Isaac McCaslin against this backdrop? From his earliest days the bear has "run in his listening and loomed in his dreams." It is he who, before he is ten, believes that the hunters who each fall set off to hunt Old Ben do not even intend to kill him. Instead, he perceives that their failed hunts are not futile but are celebrations of the "old bear's furious immortality" (p.186). It is Isaac, more than anyone else, who gives the hunt a mythical symbolism and meaning. What are the factors which lead Isaac McCaslin to see things in this way?

It is Sam Fathers who undertakes to teach young Isaac the ways of the hunt. He creates for Isaac that mystical world where the past seems more real than the present, where the Chickasaw warriors roam the woods as if they had never left it. In the child's imagination the small copses and creek beds and wooded ravines which adjoin the farms and fields become the pristine land which existed before the white man's invasion. His farm and his family's other holdings seem to him as insubstantial as the faded page on which is recorded his legal claim to the land.

We don't know the truth of what Sam Fathers relates to Isaac. He has never known the Indian peoples from whom he is descended; he doesn't even remember his father's face. However, he fashions a world out of recollections he has never had. Certainly then they are coming from his imagination. As memories they may be false, but as a myth or story with a moral they are not mere lies. Or perhaps they reflect what Sam Fathers wishes could be the case. He is training Isaac to become a hunter, a man, but also to become part of the bigger world to which the wilderness is the entrance. The world Sam Fathers creates captures Isaac's imagination completely, not just because he is a boy and likes to hear stories about Indians and hunting, but also because it relays to him a moral system and way of life which is vastly different from the one he lives in. It conveys to him a nobility, a sense both of right and privilege but also humility in the face of that which with one is entrusted. He absorbs so much of this way of life that it is the past which seems real and the present which usurps. The ideals of the past are the true ones, not the ones which have brought with them the harsh life of the plantation.

Isaac's values are those of the hunter. They are

humility, sufferance, endurance and pride. The pride only exists because of the previous three. It is virtuous and gracious, and prideful not by accomplishment but by association. So the world that Isaac believes he lives in, where the present is tenuous and is always in danger of sliding back into the past, is supported by the existence of the bear. He has foiled the best attempts of the men who control the present as he knows it: plantations, farms, and mills which dominate the land and the people who work them. He has plagued them since even before he was born, so that the bear has loomed in their dreams or run in their listening since even before they could remember, just as with Isaac. He has made their innovations and domestications look silly and useless. But even though he is too big, so that everyone is small in comparison, the men who hunt him ennoble themselves by doing so. They are drawn back by Old Ben into the past to participate in that "ancient and unremitting contest according to the ancient and immitigable rules which voided all regrets and brooked no quarter" (p.184). Each November or June they travel to the Big Woods, back into the past, and return emptyhanded. But that is the way it should be, according to Isaac, for Old Ben is their ticket into that ancient, brooding world.

But Isaac is a believer. He has faith in Sam Fathers, in the stories he is told. He believes that the wilderness is alive and sentient, and that the deer that Sam Fathers calls Grandfather really is a reincarnation of the man who has been dead for 100 years. It is the bear who confirms his faith, makes the stories more real than even his imagination can make them because Old Ben is real. He enters the wilderness and soon encounters the bear. He has inherited the bear and the wilderness as the stuff of legend, as the phantom who time and again glides through the ring of hounds and bullets because they are not enough. But the bear is alive, and faith cannot exist without the hope of its dispelling. That is why Isaac must see Old Ben, to affirm the fear that he hears in the voices of the hounds, that he himself feels when he sees the mark of its trap-ruined paw. He will be scared, because there is no helping it. The massiveness of the bear, coupled with the grandeur of the wilderness, cannot but reduce him to a state of fear and awe. But he will not be afraid, he will not be seized by the irrational fear of a coward, who must lash out at the object of his fear. The fear will possess him but will not drive him mad, because there is no necessary reason to be afraid of what is bigger than you.

But Isaac can't just walk out and see Old Ben. He must become a woodsman, he must learn from Sam how to hunt and read trails and sign. Even further, he must remove himself completely from the world of plantations and mills and progress. His search for Old Ben is futile until he leaves off not only the gun but also his watch and compass. None of the other hunters would have dared to leave without a gun. To them the wilderness is still dangerous and uncertain, and they would require protection and a means to take advantage of an opportunity to hunt. When he finally finds Old Ben, or rather, Old Ben reveals himself, he is no longer a hunter, part of that art which brings man so close to nature yet still remains intrinsically antagonistic. Old Ben moves across the glade and into the glare and then stops and looks at him again. He fades back into the woods, not as if he slipped back but as if the wilderness closed around him like a curtain, like the host were being placed back in the tabernacle after being displayed to the faithful.

And so the appearance of Lion should have caused Isaac to hate and fear him. He has seen the bear, even jumped it once with the fyce, but he knows he will never shoot at it. He knew this the first time he ever felt the presence of Old Ben. Isaac knows now that the hunters don't kill Old Ben not because they are celebrating his furious freedom but because they have no hope or chance to. But with Lion things will be different. He is the dog to run down Old Ben, and Isaac accepts it, and even feels privileged to be a part of it. He feels a sense of fatality about what is going on; he feels as if it is the beginning of the end of something big. "He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too or even just to see it too" (p.217).

Is this the code of the hunter? Earlier hunting is described as "the ancient and unremitting contest according to the ancient and immitigable rules which voided all regrets and brooked no quarter." It is a game of life and death. It requires strict rules because the hunter can easily become the hunted and the field upon which they play can be just as dangerous as the wild animals they hunt within it. And when Sam marks Isaac with the blood of the deer in "The Old People," which consecrates and links him to the half-Indian chief irrevocably, it absolves him not of love and pity for the things he slays but weakness and regret, which would prevent him from being a man's hunter. It is this voiding of regret which seems odd, as regret is a wish to change the past and to Isaac it is the

past which is always mingled in with the present and which the present is always trying to subvert it.

Isaac has immersed himself into the life of the wilderness more than any other of the hunters. He transforms their hunts into "pageant-rites," celebrations of the bear they try to slay but cannot because he is too big for them. He is not content to merely be a hunter; he voids all the laws of that "ancient and unremitting contest" so that he can see Old Ben, so that he can fill himself with the presence and mystery of the wilderness. He seeks the meaning behind things; whereas, the other men are content to see the wilderness through the medium of hunting, having killed and been marked but still in some sense antagonistic. It is Isaac who sees "the two of them, shadowy in the limbo from which time emerged and became time; the old bear absolved of mortality and himself who shared a little of it" (p.195). Yet he does not mourn Old Ben's passing, even though he knows it sets into motion events which will mark the end of something, presumably the wilderness, as the story seems to indicate. Does the absolution of regret which marks him as a hunter prevent him from properly mourning Old Ben? Does the code of the hunter include some sort of quietism which fails to do what is necessary to prevent the wilderness's passing? Or does the code base itself upon a bigger perspective, on a knowledge of the wilderness as mentioned before, so that death is not tragic, even though the death contains a significance beyond itself?

The hunt, as has been mentioned before, is a deadly serious game. It involves the virtues of humility, pride, and endurance. It rewards the ability to submit oneself to the dictates and hardships of the wilderness, and because these are followed and endured, the pride follows, which is a virtuous self-respect and a respect for all that lives, even if what lives will someday be brought down by the hunter's gun. There can be no regret because the hunter's code pushes two contradictory messages; the one which demands an appreciation, respect, and even love for all life, and the other which demands a steady aim, a sure hand, and no remorse as the trigger is pulled. The hunter loves the life he spills. But he spills it nonetheless, and he seems to have firmly entrenched in him the notion that everything must die someday. It seems almost cynical. At the very least it seems not to be a fitting end to the story of the bear. He dies with no objections from Isaac, and one wonders if the code of the hunter, the code of the wilderness which Sam Fathers inculcates into Isaac, and which Isaac accepts

joyfully and humbly, is too perfect, too complete a code, so that the boy becomes a man too soon, before he can fully appreciate the tenacious loves, desires, and thoughts of a child.

Five years after the death of Old Ben we witness a second death, a death which signifies the beginning of the end of the white male McCaslins. Isaac is 21, and at the age when his inheritance gives him, the huge farm and former plantation which McCaslin Edmonds has caretaken until this time. But Isaac refuses it, and the reader is swept into the crux of the story, the fourth chapter which flows like a river through the middle of the story. It chronicles both Isaac's arguments for his repudiation of the land and a litany of wrongs which he has inherited and which powerfully affect his reasoning. The seamlessness and the turbidity of the grammatical structure, in which sentences run through paragraphs and even pages, gives us a structural wilderness through whose ragged and continuous underbrush the reader must uncover the flowers of his relinquishment. The motives and experiences twist and turn around and through each other like brambles, so that time and place seem to take second place to the powerful pulls of the psyche which order and rank them according to its peculiar criteria.

The argument begins simply enough. It is the land that is in question. According to Isaac he does not own it, nor did his grandfather Old Carothers, nor even the Indians who sold it to him. As he has been taught by Sam Fathers, the land is owned by no one, and Sam is echoed in the Bible, where it is chronicled that God made the earth to be held in common, to be shared and enjoyed by everyone. Ownership is an illusion, because the very idea that the land is something that can be bought or sold renders invalid the actual buying and selling. He who buys land buys nothing, because the land cannot be owned. The men who bought the land, brought in slaves to work and have as proof of their ownership of a commodity which brings them money, are deluding themselves. They have no more claim to the land than the drifter who spends the night on it and then moves on.

McCaslin's retort is that nevertheless the land is owned. Isaac's reasoning is based on an ideal of the land not borne out in practice. In practice, there are men who claim to own the land and still more who believe them. Even granting the illusoriness of legal claims, it is men like Old Carothers who have seized the land in defiance of whatever principle to the contrary and kept it and made something of it, not

only for themselves but for their descendants. In practice, then, Isaac is forced to repudiate the land, while in theory he has nothing to relinquish.

It is Isaac who first refers to the Bible, and it is McCaslin who first creates the historical link between them and the Garden of Eden. It is a series of disposessions starting when God first exiled man from Eden. Man has successively invaded and taken back the land he may or may not have a claim to, so that the history of man seems to be the ebb and flow of a confused, meandering tide. And if God intended that the world be held in common and shared in peace, then where has he been during the sordid history of man, displacing his neighbor and being displaced in return?

Isaac's answer: He has been dispossessed. The history of man has been the history of the displacement of God. God has not merely stood by, ignorant or impotent, and watched the people who claimed to be His believers carry out horrible acts of injustice and slavery, often in His name. Rather the history of dispossession and wasting that seems to characterize the history of man is a removing of the simple virtues which God has ordained will preserve his creation and lead to Him. The discovery of America was allowed by God because it is here that redemption is possible, where "a nation of people could be founded in humility and pity and sufferance and pride of one to another." God permits his laws to be broken, for someone like Old Carothers to own and keep the land in the eyes of man because the white man, even before he began to divide the land into parcels and demarcations, has cursed the land.

The white man is needed to break his own curse, which he has brought to the New World. And it seems that the land must be allowed to degenerate into a model of the old world, so that out of the rubble man will create for himself, one man will stand back and cry, "What have we done?" The seeds of the old world's corrupt and worthless twilight, which the white man has fled, have been brought to the New World like a disease. The wild men who inhabit the land have no defense against it and succumb to it (witness Ikemotubbe's ruthlessness upon his return from New Orleans); therefore it seems it is necessary for the white man to destroy the curse he has brought. This process is unfolding through the line of Old Carothers's descendants. Old Carothers was the carrier of the curse, and the subsequent generations have been slowly undoing the curse, as the dictates of the times have allowed.

McCaslin misunderstands the curse interpretation that Isaac is explaining and mentions the sons of Ham, the descendants of Noah who are cursed to serve the descendants of Ham's brothers. It was commonly thought that the sons of Ham were the black people, and was often argued by those with a vested interest in a Biblical justification of slavery. Isaac argues that the Bible is a complex work and sometimes says things which are not literally true. Notwithstanding the considerable interpretation and moral myopia demanded by the conclusion McCaslin reaches, the Bible does employ symbols and myths to convey truth to man. The Bible must be read by the heart, not by the reason, and only a true heart can navigate the complex web of the Bible. The message God wants to be conveyed is simple, too simple for the complex and driven human heart. It must be explained by complex and driven men whose hearts are filled with lust and passion and hate, to men whose hearts are likewise filled with lust and passion. Truth must survive the medium of humanity's condition before it can reside in the human heart.

This argument by Isaac seems to be key to his character. He maintains both that truth is simple and that truth is complex. The heart already knows truth, but it must be filtered through the complex passions which drive the heart. The Bible, which is God's Word, is a huge, sprawling pseudo-historical spiritual work out of which both the most commonsense and the most delusional beliefs have been taken. It has been written by the driving passions of the human heart, for the driving passions of the human heart. But for Isaac, the truth is simple.

His notion comes to the fore when McCaslin reads to him Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," which McCaslin believes explains the nature of truth. The closing lines of the second stanza, "She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,/Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!," which is addressed to the young lovers frozen on the side of an antique vase, is symbolic of truth and man's relation to it. Truth is unchanging, and even if we cannot grasp it, we are destined, through courage, love, honor, pity, and pride, to confusedly seek it out. McCaslin is prompted to reflection on this poem by the story of Isaac risking his life to save the little fyce which was going to attack Old Ben. Not only does he not shoot Old Ben, but he drops his gun when he rushes to within ten feet of Old Ben to save the hysterically courageous fyce. McCaslin cannot understand why Isaac didn't shoot, and then the poem

springs to mind and helps him understand. What insight does McCaslin have into Isaac's behavior which the poem helps bring to light?

The poem celebrates the feeling of timelessness and youth which the urn inspires. The scene depicted on the urn is irrevocable; but it forever engages in the viewer not only a sense of eternal bliss but also a desire to construct a world which can produce a scene such as this. Who are the lovers? What city have they come from? What god is being sacrificed to? These details are not of historical interest; past answers are not important. What is important is that the viewer is drawn into the scene, experiences its immediacy, yet is also aware that it continually renews itself. The youthful lovers will always be youthful. In a sense the scene has a past and a present but not a future. That frozen moment speaks not of fulfillment but of the beauty of desire. In a story we might require some sort of resolution, while in this scene we instead prize the motion that is implied in the stillness. The suitor is forever courting while the beloved is forever coy.

How can we link this to Isaac and his experience with the bear? We know very early on that Old Ben means much more to Isaac than a mortal being should. Old Ben is something he inherits from his elders, and which he knows first through stories and then in dreams. His first experience of Old Ben's mortality is one of awe, and he knows that he will never fire upon Old Ben. Therefore, when he surprises Old Ben and the fyce amazingly brings him to bay, we have frozen in an instant of time the boy juxtaposed against the bear, looming as he looms in Isaac's dreams. Isaac is aware of Old Ben's mortality and the hunter's code which voids all regrets towards slain prey. Yet the immensity of the bear, both literal and figurative, impresses upon him a sense of preservation. The hunt is not a real attempt to kill Old Ben; rather it is a framework within which the bear is revealed in all his grandeur. The "yearly pageant-rite of the old bear's furious immortality" must go on. Isaac knows the bear will someday die, but it will not be him who brings the hunt to a close.

Isaac preserves a tradition, one which preserves both Old Ben and the celebration of his life. One wonders if this is analogous to the preservation of the urn, so that its message can inform subsequent generations. The urn can have no effect if there is either no one to appreciate its beauty and if it becomes cracked or ruined from mishandling or neglect. This is what McCaslin apprehends, that the truth of the bear is

preserved only in the experience of him. Truth covers all things which touch the heart, so that the things we do for truth are manifested in our virtues. Isaac is led by his heart to save the fyce, to throw down the gun in abnegation of technology, to refuse to shoot Old Ben even when he holds the gun. It all happens so fast, that reasoning doesn't seem to play a part. It seems to be a direct apprehension of truth which man only is confusedly aware of, a sense of something bigger than himself which prompts him to action, bypassing the normal acts or ratiocination and deliberation.

This is an example of the simplicity of truth, an impetus to direct action which seems to be the right thing to do. The complexity comes into play in the evaluation of the consequences of the human action. For example, Boon's killing of Old Ben to save Lion's life is another example of truth acting directly on a human heart. We do not fault Boon for his impulsive, courageous action. It is an act of love, and the worst we can say is that Old Ben died a worthy death at the hands of love. Yet the consequences of Old Ben's death are not all good. His death insures the death of the wilderness, as the Big Bottom is soon sold to a lumber company. The almost ritualized hunts are no more, and the men who perhaps unwittingly preserved the wilderness now have little to no connection with its presence.

Likewise we can see Isaac's repudiation in this light. It seems an inherently simple act, a refusal to take over what has been destined for him because what he will own was not only founded upon injustice, but still employs it in its seemingly inexorable expansion. Yet Isaac admits to himself that even his own motives will be forever incomprehensible to him. Further, the consequences of his decision insure that he will be derided by society, even by his wife, and that he will have no heir to carry on his return to purity. The possible psychological harm that his separation from society can cause him is also unknown. What is known is only that his motives are unknown even to him and that his decision can perhaps be regarded as impetuous or incomplete. It seems important then to try to understand the complex factors which molded the young Isaac McCaslin's heart and mind.

It seems that Isaac is trying to escape his grandfather, Old Carothers, by escaping his legacy. This includes the plantation that he will inherit. But even more devastating is the inheritance of the state of affairs upon the plantation. Some of the slaves that Old Carothers owned bear the same blood which runs

through Isaac McCaslin. It is not evident to Isaac until he investigates the ledgers which have chronicled the lives dwelling upon the plantation. His investigations reveal not only that Old Carothers impregnated a slave, who bore him a daughter, but that Carothers also impregnated this daughter, who bore a son as she died in childbirth. That very same day the mother, Eunice, walked into a creek and drowned herself.

In both cases the children went unacknowledged by their father. They were slaves, and thus property. However, when Old Carothers died he left in his will a monetary legacy which was to be bequeathed to the son, Terrel, upon his reaching the age of 21. This posthumous, cowardly acknowledgement is another aspect of the legacy of Old Carothers. His twin sons do not participate in his excesses; upon his death they move out of the "tremendous abortive embryo" which is the grandiose, half-finished mansion Old Carothers was building, and into a modest house they build for themselves. They set themselves to undoing the evils their father perpetrated. They begin to free their slaves, and they move the ones they have into the mansion, with the unspoken agreement that what they do at night is their business if they are all behind the door in the morning. They also expand the monetary legacy to each of Terrel's three children.

It is Isaac who takes it upon himself to insure that the legacies are bequeathed. The oldest child, Jim, one day runs away and is never heard from again. Isaac pursues him with the money but never catches up with him. He is also forced to seek out the second child, Fonsiba, who marries a Negro carpetbagger whose educated demeanor and sense of protocol belie his foolishness and inability to provide for her. Isaac finds her and makes sure that the legacy will keep her from ever starving. Finally, it is Lucas, the youngest, who seeks Isaac out and takes command not only of his portion but Jim's as well. It seems that guilt drives Isaac to this duty. It also seems that this responsibility, while virtuously carried out by Isaac, is not a life-long trust, but a feeble means of rectifying a purposeful flaunting of power. The trust is money, the literal coin of the realm which the plantation (and perhaps even more importantly, the commissary) employs. It can

do nothing to actually raise these third-white Negroes to a status commensurate with humanity in general: with Jim it is ineffectual, with Fonsiba it enables her not to live as a beast, and with Lucas, his acceptance of it links him to his grandfather in more than just

parentage. It is Lucas's special burden (as the reader witnesses in "The Fire and the Hearth") that he must fight the white man's obsession for miserliness and hoarding.

The backdrop against which this drama is played out is the post-Reconstruction South. Isaac was too young to remember the Reconstruction and the devastation it wrought on the land. On the one hand there were newly freed Negroes with no previous experience of freedom and a tendency to misuse it just as the white man was prone to misuse his license. On the other hand there were the defeated Southerners, bitter and defiant, who were charged with the task of rebuilding their homes and lives and cities. Thirdly there were the carpetbaggers, whose rapaciousness was unbounded. At first entering the South under the banner of freedom, it is they who are soon fighting with the blacks over the limited number of jobs and acres of land. In a few generations they will be actively trying to subvert the blacks' freedom under the white hoods of the Klu Klux Klan. Through this all the plantation and commissary plug on, following the pattern of the seasons, the harvests and plantings, holding all who work the land in thrall. The black ex-slaves', now sharecroppers', lot has changed little since before the War. They are still beholden to the white man to sell them their farming supplies and to buy his cotton at prices not only the white man knows to be fair or not.

Isaac's repudiation is the refusal to become part of this machine; the machine not just of the farm and commissary but the bigger machine of the South. The economy-driven exigencies of this life are repulsive to him. They make of the people, not just the workers but also the owners and overseers as well, means to the end of profit. There is no presence beyond man which can force him to contemplation and awe. Instead the land, which has been transformed by man, translated, if you will, into a force which has quickly grown beyond any man's control, so much so that it is referred to as a curse. Perhaps it contains within it the beginnings of sin, the desire to establish what is mine and what is thine, and then to take what is other and make it one's own. In any event, it proved too big even for Buck and Buddy, whose attempts at reparation were ineffectual in stopping the onslaught of the white man's curse upon the land.

But Isaac breaks free from more than the plantation. He acknowledges not only that he is free of the "two threads frail as truth and impalpable as equators yet cable-strong to bind for life them who

made the cotton to the land their sweat fell on" (p.245), but that he is also free:

the frail and iron thread strong as truth and impervious as evil and longer than life itself and reaching beyond record and patrimony both to join him to the lusts and passions, the hopes and dreams and griefs, of bones whose names while still fleshed and capable even old Carothers' grandfather had never heard. (p.286)

What is this thread Faulkner is speaking of? It seems to be the thread of human nature which binds all men, however different, together. The attributes which are tied together by this thread seem to be very similar to the components of the heart's driving complexity mentioned earlier. The mention of the past at first has the effect of linking Isaac to the wild and free men who first inhabited the land. But how is he free of them if his decision has been in emulation of them? Rather, it seems that the past is significant in providing a scope, a historical survey, through which has passed a single strain which has been broken by Isaac McCaslin.

What is the significance of Isaac being free from this thread? How does it bear on the fact that he is forever childless, spurned by his wife, and believed even by his friends to have just given up? In effect he is rejecting society, by refusing to accept their established traditions of inheritance and property ownership. He marries, and thus enters society through its conventions, but he still manages to live amidst society but not of or in it. His wife cannot accept this, constantly being held in contempt even by the blacks, for example Lucas, who have witnessed his decision. She sleeps with him one final time, knowing he will never move onto the farm, and then becomes as remote to him.

Isaac acknowledges that the wilderness will always be his mistress and wife. It is the communion with the wilderness which means the most to him. Old Ben and Lion and Sam are gone, but their spirits live on within the wilderness. He journeys back to the woods, not merely to hunt, and not merely to mourn their deaths, but also to celebrate their continued presence, albeit translated, within the wilderness. It is here that he almost steps upon the snake whom he calls "Grandfather." In recognizing Old Carothers in the snake, he is acknowledging Sam Fathers's influence. This buttresses the fact that their is no parallel

mystery in the supposedly tamed and ordered land which can compare to the experience of the presence of the wilderness. This is what Isaac chooses over the farm and the conventions of society. He chooses a world which is fast disappearing before the onslaught of the modern world and its machinelike farms and mills. It is a world where silence and solitude reign supreme, where man is confronted with a sense of his own fragility and powerlessness. This experience seems only to be available in the tamed and ordered land in something like death; whereas, in the wilderness this confrontation is followed by an awareness of life, both of one's own and of the life of the wilderness. Given this, how can we understand the apparent contradiction which is voiced most aptly by Roth Edmonds while addressing Isaac in "Delta Autumn": "Where have you been all the time you were dead?" (p.329).

The contradiction of purity versus compromise stems from the perception that society has of Isaac. To them he has quit, he has forsaken what was rightly his, and he has failed to carry on his name to the next generation. While the opinions of society in general are often mean-spirited and narrow, the reader has several questions of his own which parallel these opinions. Why doesn't Isaac sell the land he inherits and buy back part of the wilderness? Why doesn't he assume control of the farm and make it a model of justice and equity? Why does he not regret the fact that he will never have a son to mark as Sam Fathers did him? How can his ideals and concern for the wilderness outlive him?

These questions refer to the moral tradition with which Isaac was raised. He learned a nobility, a pride in oneself for having the humility to accept unchangeable conditions, and the endurance and suffering to outlast them. However, this moral code seemed inundated with a sense of fatality that may often accompany nobility. This was due to the fact that the hunter had to embrace a contradiction: he loved the land and the creatures which inhabited it, yet he also killed some of those creatures. This carries with it a responsibility (not to overhunt, for example), but it still does not take away the fact that the hunter kills what he loves. Isaac early on feels part of something big and privileged to participate in it, but he never feels the impetus to try and change what to him is the established order.

Thus, when Isaac inherits the land, he not only takes seriously the idea that the land is no one's, and should properly be held in common, but he is also

overcome by the evils that have been perpetrated on the farm. The blacks are basically still slaves, and some of them are living evidence of the white man's license. If he were to assume ownership and then sell it, he would merely be passing the farm and all its evils on to someone else, who more than likely would continue to perpetuate these evils. The refusal is key, a deliberate forsaking of the established mores of society. He cannot forsake his ideals to save them. Likewise accepting ownership of the land to become a wise and generous landlord would be futile. The farm, the solvent and ever increasing machine which binds people to the land for the duration of their lives, would snap him up into its jaws in a second. No matter how hard he tries, he would be bound to the land as well, constrained to make others work, to raise or lower prices according to the dictates of the economy, and to sell and buy from cheats, skinflints, and harsh overseers. He would become a cog in the machine no matter how pure his intentions were.

Lastly, Isaac has no son. He tries to break free of his blood, from the specter of his grandfather as manifested in the farm which becomes in minutia a model of the South. In so doing he alienates himself from the society of man, not just the tainted, corrupt, profit driven society, but also from the political life of man, of families, friendship, stewardship, and civic responsibility. In freeing himself, he means to free his descendants; but this freeing instead insures that he will have no descendants. It seems that we cannot separate man's passions and desires from the arena in which they are played out. To love is a glorious thing, but the very nature of love involves another person and one cannot love without compromise and negotiation, which are governed or at least overseen by the society of man. Isaac frees himself from love and responsibility; he becomes "father to no one and uncle to half the county" (p.286).

Who is Isaac McCaslin? Is he a visionary or a failure? It is through his eyes that the reader experiences both the wilderness and the bear. Both fragile-in that they are mortal-yet their presence is anything but. They reduce man to weakness and fragility, but also incite him to wonder and awe. They are not gods, not even in the Olympian sense, but huge, sentient beings who make man aware of the bigness of creation whose origins or causes are unknown. Their brooding inattentiveness or furious grasping of freedom leads man to contemplation not just of themselves but of the drama of which they are a part. It is Isaac who sees

that they are doomed, not just because they are mortal but because there seems to be a higher, remote and mysterious plan in which man's role is so miniscule he seems almost a spectator. It is Isaac who also sees their sublimity and grandeur, and who brings them to life for us, so that we can be awed by them as well.

If, as he says, he is "an Isaac born into a later life than Abraham's and repudiating immolation: fatherless and therefore safe declining the altar" (p.270), then why does he flee? Does the sacrifice entail entering into society, fathering children to carry on his name, and teaching them how to respect and love the wilderness and the life it contains? In order to save the wilderness must he enter into the mazed complexity of the human heart, where his ideals and beliefs may become muddled, confused, or bent? Or is he analogous to John Brown, that one silence among the moiling and yapping of humanity (p.272), that defiance of society's contradiction, that causes God to turn his face back to the South? Because, as in "Delta Autumn" (p.337), he is content to see the wilderness die with him, is he instead similar to Uncle Hubert, who bestows a legacy to the next generation yet bankrupts it within his own lifetime?

For we see the fullness of Isaac's youth, his love affair with the wilderness and his message of hope to the oppressed blacks, yet we also see him in "Delta Autumn," where the granddaughter of James Beauchamp (also his distant cousin) asks him, "Old man, have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you don't remember anything you ever knew or heard or even felt about love?" (p.346). He cannot recognize love any longer. She also accuses Isaac of spoiling the Edmondses by giving them the farm that they are not entitled to.

Isaac possesses the same type of insight which John Brown possessed. However, John Brown's decision spurred him to an action: an attempt to subvert society. Isaac's decision, while itself an act, leads him to inaction, at least within society. He is ignored by society, and ignores it in turn. He believes he will find peace in his decision, because he will not have the responsibilities that society will place upon him as a prominent landowner, and which will inevitably corrupt him. However, his decision insures that the McCaslin curse will live on at the (now) Edmonds plantation. Even with his repudiation, he still must bequeath the feeble monetary salve which cannot bandage the gaping wound of McCaslin rapaciousness. He is still beholden to society and its evils, regardless

of his rejection of it. Since he has rejected society, and yet has not removed himself completely from it, must we see him as a failure? For his repudiation has also guaranteed that he will have no son, and thus no one to mark as Sam did him. Does he thus appear to be like Uncle Hubert, who bankrupted his own legacy? The answer is no. We owe much to Isaac for his refusal to be "tainted" by the modern world. His love for the wilderness and the life within it are important not only because they are values held in poor esteem today, but also because his spiritual understanding of them challenges the self-absorbed modern man to experience and acknowledge the being outside of himself. Isaac's failure to enact a unity between the wilderness and the modern, profit-driven world is tragic but understandable, because this schism still exists today. Although one cannot ever truly escape society, it serves to define the nature of the conflict as it did with Lucas Beauchamp and Sam Fathers. His failure to completely remove himself from society serves to remind us how important it is, and Isaac's purity in the face of it reveals to us how decrepit and in need of reform it has become. The wilderness will die with him because he was the only one pure enough to truly see it as it is. The lack of such a purity, both in the now extinct wilderness, and in ourselves, will make our own search for truth through the labyrinthine passions of our heart that much more difficult. He has not bankrupted the legacy, for we are the children who, by reading about him, have been marked with his heritage. ♦

#### Notes:

1. *Go Down, Moses*, Vintage International Press.
2. All citations from same edition as previous.

## Freedom and Limitation:

### The Understanding in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

Todd Pytel, A99

I have only one experience, the elements of which can always be compared to each other according to certain fundamental relations. Immanuel Kant uses this simple reflection to bind together his philosophy of the powers and limitations of human understanding in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. This, according to Kant, allows us to steer through the dangerous strait between skepticism, the view that reason can know nothing with certainty, and fanaticism, the opposing view that reason has no limits (B128). Just how such a reflection does this is explained in the Transcendental Deduction. In this section, Kant attempts to prove that all incoming sensible intuition must always be subject to the conditions of *one* possible experience. These conditions have an intimate connection to the categories, *a priori* concepts that Kant discovers through reflection upon the table of logical judgments.<sup>1</sup> A reasonable first reading of this very difficult section might lead to the following summary: all appearances are shaped by original apperception into harmony with the categories, otherwise they would not form parts of one unified experience. Thus the categories seem to be innate predispositions that determine the one and only way that we can view the world.

Such a view seems consonant with Kant's description of the transcendental unity of apperception as a condition for all cognition as well as his description of the categories as concepts which correspond to the forms of thought. But a few important passages reveal that Kant views the categories in a different way. At the end of the first edition's transcendental deduction he remarks, "If we got the concepts [the categories] from ourselves, then they would lack objective validity" (A129).<sup>2</sup> This statement is not obviously in conflict with the view of categories as predispositions. Kant has already ruled out any knowledge of the things-in-themselves. Thus, "objective validity" certainly does not refer to those things. We might indeed believe that "objective validity" is only our view of the unity of experience caused by the categories as predispositions. However, he decided in the second edition's version of the Deduction to expand

the statement considerably. After ruling out the possibility of abstracting the categories from experience, he restates his view, "that the categories contain the bases, on the part of the understanding, of the possibility of all experience as such" (B167). But then he proposes and rejects a third possible view as a "middle course" between the above two views. This "middle course" holds that:

[T]he categories are neither *self-thought a priori* first principles of our cognition, nor again are drawn from experience, but are subjective predispositions for thinking that are implanted in us and given to us simultaneously with our existence. (B167)

Kant dismisses this view, which is exactly the one most easily carried away from the Deduction, by noting that the "categories would in that case lack the *necessity* which belongs essentially to the concept of them." (B168) In the case of causality:

I could then not say that the effect is connected with the cause in the object (i.e., connected with it necessarily), but could say only that I am so equipped that I cannot think this presentation otherwise than as thus connected. And this is just what the skeptic most longs to hear. (B168)

Clearly, we now have a problem. Kant consistently portrays the unity of apperception as a condition of possible experience. In that case, the understanding seems passive, merely processing the data in unalterable forms of thought prescribed by original apperception. But in this passage, Kant clearly rejects as unsatisfactory the view that the categories are any sort of passive or subjective predispositions. Instead, they are "self-thought" first principles, which seem to allow the understanding a more active role in relation to appearances. Precisely how are the categories and the transcendental unity related in order to condition incoming

appearances while retaining an active understanding? What does it mean for the categories to be "self-thought" and still have a claim to objective validity? And what is the philosophical importance of the distinction that Kant hopes to draw?

#### I. The Transcendental Object = x

If we are to reject characterizing the categories as subjective and passive predispositions, then we must immediately rule out looking solely to the understanding for their source. But where else can we look if we wish to retain their character as concepts which are somehow related to the forms of judgment? One of Kant's earliest definitions of the categories points to a solution. He says that the categories "are concepts of an object as such whereby the object's intuition is regarded as *determined* in terms of one of the *logical functions* in judging" (A95). Just how to read "an object as such" is unclear. If we were to take it as "any object" (that is, one of a number of potential objects), then the sentence would mean that the intuition of the particular object presented to me is unified according to certain preset functions (forms of thought) expressed by the categories. Unfortunately, this is the same as saying that the categories are predispositions. Instead, what if "an object as such" refers not to one of many objects, but instead to one original object, like a blueprint which specifies what any possible object must look like? An "object as such" would then be like a "form of an object."

Such a reading solves some problems while introducing others. If the categories are concepts of some original object that the understanding has access to, then we have succeeded in moving the source of the categories outside of the understanding, provided that this object is in some way distinct from the understanding. According to this view, the categories would be derived from the understanding's analysis of an original object logically prior to any specific object of experience. But what role would such an object play in the process of synthesizing the manifold of intuition? And how would the understanding's access to one original object be practically different than a subjective predisposition?

To answer these questions, we must turn to the Transcendental Deduction, and particularly to Kant's discussion of the "synthesis of recognition in the concept" (A103-110). He remarks there that we should clarify what we mean by an "object of presentations," asking:

What, then, do we mean when we talk about an object corresponding to, and hence also distinct from, cognition? We can easily see that this object must be thought only as something as such = x. For, after all, outside our cognition we have nothing that we could contrast with this cognition as something corresponding to it. (A104-105)

Kant again uses a peculiar locution, "something as such," similar to the "object as such" at A95. Here, he uses the phrase to denote an object removed as far as possible from our cognitions. This "something as such = x" (I will henceforth call it the general object, to avoid confusion with other specific Kantian terms) is not a thing-in-itself. A thing-in-itself is never an object of our understanding, since it must be perceived before it reaches the understanding. Once it has been perceived, it is an appearance, by definition no longer the thing-in-itself. With the general "x," however, we are dealing with an object *present to the understanding prior to any actual experience*. Thus, it "corresponds to" cognition because all objects require cognition. However, it remains "distinct from" cognition because it is not an object given in cognition. An object given by cognition would be a specific concept, such as unity or causality. Hence, this general object seems to occupy some sort of limbo between an actual, specific concept and the thing-in-itself which is never present to the understanding. It is still unclear, however, how such a strange thing would fit into the actual process of cognition that Kant has described.

#### II. Synthesis and Cognition

To approach this problem, we should briefly recall Kant's discussion of synthesis in general, introduced just before the categories at A77-80. There, he divides the synthesis of the manifold, "cognition," into three necessary components: intuition, imagination, and unification (A79). Any cognition must begin by receiving some sensible intuition, be it empirical sensation or an *a priori* intuition of space or time. But a mere intuition is never used by the understanding. Instead, it is taken up by the imagination, which acts as an intermediary. This mediation by the imagination creates several problems of its own. Most significantly, it appears that imagination plays its own role in shaping cognition alongside that of the general object. This would lead at least to a complication, if not to a

conflict, in the process of cognition. But, these problems can be solved only after we understand the role of the general object. So, let us pass by for the moment the difficulties involved with the imagination and try to explain as well as possible how the general object acts in the unification of a sensible manifold.

Assuming, then, that the imagination has produced an image for the understanding, the remaining step is the unification of the produced manifold. This unification is later explained as dependent on the schemata, which are rules for assembling the manifold in a certain way. The role of the schemata is most easily understood in the context of the unification by empirical concepts, as opposed to the unification by the categories, which rely on the more subtle transcendental schemata. In this simpler case, Kant explains how the schemata provide the concept with true universality as follows:

Even less is an object of experience or an image thereof ever adequate to the empirical concept; rather, that concept always refers directly to the schema of imagination, this schema being a rule for determining our intuition in accordance with such and such a general concept. (A141)

Later, Kant will use the *a priori* intuition of time to explain the transcendental schemata (that is, the ones corresponding to the categories) in a similar way. Thus, we may safely say, in general, that the understanding unifies the manifold presented to it by applying a certain rule. This rule, in turn, points to a corresponding concept.

A concrete example may help to illustrate this view of cognition. Let us choose an empirical concept as an example, since its components do not involve the complexities of the transcendental schemata. Accordingly, let us suppose that we have the concept of "dog," which is defined by a schema that assembles, in a determinate way, the three elements "fur," "barks," and "four-legs." The process of cognition would then run as follows. First, sensibility receives intuitions. These intuitions have not yet been presented to the understanding, and thus I am not consciously aware of them. Then, the imagination takes up these intuitions and presents them to the understanding as the elements "fur," "barks," and "four-legs." Lastly, the understanding finds that the schema corresponding to "dog" applies to the given arrangement of elements. In

other words, the particular elements, and their relations to one another, actually present are the same as the elements and relations that the understanding finds in the schema corresponding to "dog." Accordingly, the given appearance is unified and cognized as "dog."

With this simplified example in mind, we are prepared for Kant's view of the general object in cognition. In a discussion about cognizing a triangle, he remarks that:

[W]hen we think of a triangle as an object, we do so by being conscious of the assembly of three straight lines according to a rule whereby such an intuition can always be exhibited. Now this *unity of the rule* determines all that is manifold, and limits it to conditions that make possible the unity of apperception. And the concept of this unity is the presentation of the object = x, i.e., the object that I think through the mentioned predicates of a triangle. (A105-I06)

The first sentence here sounds almost exactly like the unification in synthesis outlined above, except that he has not yet introduced the technical term "schema" for the determining rule. How, then, does the rule, or schema, relate to the general object?

The second sentence of the passage describes the effect of the "unity of the rule." What does Kant mean by saying that the schema is unified? I believe, in light of the adjective "this," that the "unity" refers back to the previous sentence's assertion that, according to this rule, such an intuition could *always* be exhibited. A concept, by its very nature, is universal. It refers, through a schema, to one thing in various circumstances. "Such an intuition" can be assembled in the same way regardless of the situation. If it could not, then it would not be "one such" intuition but several. One concept would refer to two essentially different things, which would be absurd. The next part of the sentence explains the effect of a schema that links one concept to one object in different situations. Kant states that the unity of the rule "determines all that is manifold." That is, the rule places several disparate appearances into a determined, fixed order with certain definite relationships present to our mind. In the dog example, the rule would change three unconnected elements ("barks," "four-legs," "fur") into three elements connected in a system ("barks + four-legs + fur"). But at this point, the elements, though related,

are not considered as one thing. The final part of the sentence, "[The unity of the rule] limits [all that is manifold] to conditions that make possible the unity of apperception," brings back the question of the imagination's production of rule-governedness. Let us pass it by for the moment, for only with hindsight can we understand how the rule makes possible the unity of apperception while still not inhibiting the active role of the understanding.

Kant's last sentence in the quotation above (A105-I06) gives us the key to understanding the role of the general object in cognition. Here, Kant introduces another new phrase, "the concept of the unity." By this I believe him to mean the concept that corresponds to the elements connected by the rule, e.g. the "dog" that corresponds to the "barks + four-legs + fur." How, then, is "dog" a "presentation of the object = x," that is, the general object? Now, we will soon see that "dog," being empirical, is not simply a presentation of the general object. In fact, only the categories are direct determinations of "x," while "dog" would be a composite of those fundamental categorial determinations. But let us follow the dog for the sake of simplicity. To resume, Kant says that the concept of the unity is thought "through the mentioned predicates." I take this to mean that some of the characteristics present in the indeterminate object = x are determined and presented to the understanding by the application of the rule to the given appearances. A specific concept, then, is a determination of the general object = x. Kant will later reaffirm the presence of the general object in all cognition, saying that:

The pure concept of this transcendental object (which object is actually always the same, = x, in all our cognitions) is what is able to provide all our empirical concepts in general with reference to an object, i.e., with objective reality. (A109-I10)

Thus, the general object = x is always present in cognition and is determined (that is, made into a specific concept) by the understanding's application of a schema to the appearances.

If we read between the lines here, we can see that the notion of a general object becoming a specific one is implied by Kant's description of the object as "= x." The process of synthesis is, in many ways, analogous to the process of solving an algebraic equation. The numbers given in an equation, e.g. "3 + 2

$\sin 30^\circ$ ," correspond to the manifold of intuition presented to the understanding. If we add "= x" to the end of "3 + 2  $\sin 30^\circ$ ," then we say that the left side is equal to "x." This "x," by itself equal to any possible number, is limited to only one number when it is placed in the equation. This number can be found by calculating the values on the left side and finding their relation to one another. Then, of course, the right side is no longer "= x"; instead, it is equal to "4." The general "x" has been reduced to the specific number in a way similar to the determination of the general object = x in all cognition of objects.

This analogy, taken together with Kant's discussion of the categories as "concepts of an object as such" (quoted above, from A95), takes us a great distance towards solving our original problem: explaining how the categories are not simply predispositions of the understanding. The categories are not characteristics of the understanding, but are rather the concepts that the understanding finds presented to it by the general object = x. Given a set of appearances "equal" to, i.e. organized by, the general object "x," and given the characteristics, the categories, that the understanding discovers *a priori* in that object, the understanding can solve the equation, determining the manifold in a certain manner, expressed by the schema. But there seems to be a significant departure from the algebraic analogy when the origin of the categories is considered. In an algebraic equation, we say that we solve for x "in terms of" the other elements of the equation. All of the order and relation in the equation comes from the side of the equation with the numbers and relations. This is similar to cognition insofar as we determine one specific concept from the presented manifold. But for *a priori* cognitions, the manifold can only be determined in twelve ways (one for each category). Since these categories are the concepts of the general object, it seems that the unknown "x" is exerting some influence on the given manifold, unlike the algebraic example, where the "x" is entirely determined by the other side of the equation. But then do both sides of the "equation" of cognition play a significant part in organizing the sensible manifold. That is, is there only one ordering of the manifold, by the unknown "x"? Or is the manifold already arranged when it is presented and then rearranged?

These questions will be examined shortly when we look at the imagination, but in either case we now have a sense of what Kant means when he says that the categories are "self-thought." Even though the

general object =  $x$ , and thus the categories as that object's characteristics, are present in all cognition, the understanding is not, in its nature, limited to them. If a different general object " $y$ ," utterly unlike our familiar " $x$ ," were presented to the understanding, then the understanding could find new categories that would apply to any appearances set equal to that " $y$ ." We shall soon see that the fact that we have only one experience shows that we have only one general object, with the familiar categories derived in the Metaphysical Deduction. But this singular experience of the understanding does not detract from its nature as an active, unlimited power of the mind. Once we have traced the source of the categories to the general object =  $x$ , however, we may then ask where that object comes from, and what it really means to say that the categories are objectively valid. These questions bring us at last to apperception and imagination.

### III. Apperception and Imagination

In our discussion of the object =  $x$ , we have heard almost nothing of one of Kant's central terms: apperception. If the act of cognition is in some way like solving an equation, how does apperception affect it? And from where does that apperception's transcendental unity arise?

It will be important first to clear up exactly what sort of thing apperception is. On one hand, Kant's connection of it to self-consciousness might make it sound something like an "ego." But its relation to the categories makes it sound more like a thought process. Then again, its name might suggest that it is a power or capacity like perception. Two of Kant's statements help to clarify this confusion. He says first that "in original apperception everything must necessarily conform to the conditions of the thoroughgoing unity of self-consciousness" (A112). Shortly afterwards, he remarks that "nothing can enter cognition without doing so by means of this original apperception" (A113-114). The use of the preposition "in" and especially the prepositional phrase "by means of" point to the last of the above alternatives: that apperception is a power or capacity. We might say that things are given to the understanding "through" apperception in the same way we speak of an intuition passing "through" sensibility.

Furthermore, the second sentence quoted above leads to the definition of apperception in terms of the algebraic analogy to cognition. It states that all

things must enter cognition through apperception. But what does it mean to enter cognition but to set the entering appearances equal to the general object =  $x$ ? Thus, we can say, in terms of our analogy, that *apperception is the power of applying " $= x$ " to a given set of appearances*. Though this power is a necessary component of the human mind, it is distinct from the understanding, which is the power of finding rules (A126-127). The power of this definition is that it immediately reveals the source both of the categories and the transcendental unity of apperception. The categories are the characteristics of the object =  $x$ , present to the understanding prior to all cognition. The transcendental unity of apperception is the unity produced by the constancy of this object in all cognitions. Since the object is constant, the categories must apply to all possible cognition, that is, all possible experience. And if all possible experience can be cognized according to the same concepts, that experience is unified. Finally, this definition of apperception clarifies Kant's distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. The categories are objectively valid because they stem from apperception, which is a power *outside* the understanding. But because the human mind deals only with appearances, the categories can never have a source in the thing-in-itself. The most that can be said is that they originate in apperception, which is not part of our active power of understanding. The evidence for such a view and its philosophical ramifications will be taken up shortly.

The last of Kant's terms that plays an important role in ordering cognitions is imagination. He often ascribes to it an active power to synthesize the manifold. For example, he states that:

[P]erceptions need to be given a combination that in sense itself they cannot have. Hence there is in us an active power to synthesize this manifold. This power we call imagination; and the act that it performs directly on perception I call apprehension. (A120-121)

If it is simply true that the imagination arranges intuitions before the understanding unifies them, then two distinct arrangements are taking place, one by the imagination and one by the general object. Such a pair of arrangements would be troubling. How would the two work together? Would the categories be affected? And even if that could be explained, wouldn't it seem like a needlessly complicated theory?

Such questions, reasonable as they seem, rest upon a false separation of the arrangement by the imagination and the application of the general object through apperception. The two are, in fact, the same act. The basic function of the imagination "is to bring the manifold of intuition to an *image*; hence it must beforehand take the impressions up into its activity, i.e., apprehend them" (A121). To change intuitions into an image is to present them to the understanding. But the understanding only deals with images to be cognized into an object. This cognition, moreover, is the process of applying " $= x$ " to appearances. It is thus absurd to say that the imagination's presentation is truly separable from the application of the general object, because such a presentation would then somehow be present to the understanding even though it was not an object of cognition. I believe that Kant refers to this yoking of imagination and apperception when he states that:

The mind could not possibly think its own identity. . . if it did not have present to it the identity of its act—the act that subjects all synthesis of apprehension. . . to a transcendental unity, and thereby first makes possible the coherence of those presentations according to *a priori* rules. (A108-109)

The identity of the mind's act must refer to the single general object =  $x$  that is present in, and is the essential act of, all cognition. This identity subjects the synthesis of apprehension (that is, the synthesis and arrangement of the manifold by the imagination) to a coherence of rules. Hence, while the imagination and apperception are two subtly different powers, they are bound within a single act, the imagination's presentation of the manifold to the understanding through the "equation" of that manifold with the general object presented by apperception.

### IV. Conclusion

This description of the categories as characteristics of "general object =  $x$ " gives us the beginning of a path through the Transcendental Deduction. We have shown that Kant believes the categories to be concepts of the general object, the presentation of which is the power of apperception and the beginning of cognition. This power is distinct from the understanding. Because of this, we know that the

understanding is not limited in its nature and that the categories are not subjective predispositions. Instead, they are "self-thought" concepts that the understanding finds in the general object prior to all cognition. But for all this, questions still remain. What evidence does Kant have for considering apperception to be distinct from the understanding? And what importance could such a distinction possibly have for a system of philosophy?

Kant gives us no clear answer for these questions, but we can draw some inferences from the remarks that end the Deduction in the second edition. He states that, if the categories *were* subjective predispositions:

[T]hen all our insight, achieved through the supposed objective validity of our judgments, is nothing but sheer illusion; and there would also be no lack of people who would not concede this subjective necessity (which must be felt) in themselves. At the very least one could not quarrel with anyone about something that rests merely on the way in which his self as subject is organized. (B168-169)

The last sentence, while holding the false hypothesis that the categories *are* part of the understanding, reveals Kant's view that it is the understanding that we properly call the "self." Since he is in fact rejecting the attribution of the categories to the understanding, i.e. the particular individual, should we infer that he believes that the origin of the categories in apperception makes them common to all human beings? It seems impossible to find any direct, conclusive evidence for such a view. But if we accept the theory we have sketched out from the Deduction, a certain plausibility is revealed. Let us take for granted, then, that there is a general object =  $x$  which is the same in all cognition. This object would have, as explained above, an active power to arrange the manifold of intuition. But it would also be static, insofar as the object presented is always the same. Now, it seems likely that such a constant power would never originate in the understanding, which is both active and varied, in that the understanding finds different rules to govern different appearances that are presented to it. Instead, we might speculate that apperception has a physical source. After all, we expect physical bodies to behave in constant, predictable ways just as we believe apperception to act. Apperception, as well as the categories that it entails, might then be linked to the phys-

ical structure of the thinking mind. This connection would make Kant's philosophy compatible with the ever-mounting scientific evidence for an understanding of thought as a chemical or biological process. In addition, this view gives some suggestion that the categories are common to all human beings, since we believe that we are essentially physically identical to other men. Thus, Kant's doctrine is both consistent with our knowledge of the physical world and suggestive of common modes of thought among mankind.

Implications other than that are more difficult to sketch out. From a practical, individual perspective I can see no difference between a "subjective" predisposition and the constancy of the general object. In either case, the understanding is forced to cognize an object in a way which is not at all determined by the thing-in-itself. But Kant has concerns apart from questions of practical objective validity. By keeping the source of the categories outside of the understanding, Kant is keeping in mind what he considers the three necessary problems in philosophy: God, freedom, and immortality (Bxxx), all of which bear on moral questions. Speaking of freedom and morality, he states:

All I need for morality is that freedom does not contradict itself and hence can at least be thought. . . . [A]ll I need is that freedom in my act puts no obstacle whatever in the way of the natural mechanism that governs the same act. (Bxxix-xxx)

The categories as predispositions of the understanding would be just this sort of obstacle. For how could any sort of freedom (empirical or transcendental) be maintained if the understanding, by its very nature, were confined to twelve distinct forms of thought and no more? The importance of this freedom is amplified when we consider with it the above suggestion that apperception is the same for all men. If man's mind is essentially free, and his apperception identical to that of others, we have the foundation for a rational ethics that applies to all men. Such an ethics might well be different than previous systems, since Kant accepts that all phenomena, including actions, are governed by cause and effect in the empirical world. But it is a beginning nonetheless. The separation of understanding and apperception has similar ramifications for religious faith and immortality. Kant certainly acknowledges the possibility of faith, even if, according to the Transcendental Dialectic, such faith

cannot be obtained rationally. But by separating apperception from the understanding (that is, the self), Kant preserves the possibility of a truly transcendent afterlife. If my self, and not my apperception, lives on after death, then the afterlife would be completely beyond any earthly experience. Thus, Kant's doctrine saves him from a possible contradiction between his philosophy and personal faith.

All of these considerations must have been at work in Kant's mind as he formulated his doctrine in the Transcendental Deduction. Though certainly subtle and difficult, the argument in the Deduction fulfills his goal of discovering both the limitations and the strengths of human understanding. Although, the understanding can never reach the things-in-themselves, it can at least realize the possibility of both a rational ethics and a transcendent immortality. Perhaps this lack of an extreme view causes some to label Kant as tedious. But he himself believes his work to be an exciting challenge, envisioning it as a safe passage between the "dangerous cliffs" of skepticism and fanaticism. And if we are to be impressed by Odysseus' passage between Scylla and Charybdis, or the achievement of Aristotle's virtuous mean between vices, we must indeed be impressed by both the depth and moderation of Kant's thought in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. ♦

#### Notes:

1. I do not treat here the important question of how the categories as *concepts* relate to judgment as *form*. Such a topic would be more suitable for an examination of the Metaphysical Deduction.
2. All quotations are taken from Werner Pluhar's translation of the *Critique* (Hackett Publishing, 1996). All emphasis in quotations is Kant's. I have omitted the translator's bracketing for simplicity. Thus, any bracketed insertions in quotations are my own.
3. We must remember that here, as elsewhere, Kant is speaking of logical, and not temporal, priority. I do not believe he would maintain that we are conscious of a general object before any specific object has been cognized. For a similar statement related to the forms of sensibility, see B 349.



Arles, France, Vada Mossavat, A00

## JUNIOR ESSAY PRIZE, 1997-98

### Sympathy and Selfishness in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*

Deborah Carlos, A99

In my essay this year I would like to examine one of the major themes in George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch*, the relationship between compassion for others and self-interest, and the way in which they each influence human actions and beliefs. Eliot illustrates the complex relation between the two, both within one person and between individuals, primarily through her depiction of two unhappy marriages. The unions of Dorothea Brooke and Edward Casaubon, and Tertius Lydgate and Rosamond Vincy, are defined by the conflict of expectations that each has of the married state. These different expectations are the products of selfish inclinations, in which the purpose of marriage is to achieve some other social or professional end, in which the spouse does not have any real interest. (This is very different from the purpose that marriage has for the Garths and their daughter Mary, to live and raise a family with a partner worthy of love and respect, who returns such feelings.) Each makes the mistake of not looking for the real character of the future partner during courtship, but instead projects onto the person the ideal that is in his or her own mind. Marital strife soon disabuses them of these ideals, and the characters begin manifesting either compassionate or selfish behavior towards each other. Dorothea and Lydgate first repress and then sacrifice any interests of their own that displease their spouses, while Casaubon and Rosamond seek ways to assert themselves even more, without much consideration for the pain they cause.

The idea of ardency is closely connected to Eliot's portrait of the relationship between compassion and selfishness, because both Dorothea and Lydgate have ardent natures, while Casaubon and Rosamond do not. Eliot defines ardency in the *Prelude*, in which she describes another ardent nature, Saint Theresa of Avila, the sixteenth century Spanish nun who reformed the Carmelite religious order. Theresa is portrayed as a passionate, idealistic woman with two intimately related central desires: to accomplish a deed of clear importance in the world, and to devote herself to an object worthy of all the serious thought and intense emotion she can expend on it, and would in return offer her the

possibility of self-transcendence. The latter desire is expressed at the end of the first paragraph of the book: "some illimitable satisfaction, some object which would never justify weariness, which would reconcile self-despair with the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self" (vii).<sup>1</sup> The former is made explicit a few sentences later, where Eliot specifies "a constant unfolding of far-resonant action" as the defining characteristic of an "epic" life, which a nature such as Theresa's "demanded". Eliot goes on to say that Theresa fulfilled her desires within the framework of the Catholic Church, which provided a "coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul" (viii). It is interesting that Eliot names the social conditions in which Theresa lived, dominated by the Church, as the source of the knowledge, in the form of religious faith, that was essential to her achievements, both in spirit and in action. Religion seems to be the only thing Eliot thinks can provide an endlessly fulfilling goal, with ideas general enough to be considered all embracing and specific enough to guide one's own actions in everyday life. The assurance of how actions can be matched with religious or moral beliefs, and of the positive consequences of those actions, is especially secure if one lives within a religious community, and not in the outside world. This social "medium", in which a woman like Theresa or Antigone could perform "ardent deeds" (811) is lacking in the modern world, for Eliot early Victorian England. In this society, the Anglican Church is either itself seen as an avenue for worldly success (by the money-minded manufacturer Mr. Vincy) or as a source of justification for worldly success (by the puritanical banker Mr. Bulstrode). This early emphasis on religion in Eliot's discussion of ardency makes her later use of the word for Lydgate's enthusiasm for medicine seem odd, but it is still appropriate, since he seeks in his science "the most direct alliance between intellectual conquest and the social good" (143) and is "ambitious of a wider effect. . . fired with the possibility that he might. . . make a link in the chain of discovery" (145). However Lydgate is called ardent only in reference to his work, and Eliot slyly remarks that "his intellectual

ardour did not penetrate to his feeling and judgment about furniture or women" (149).

In both Dorothea and Lydgate, the search for self-transcendence takes the form of the quest for the social good, both seeing the need for reform in different areas, with Lydgate obviously focused on medical practices. This tendency, in addition to the different role that religion plays for them, is a striking difference between their manifestations of ardency and Theresa's. Religious principles do not seem to concern Lydgate at all, while Dorothea is interested in them for the moral guidance they can provide for her actions. Eliot gives no indication that Theresa was ever interested in "social good," and the reformation of an order of nuns is not a mission that would result in making very many people in the world happier. This discrepancy is due to an emphasis on different aspects of Christianity on the part of Dorothea and Theresa, with Dorothea concerned with helping her neighbors in this world (i.e., building better cottages for the tenant farmers) and Theresa concerned with people living up to the moral requirements of a life of devotion. These two aspects are also contrasted in the different styles of the two clergymen nominated to be chaplain of the new hospital, Reverend Tyke and Reverend Camden Farebrother. Tyke is "methodistical" (183), strict, austere, and very concerned with the proper interpretation of religious doctrine, assuming that morality necessarily attends such concern. Farebrother, on the other hand, believes that the Church is the wrong vocation for him, and is very aware of his own inner conflicts relating to religious teaching, for example, about gambling, which he practices purely for the money. Since he sees himself as unfit to dispense hard-and-fast rules of right conduct, he concentrates on offering solace and comfort to the suffering, and he is very well prepared to do this.

Farebrother has the ability, which Dorothea develops, after a long struggle, to use "vivid sympathetic experience" as "acquired knowledge" (764), an ability resulting in feelings of non-judgmental compassion for people who are, he realizes, subject to the same passions and sorrows as he himself is. However, Farebrother has already paid a large price in personal happiness in return for this compassionate knowledge. He tells Lydgate, who has just cast the tie-breaking vote to give the chaplain's office to Tyke:

The world has been too strong for me, I know . . . But then I am not a mighty man. . . shall never be a man of renown. The choice of

Hercules is a pretty fable, but Prodicus makes it easy work for the hero, as if first resolves were enough. Another story says that he came to hold the distaff and at last wore the Nessus shirt. I suppose one good resolve might keep a man right if everybody else's resolve helped him. (184-5)

Eliot comments: ". . . he had not escaped that low estimate of possibilities which we rather hastily arrive at as an inference from our own failure". While Eliot does not explicitly say how Farebrother believes he has failed, she emphasizes his dislike of Tyke's sponsor Mr. Bulstrode, and the dogmatic religious hypocrisy that the banker uses his influence to spread. Perhaps Farebrother would like to oppose Bulstrode and others like him, even attempt to reform certain practices of Anglican Church, as Lydgate would like to reform the medical profession, but realizes that he does not have the strength or means to do so.

While Eliot uses Farebrother to say that the world tends to make martyrs of great-spirited individuals, she also maintains that these great-spirited individuals often contribute to their own suffering. The *Prelude* includes the story of Theresa and her brother, while still children, leaving their home "to go and seek martyrdom in the country of the Moors" (vii), showing that Theresa eagerly would have tried to accomplish a great act by getting herself murdered if she had not found less dangerous means. Likewise, Dorothea is "enamored of intensity and greatness and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it" (10). Even Lydgate, with his well-focused ardency, is not free from such a tendency, as he shows in his admiration of persecuted physicians from the past, like Vesalius, who was forced to steal bones to study anatomy and "died rather miserably" (443). The very desire for self-transcendence, the opening up of the mind and emotions to experience things beyond the reach of the self, devalues the worth of the self, since such desire assumes that the perspective of a single person is too small for the most all-encompassing thought or feeling. This is a view that Eliot supports when she writes: "Will not a tiny speck very close to our vision blot out the glory of the world and leave only a margin by which we see the blot? I know no speck so troublesome as self" (407). Yet she does not seem to think that self-transcendence

which would lead to seeing beyond the speck of self is achieved very well simply through self-sacrifice, on a large or small scale. The tendency towards martyrdom is just as much a fault in the ardent nature as the tendency never to think of anything other than oneself is in the selfish nature, since neither leads to the practice of much actual good in the world.

It would seem that the desire and capacity for self-transcendence inherent in the ardent individual would lend itself to compassion. However, while no one is born compassionate, it does seem to be a quality that develops earlier and to a greater extent in some people than in others.

We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr. Casaubon and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling—an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects—that he had an equivalent center of self whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference. (208)

But ardency is not required for compassion, even compassion involving self-sacrifice, as we see, again, in the character of Farebrother. He willingly gives up his courtship of Mary Garth when he learns that she and Fred Vincy are in love, certainly a compassionate act, and a painful sacrifice. His motives are a mixture of resignation—Mary has told him that she could never love anyone else like she loves Fred—and genuine concern for the well being and happiness of both. Now, he could have tried to put Mary's claim to the test, and Eliot does hint that, if Mary were to love another man, it would be Farebrother. Being able to respect a man's character is essential to Mary's affection, and she already respects Farebrother greatly: she thinks he is "the cleverest man in her narrow circle" (503). This is an estimation that her mother, whom Mary strongly resembles in personality and taste, also made of her father Caleb (546), and we know where that led. But while Farebrother is not passionate or idealistic enough to be ardent, he has magnanimity enough to renounce any intention of proposing to

Mary with his dignity and his sense of self intact. A revealing difference between Farebrother's more sophisticated compassion for Fred and Mary and Dorothea and Lydgate's raw pity for their spouses is in the view taken of the objects of compassion in each case. The idea of Casaubon and Rosamond as weak creatures requiring special care seems to be essential for inspiring compassion in Dorothea and Lydgate, while Farebrother respects Fred and Mary, although he worries about Fred's bad habits and lack of maturity. After Dorothea restrains an especially fierce outburst of anger, "she felt something like the thankfulness that might well up in us if we had narrowly escaped hurting a lamed creature" (416). Lydgate thinks, while comforting a tearful Rosamond, after her meeting with Dorothea, "he had chosen this fragile creature and had taken the burden of her life upon his arms. He must walk as he could, carrying that burden pitifully" (775). Such attitudes would seem offensive, if Casaubon and Rosamond were not as pathetic as they are. But the question remains, what does the presence of such an attitude indicate about compassion? Are there two different kinds of compassion, one judgmental and one not, or are these just different stages in the development of sympathetic feeling in a person?

It seems useful to examine the main characters more closely in their relations with each other, and a good place to start is with their expectations before marriage, since the disappointment on all sides is largely due to these. For Dorothea, Casaubon's chief attractions are his extensive classical education, and his status as a clergyman, which she takes as evidence of profound religious faith and therefore certain knowledge of right action. She is "a girl whose notions about marriage took their color entirely from an exalted enthusiasm about the ends of life" (29). She accepts Casaubon with the intention of helping him complete his life's work, *The Key to All Mythologies*, believing that in return she will receive the education, in both universal truths and how to apply them, that she feels is necessary to be sure of accomplishing anything worthwhile.

"I should learn everything then," she said to herself. . . . "I should learn to see the truth by the same light as great men have seen it by. And then I should know what to do when I got older: I should see how it was possible to lead a grand life here—now—in England. I don't feel sure about doing good in any way

now; everything seems like going on a mission to a people whose language I don't know. . . ." (30-1).

This last comment emphasizes the importance of social context for ardent deeds. The understanding, appreciation, and practice of art, such as the paintings and statues that Dorothea sees in Rome, requires a social context analogous to that required for the understanding, appreciation and practice of ardency. Without it, not only do those who are inclined to make art not know how to go about it, they do not properly understand their own desire to do it, or the worth of anything that they might produce. But art still retains a confused power, even over those who are ignorant, as is seen in Dorothea:

At first when I enter a room where the walls are covered with frescoes and rare pictures, I feel a kind of awe. . . . I feel myself in the presence of some higher life than my own. But when I begin to examine the pictures one by one, the life goes out of them or else is something violent and strange to me. . . . I am seeing so much at once and not understanding half of it. . . . It is painful to be told that anything is very fine and not be able to feel that it is fine. . . . (203)

Before she learns to use her emotions and experience as a guide for her actions, there seems to be a parallel between Dorothea's approach to art and her approach to life in general. Only the perception of a whole, vast because it encompasses many individual things, unified through special knowledge, can move her to great feelings. She may wish to see the grandeur in a single painting, but she cannot. By the end of the novel, Dorothea has begun to feel that her own life and her actions can be fine, despite her lack of sure knowledge of why it would be so.

Casaubon's motives for selecting Dorothea as a wife are equally revealing of his character. He had always intended to marry someday, but never fell in love with any woman, and apparently was sufficiently absorbed by his scholarly pursuits not to notice that many years were passing without a wedding. Dorothea fits his prudent standards for a suitable wife for a man like himself: "a blooming young lady—the younger the better, because more educable and submissive—of a rank equal to his own, of religious principles, virtu-

ous disposition, and good understanding" (272). In fact, he believes that he has found even more in Dorothea, a woman who also displays a strong admiration for his intellectual goals and achievements, and who can help him conquer the persistent demon of self-doubt. However, Casaubon falsely believes that because Dorothea is a woman, she cannot or at least will not dare form opinions of her own. Since Casaubon himself will determine her opinion of him, her admiration will be complete, eternal and unquestioning, and serve as the self-confidence that he sorely lacks. He has no idea whatsoever that his wife has rigorous expectations of him, that he will be "a modern Augustine who united the glories of doctor and saint" (26). Considering the utter lack of connection he feels between his life, even the living world in general, and his learning, he is singularly unsuited to teach Dorothea how to put theoretic principles into action, even if he had the desire to teach any to her in the first place: "such capacity of thought and feeling as had ever been stimulated in him by the general life of mankind had long shrunk to a sort of dried preparation, a useless embalming of knowledge" (194). The very idea of teaching anyone anything would probably frighten him into paralysis, since it would require exposing himself to examination and ridicule, the student-teacher relationship by nature inviting mutual evaluation by both parties. Casaubon is so "nervously conscious that he was expected to manifest a powerful mind" (272) that he refuses to hire a secretary, for fear that some insolent young man (perhaps reminiscent of Will Ladislav) would secretly, or not so secretly, think his mind not powerful. This fear is certainly the product of a hidden suspicion that he himself has, but will not admit, and he, "like the rest of us, felt how soothing it would have been to have a companion who would never find it out" (407).

Lydgate shares the opinion that a wife should always be an uncritical admirer of her husband. Eliot, with sarcastic exaggeration, says he sees "his superior knowledge and mental force" as a "shrine to consult on all occasions" (567). However, he is young, self-assured and ardent in his profession, and needs no outside inspiration to urge him on after his goals. He is also so far from appreciating a woman with ambition and ideas of her own, that he observes upon first meeting Dorothea: "She did not look at things from the proper feminine angle. The society of such women was about as relaxing as going from your work to teach the second form instead of reclining in a paradise with sweet

laughs for bird-notes and blue eyes for a heaven" (95). Rosamond captures his interest because she fits so perfectly his conception of the ideal woman: beautiful, charming and sympathetic, someone with "that feminine radiance, that distinctive womanhood which must be classed with flowers and music, that sort of beauty which by its very nature was virtuous" (262). Indeed Eliot emphasizes how much Lydgate's attraction to her comes from this absorption of the popular image of womanhood, in which beauty means virtue, "the complexities of love and marriage . . . being subjects on which he felt himself amply informed by literature and that traditional wisdom which is handed down in the genial conversation of men" (162). His opinion that Rosamond will make a perfect wife is only reinforced by the sense of knowledge of women's nature that he took from his experience with the French actress Madame Laure when he was a medical student in Paris. At that time, he seems to have had an even less complicated conception of the ideal woman: all that Laure needs to attract him is her automatically virtuous beauty and silence, which he sees as "melancholy radiance" (151). The course of this ill-starred romance runs parallel to Lydgate's later involvement with Rosamond. He falls in love from afar with a beautiful woman, indulges a fantasy of her perfection while having no intention of ever becoming involved with her, then impetuously decides to propose under the impression that she suffers from some grief and needs a comforter. (To be fair to Lydgate in his youth, Laure is married when he first becomes enamored of her, so pursuing a relationship would be against his better judgment.) Fortunately for him, Laure is not interested in remarrying after her husband's death, and she cures Lydgate's ill-conceived ideal by confessing that she killed Monsieur Laure because she was tired of him. Lydgate realizes he has been a fool, but he is too tender-hearted to become bitter, and vows in the future to get to know a woman's character more thoroughly before asking to marry her, "entertaining no expectations but such as were justified beforehand" (152). His disappointment is severe when he realizes that, while Rosamond is beautiful, charming and sensitive (and not a murderess) she is not sympathetic, towards him or anyone else.

Of the four, Rosamond's motives for marrying Lydgate seem to be the most shallow, since the benefits she seeks in marriage are entirely concerned with appearance. For her, Lydgate's chief attractions are his aristocratic family, the fact that he's not from Middlemarch, and his potential to provide money and

material things. However, Rosamond is not merely mercenary; if she were, she could simply marry the rich young tradesman Ned Plymdale, but she wants a husband who is wealthy and well-mannered and handsome.

In Rosamond's romance it was not necessary to imagine much about the inward life of the hero or of his serious business in the world; of course he had a profession and was clever as well as sufficiently handsome, but the piquant fact about Lydgate was his good birth, which . . . presented marriage as a prospect of . . . getting a little nearer to that celestial condition on earth in which she would have nothing to do with vulgar people. . . . (164)

Rosamond, like Casaubon, is chiefly interested in how she is perceived by others, with some differences that seem mostly due to her gender. Of course she must be constantly concerned with her physical appearance, while the good Reverend can blissfully ignore his moles, because beauty in a woman is by its nature virtuous, but is not so in man. Whatever natural inclination to self-consciousness may be in Rosamond has been greatly enhanced by her education at Mrs. Lemon's school, which has trained her to be "adorned with accomplishments for the refined amusement of man" (263). She is scrupulous about not showing any "unbecoming knowledge" (262), in fact all she needs to know in order to determine the best way to act is "what her audience liked" (159). In contrast to Dorothea's simplicity and lack of concern for appearances in general, Rosamond has "that controlled self-consciousness of manner which is the expensive substitute for simplicity" (419) which requires having "an audience in her own consciousness" (159). One of the reasons she is so fond of Lydgate is her belief that he will, with the discriminating taste of a man whose uncle is a baronet, appreciate her far more than any of the provincial young men of Middlemarch possibly could.

Thus the stage is set for intense marital strife between the Casaubons and the Lydgates, which provides a good showcase for the conflict between self-centeredness and compassion. It is easy to categorize Casaubon and Rosamond as selfish, and Dorothea and Lydgate as compassionate, if misguided, and this seems to be an accurate appraisal. However, for Eliot, self-centeredness is quite ordinary, and seems to be the natural result of being only one person with a single point-of-view, as every individual is:

Your pier-glass. . . made to be rubbed by a housemaid will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a center of illumination, and lo, the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. . . . These things are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle is the egoism of any person now absent. . . . (258)

Rosamond is slyly given as an example of a "person now absent," but this "parable" does not seem to refer exclusively to such exceptional egoism as hers. But while it may be natural to perceive the events that happen around us, not only directly to us but also to our neighbors and our business rivals, in relation to ourselves, it is a limited view that leads to unnecessary bitterness and grief. The self-centered individual has scant resources for recovering from misfortune, because it is a direct blow to the ego, or the sense of the self. The compassionate individual knows that the concentricity is an illusion, and this knowledge helps protect the self from being crushed if the candle is blown out and the scratches are revealed as random and chaotic. When Will Ladislav makes Rosamond aware that she is not the object of love for all the men who know her, as she is naïve and selfish enough to believe, she feels close to "losing her sense of identity" (755). The illusion that because she is beautiful, amiable, and refined, she is therefore the proper object of love for any man is the foundation for her idea of herself. She indulges the fantasy that Will is in love with her, or at least as much in love with her as with Dorothea, until he rudely shatters it. During an early conversation, when Rosamond asks Will what men think about when with Mrs. Casaubon, meaning what qualities does she have, Will responds simply "Herself" (422). Rosamond does not appreciate this answer.

The exceptional thing about Casaubon and Rosamond is not that they are selfish, but the degree to which they are. Their preoccupation with how others see them, which in Rosamond leads to vanity and in Casaubon, to crippling self-doubt, is a symptom of their definition of themselves solely in terms of outward requirements. Casaubon fails to experience joy in marriage because "the deeper he went in domesticity, the more did the sense of acquitting himself and acting with propriety predominate over any other satisfaction" (274). Unfortunately for him, Dorothea is not a

woman satisfied by meeting outward requirements, but inward. Casaubon does not have any feeling for the importance of these outward requirements apart from his own reputation, but both he and Rosamond share a need to be beyond blame in any situation. One gets the impression that if doing the opposite were not considered proper and expected in their respective cases, and afforded opportunity for praise, then Rosamond would feel no qualms about yelling at her husband and Casaubon would have left Will as an illiterate in some orphanage. Such reliance upon the judgments of others for the determination of one's actions and opinions betrays the absence of a solid, independent sense of self, although such a lack seems paradoxical in the two most self-centered characters in the book. Is compassion conducive to such a sense of self? Do Dorothea and Lydgate display more of such a sense before or after their marriage trials?

Dorothea and Lydgate both respond initially to the discovery that their marriages are not what they had hoped for with self-accusation, frustration, despair and anger. Indeed, most of the effort that Dorothea and Lydgate expend in repressing their feelings is focused on their anger, that most accusatory of emotions, and most offensive to their spouses, who wish to avoid accusation. Anger is also exceedingly difficult to reconcile with compassion, especially if it is perceived to be just anger. After her very first quarrel with Casaubon during their honeymoon in Rome, Dorothea is already determined not to let anger guide her actions, and so she goes to the Vatican museum with her husband, rather than stay to sulk in her room. "However just her indignation might be, her ideal was not to claim justice, but to give tenderness" (199). This argument started when Dorothea asked her husband when he planned to start actually writing his book, seeing that he had acquired literally volumes of notes. The anger she expresses on this occasion is tempered from the start by a guilty awareness of her own selfishness in wanting more from Casaubon, namely the opportunity finally to put her ardency to use by helping him with his great work: "what she inwardly called her selfishness" (196). Given her view of her marriage as a "state of higher duties" (42) in which all obligations take precedence over her personal desires, she is bound to see any preoccupation with her own needs as selfish. Her honeymoon is a time of great pain and confusion for Dorothea, and she finds it hard to maintain her previous dedication to the high ends of life in the face of the daily struggle to under-

stand and cope with a husband who is not at all interested in her concerns. "And by a sad contradiction Dorothea's ideas and resolves seemed like melting ice floating in the warm flood of which they had been but another form. She was humiliated to find herself a mere victim of feeling, as if she could know nothing except through that medium: all her strength was scattered in fits of agitation. . . ." (195). This remark is very revealing, because it emphasizes the paradox that Dorothea, a woman of intense emotions, should distrust her feelings so. Here, her need for principle and knowledge, which she disassociates from passion, comes from the very intensity of her emotions, and is only at base another form of them. This may indeed be a paradox inherent in any ardent nature, and is worth further consideration in another essay.

The second quarrel between Dorothea and Casaubon, after they have returned to Lowick, is even more interesting. The occasion this time is the arrival of two letters from Will Ladislav, who had become friends with Dorothea in Rome, and in one of them requests permission to visit. Before she even reads the correspondence, Casaubon announces his intention of prohibiting his cousin from coming, and implies that Dorothea will be upset by this. "This gratuitous defense of himself against selfish complaint on her part" (275) when she has not even made any complaint, is too much for her to endure silently. Dorothea is so angry for several reasons, not all of which she admits to herself: she would like to see Will, regardless of whether she is really in love with him at this point; she would voluntarily hide her pain at not being allowed to do so to spare Casaubon grief; she thinks it unfair for him to restrict both herself and Will from a harmless mutual pleasure; and she is sensitive to the charge of selfishness. It is not so easy for her to conquer her anger this time, and she allows it to come through silently in the fierce energy she expends on copying a Latin text, even after expressing it vocally to her husband. However, she soon receives a powerful check to her indignation when Casaubon has an apparently agitation-induced fit of "bodily distress" (277), and Lydgate diagnoses heart trouble. Dorothea feels intense remorse and guilt, and becomes aware with depressing certainty that Casaubon, who never made progress with his book when he was healthy, will surely never finish it now that there is the additional obstacle of illness. Casaubon's attack is a turning-point in the marriage for her, for two reasons. It sets her on the road to that peculiar pity which she will come to

feel so thoroughly for him, which casts him as a small, weak creature requiring her protection. It also draws her ardent energy away from his work, since she is given a new task by Lydgate, that of guarding her husband's health.

The strife between Dorothea and Casaubon is paralleled with Lydgate and Rosamond, and there is even an incident where Lydgate is called upon to repress his anger and show compassion for Rosamond when her health is endangered, although she suffers no lasting ill-effects. Rosamond suffers a miscarriage after going horseback riding, and this disobedience is especially provoking for Lydgate, since she ignores both his authority as a husband and his judgment as a doctor, for the sake of riding in the company of his cousin Captain Lydgate, who, as the son of a baronet, is even more charming than the nephew of one. The question of authority in marriage is complex in *Middlemarch*, because of the desire to rule that Eliot attributes to an ardent nature. While Dorothea does not expect to be able to command her husband, since everything she has ever learned about marriage tells her that this is not proper or possible for a wife, she does expect to have some influence over him, assuming he will listen when her arguments are reasonable or her pleas for the sake of some good. She has "the ardent woman's need to rule beneficently by making the joy of another soul" (351). (She even says, in response to Will's remark that he will never do anything that he knows she disapproves of, "I shall have a little kingdom then, where I shall give laws" (357). Lydgate expects to have full authority over his wife, willing of course to follow her discretion in matters where she may know better than he, for example, flower-arranging or (more seriously) tact. But when it comes to asserting his will after he learns that "Rosamond's quiet, elusive obstinacy. . . would not allow any assertion of power to be final" (640), he cannot do it. The question at stake is whether they will stay in Middlemarch and ride out the town's disapproval of his involvement with Bulstrode and the death of Raffles, or leave. Rosamond has wanted to leave since marrying and move to a place that will give her more social cachet, like London. However, Lydgate feels that doing so would be cowardly, an acceptance of the shame that ignorant, gossiping neighbors want to put on him for all kinds of imaginary offenses that bear no resemblance to what actually occurred. But he agrees to leave, sacrificing his pride and, most damaging of all, the last remnants of his sense of independence, and

with it all the ardent energy upon which hinged his hopes of scientific discovery and a truly great medical career. He does this for Rosamond's sake, because he is painfully aware of how much her happiness depends, not on him, how he feels and what he accomplishes, as he wishes it did, but on the societal benefits she would receive from marriage to a prosperous, aristocratic doctor. This sacrifice is perhaps attributable not so much to his compassion for her in her suffering, but to the self-doubt as to his capacity for greatness, that arise from both his role in Raffles' death and his inability to assert himself with his own wife.

While Dorothea does not sacrifice anything as definite as professional ambition for Casaubon's sake, she is prepared to give up something just as vital to her: her personal freedom. Casaubon's illness is just the beginning of the final process of "more complete renunciation, transforming all hard conditions into duty" (196), culminating in her readiness to agree to the promise he wants from her to carry out his wishes after his death. During a conversation with Will following Casaubon's attack, she shows how her feelings toward her husband are changing. When Will disparages Casaubon's abilities, she is "not immediately indignant, as she had been on a like occasion in Rome . . . now when she looked steadily at her husband's failure, still more at his possible consciousness of failure, she seemed to be looking along the one track where duty became tenderness" (355). However, Will sees another side of Dorothea's growing compassion for her husband: he has "the unutterable contentment of perceiving—what Dorothea was hardly conscious of—that she was traveling into the remoteness of pure pity and loyalty towards her husband" (357). This remoteness seems to crystallize during a later incident, which occurs after Lydgate finally tells Casaubon himself that he suffers from "fatty degeneration of the heart" (412) and he is struck with the certainty that he will die, sooner rather than later, and will not be able to complete his life's work. Dorothea, realizing what has occurred, wishes to comfort him, but is completely and unceremoniously rebuffed. She is used to his coldness, but his complete lack of response—not even acknowledging her to tell her to leave him alone—triggers the most intense anger she has ever felt, and her sense of his injustice and self-absorption leaves no room for pity.

[S]he saw her own and her husband's solitude—how they walked apart so that she was

obliged to survey him. If he had drawn her towards him, she would never have surveyed him—never have said 'Is he worth living for?' but would have felt him simply a part of her own life. Now she said 'It is his fault, not mine'. . . pity was overthrown. . . . She was able enough to estimate him—she who waited on his glances with trembling and shut her best soul in prison. . . that she might be petty enough to please him. In such a crisis as this, some women begin to hate. (415)

However, Dorothea is not a woman to let her anger coalesce into lasting hatred. It is characteristic of her to want to confront her husband openly, although surprising in this scene, simply because she has learned to repress herself so well in dealing with him: "she believed now that she could not see him again without telling him the truth about her feeling. . . . He might wonder and be hurt at her message. It was good that he should wonder and be hurt." It is uncertain what Dorothea thinks will come of such confrontation, whether she imagines that informing Casaubon that he is selfish will somehow shock him out of being so, or establish that he has forfeited his authority over her, and that she will no longer obey him. Maybe she does not expect to have any influence on him, but simply must release her emotion, no matter how much pain that might cause him. However, she loses her chance when he sequesters himself in the library for the evening, and she has time to reflect on the grief that Lydgate's news must cause him. "The energy that would animate a crime is not more than is wanted to inspire a resolved submission when the noble habit of the soul reasserts itself. . . . It cost her a litany of pictured sorrows and of silent cries that she might be the mercy for those sorrows, but the resolved submission did come" (416). Pity, as for a weak or wounded being, has become her predominant feeling for her husband, and seems to leave her as separated from him as any hatred would have, while compassion such as Farebrother's both requires and leads to a sense of communion. Since Casaubon has shut Dorothea out, and her own nature recoils from hating him, such pity seems to be her only option.

Both Casaubon and Rosamond dislike being pitied, although Rosamond does not seem to mind having someone feel sympathy for her when she is distressed, especially when the sympathizer is a handsome man, or when such feeling assists her having her own way. However, the idea that anyone would pity her

instead of admiring her, perfection of womanhood that she is, offends her. But Casaubon has an intense hatred of all compassion because he sees any such feeling as criticism. Eliot explains his reaction to Dorothea's efforts to please him:

To his suspicious interpretation Dorothea's silence. . . was a suppressed rebellion; a remark from her which he had not in any way anticipated was an assertion of conscious superiority; her gentle answers had an irritating cautiousness in them; and when she acquiesced it was a self-approved effort of forbearance. (407)

While it is an effort for Dorothea to be so kind to him, what is beyond Casaubon's comprehension is that she is trying to make him happy, not coming up with excuses to gloat over her superior magnanimous soul. Again, Eliot claims that this trait of Casaubon's is but an excessive form of an ordinary human quality, pride: "Every proud mind knows something of this experience, and perhaps it is only to be overcome by a sense of fellowship deep enough to make all efforts at isolation seem mean and petty instead of exalting" (406). Lydgate also scorns the compassion of others, as is shown in his rejection of Mr. Farebrother's offer of help as he descends deeper and deeper into debt. However, he does not do so out of fear that Farebrother will think less of him for needing aid, but because he is used to thinking of himself as Farebrother's benefactor because of his role in obtaining the living at Lowick for the clergyman, and he is reluctant to reverse this relationship. He is also aware that since Farebrother is not a wealthy man, he cannot provide any financial assistance, which is what he feels he really requires, only spiritual assistance, and, at this point, Lydgate is still determined to bear his problems alone. Even Dorothea is "habitually controlled by pride on her own account" (189) and is not easily induced to describe her distress to others.

In *Middlemarch*, the exaltation of the self through isolation leads to a conception of the self that is indeed exalted, but only within the narrow confines of an individual perception, and which cannot survive "under the varying experiments of time" (vii). Casaubon is pitiable because, although he exalts himself in an attempt to be great and accomplish great things, he is doomed to failure, because the very act of exaltation destroys his ability to care about anything

outside of himself. Eliot says of him:

It is an uneasy lot at best. . . to be present at this great spectacle of life and never to be liberated from a small, hungry, shivering self—never to be fully possessed by the glory we behold, never to have our consciousness rapturously transformed into the vividness of a thought, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action, but always to be scholarly and uninspired, ambitious and timid, scrupulous and dim-sighted. (274)

Rosamond, for all her inflexibility, does not escape with her egoism intact: she has "her dream-world in which she had been easily confident of herself and critical of others" irreparably damaged. She continues to act as though she still lived inside it, because she lacks the understanding, energy and courage to change. However, she manages what Casaubon never could, to accept Dorothea's compassion gratefully, without resentment or fear. She always thinks well of Dorothea, despite the fact that Lydgate often compares her unfavorably to Mrs. Ladislaw, an offense that Rosamond would not have borne without resentment before.

It is difficult to compare the fates of Dorothea and Lydgate, because Casaubon dies before she can give him her promise to let the rest of her life be determined by his wishes posthumously. And it is certainly a narrow escape. But Lydgate never seems to advance beyond the stage where he sees himself as superior to the people he must show compassion towards—whether his patients or his wife—and the consideration that this is so because of lack of opportunity does not change the fact. The last words we hear from him in the Finale are bitter and show that his relationship with Rosamond has not changed over the years: he calls his wife his basil plant, because "basil was a plant which had flourished wonderfully on a murdered man's brains" (808). Bitterness is often accompanied by a feeling of inherent superiority, although with the recognition that such superiority has been put to no good use, usually through the fault of someone else. But Dorothea, like Farebrother, comes to see that she is not better than the people for whom she feels compassion are. Her ardent nature, her desire for knowledge and noble deeds, does not exempt her from the frailties and accidents that befall all human beings, and it sometimes even makes it more difficult for her to cope with them. However, Dorothea has gained two important insights, from the mistakes she

makes in her marriage and from her later experience with Will and Rosamond. One is to trust that her own emotions and past experiences are sufficient to guide her actions towards the good in her very non-epic life, and the other is to focus her compassionate impulses. During her honeymoon, Dorothea tells Will that "It spoils my enjoyment of anything when I am made to think that most people are shut out from it" (216), and Will calls this a "fanaticism of sympathy". Eliot would seem to agree:

If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well-wadded with stupidity. (191)

In *Middlemarch*, there is no concrete answer to the question of how to properly balance compassion and selfishness in one's life. Indeed, it is Eliot's contention that this is an issue that cannot be resolved by a book or a body of knowledge, and all individuals must sort it out as best they can, given their own natures and the peculiar circumstances of their lives. This is not to say, however, that a book cannot be of some help, by examining dilemmas and offering insights into the subject. This is the case with Dorothea and her struggle to do good: the realizations that she comes to are valid for the majority of non-ardent people as well, and can be of use for those people, like Farebrother, who, while they may not want to change the world, do want to do some good in it. ♦

## AIRBORNE Alicia Potee, A02

like a keychain decades old,  
last year somersaults  
amid change  
in my pocket—

outdated, collecting dust.

they say time works  
in circles,  
and I'm trying  
to agree.

but still,  
there lies a single  
dead second,  
when chariots turn to rust,  
when the carousel loses  
momentum,

when the very last nickel is spent.

the revolution stops  
(an empty alarm)

flat broke, as if on cue.

hanging  
stillborn  
in soundlessness,

these hollow horses  
propel me

past a string  
of pitch-dark  
midnights,

(in pieces)  
like a loveletter

or a twenty-ton sledgehammer

crashing  
through bone  
thin air

## Gone West

Eva T. H. Brann, Tutor

In 1995 I wrote about the Western *High Noon* in these pages, roused thereto partly by the incredulity of people who can't believe in Westerns as a creditable genre, partly by the good ideas I got from undergraduate and alumni seminars, but above all by my own affection for that movie and for some others close to it in time. The fact is—or so it seems to me—that what I think of as classical Westerns are very finely and thoughtfully made, as are their literary counterparts, and together they make an admirable and lovable and thought-provoking genre. But though I'm probably preaching partly to the choir and partly to the unconvertible, I've got something more to say.

One thing I like about these Western movies is that they constitute about as American a genre as you can find. As such it both redeems and complements the gangster movie, its all-American counterpart, which has a sort of depraved purity all of its own. As Robert Warshow says in the article we read together in one seminar, "The Movie Chronicle: The Westerner" (1954, in *The Immediate Experience*, Atheneum, New York 1979), both genres are melancholic, even tragic. But the Westerner's tragedy is that he is a man of virtue who is called on to exercise the craft of killing, while the doom of the perfectly corrupt gangster is "the outrageous presumption of his demands."

Another appealing feature is that Western prose and Western scripts are so simply and straightforwardly written and so pungently flavored with Western idiom. And they are well researched in what the German call "realia"—detail, say, about techniques of horse-breaking or the supplies found in chuck wagons; a reader who takes pleasure in the paraphernalia of various lives can trust classical Western movie-makers and writers for the facts. The reason is that they think of themselves not only as yarn-tellers but as affectionate chroniclers and accepting memorialists—you might say, anti-revisionist historians—of a bygone era and a geographically remote place. It is a cherished fact to me that *Shane*, a book I have grown to love over five readings, was written by Jack Schaefer in Norfolk, Virginia, when he had never been west of Toledo. To

be sure, he, like other writers of the West, eventually drifted toward the land of his imagination and settled in Santa Fe (where one of our tutors, Tom Harris, sold him his own house).

Yet a third factor that draws me is the temporal backdrop of those movies and books that touch me especially. They were made or written during or shortly after the Second World War—my war, the war of my particular childhood—and that fact has subtly seeped into them. Of course the war that dominates them from within is the Civil War—our war, the war of our common imagination—largely because the Western hero is so often a defeated and displaced Confederate officer who bears a melancholy burden of loss from way back.

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For all these and more reasons I proposed to the alumni in charge that we should devote a week of their 1996 summer program to watching, reading, and discussing Westerns. I got some grave looks—Plato or Jane Austen were evidently felt to be more in character. But we did it, and it was delightful and illuminating. I was joined in leading the seminars by a colleague from Santa Fe, Mr. Krishnan Venkatesh, and by an Annapolis alumnus, Jim Sorrentino, both more knowledgeable aficionados than myself. Mr. Venkatesh added *Unforgiven* (1992, director and lead Clint Eastwood) to my choices, to good effect as I will tell.

I chose a list of three, all made within five years just after the Second World War.

*Red River*, 1948; director Howard Hawks; John Wayne, Montgomery Clift; dramatic date, 1850-65.

*High Noon*, 1952; director Fred Zimmerman; Gary Cooper, Grace Kelly; dramatic date, late in the century (a tattered poster on the sheriff's wall says: "War declared," perhaps an old Civil War memento or possibly a proclamation of the Spanish American War).

*Shane*, 1953; director George Stevens; Alan Ladd, Jean Arthur, Brandon de Wilde; dramatic date, 1889.

The truth is that I haven't watched much of

the later work in this huge and irrepressible genre, neither the TV series that damped movie production for a while in the fifties, nor the spaghetti Westerns produced later in Italy. For a while everyone I ran into told me of a different best Western ever, and I realized how little I had seen. But even I knew that there were other candidates galore even just for this time frame, especially *The Gunfighter* (1950) as well as *Rio Bravo* (1959), made by Howard Hawks as a tough response to some supposedly discernible whiny liberalism in *High Noon*—search me.

One bonus of this project was that in the weeks before I met the alumni I got to do as a smug duty what I otherwise do as a guilty pleasure. In fact our president, Chris Nelson, had me over more than once to watch selections from his large Western video library. It turns out that there is so much to see and think about in these movies—little but telling things—that watching in couch potato passivity is out of the question; on yet one more viewing of *High Noon*, I saw and had pointed out to me a lot I missed in the earlier *Energeia* article. For example, at his marriage his bride says the conventional "I do," but Marshal Will Kane, who is governed by a Kantian sense of duty, says "I will." By a Kantian sense of duty I mean one in which the rational will asserts itself over mere wishes; in the ballad of the movie, "Do not forsake me, oh my darling," which expresses Will's heart, the need to kill the outlaw Frank Miller who has come to avenge himself on Will is immediately related to his desire for a peaceful future with his young wife, but in his thinking as just-resigned marshal he does his death-courting duty.

*Red River*, too, is full of nice observables: As Caesar once crossed the Rubicon, the "Ruddy River" that is the boundary between Gaul and Italy, to win a political empire, so the movie begins with Tom Dunston crossing the Red River into Texas with three cows to build a cattle empire. And it ends with an addition to the Dunston brand, D≈ signifying Dunston and the Red River's curving banks. Tom adds M (D≈M) for Mat Garth, his son in spirit, neatly signifying both the northerly recrossing of the river, now with a herd of nine thousand head, and the adoption of Garth as a Dunston. And so on, detail by detail.

But there are of course also larger elements worth attending to. Movies, being cooperative and commercial enterprises, are particularly apt to reflect, whether purposefully or accidentally, current society (by which phrase I here mean such opinions and per-

spectives as people have in large part because others have them). Warshow points out, however, that the classic Western hero is concerned with timeless personal questions of individual honor, not with solving social problems. Nonetheless, both *Red River* and *High Noon* do bear intimations of the time. *Red River*, which is a fiction about the historical opening of the Chisholm Trail, over which huge cattle drives from Texas to the new railroad at Abeline, Kansas, could be accomplished, is brim full of the boundless energy and human naiveté of postwar America, the maturing effects of war on young veterans, and an aversion to tyranny. Thus the chorus for this drama, Groot the Cook (Walter Brennan), keeps a journal in which we glimpse the word "tyrant" used of an increasingly hard-driving Dunston.

Again, in the later *High Noon* some of the social cowardice of the McCarthy era comes out; I've been told that the director meant the town's name, Hadleyville, to call Hollywood to mind and to decry the incipient unheroic conformism of the fifties.

But allusions to current society are only faint whiffs in these two high classical Westerns. In *Shane* and *Unforgiven*, on the other hand, the times are powerfully at work. *Unforgiven*, whose great reviews may actually be taken to prove my point, is a thoroughly postmodern creation and plays to postmodern sensibilities: a slasher movie gussied up with bottomless moral ambiguity. It is filmed alternately with very beautiful long shots and very ugly tight shots. My sense of the close-up ugliness, particularly of faces, was confirmed by our alumnus Tom Stern (SF69), who was in charge of the lighting of the set. (I wish there was a gore tax—so many hundreds of thousands of dollars paid by the industry for every bottle of ketchup, or whatever, expended.)

The movie appears to be built on a systematic subversion of classical Western conventions. People—to begin with, a woman—are slashed about the face, kicked and beaten when they are down, shot in cold blood by the "hero"; women are terrorized and manhandled, while the whores put out a contract on their attacker. Real Westerners are photographed mostly at a decent middle distance; the heroes wait for the other man to draw first and only then drill him with a neat bloodless hole; they help opponents up after a fair pugilistic ballet, keep their hands off the women, who, especially if experienced, have hearts of gold and low expectations; and above all, though the naive old Western contained plenty of the melancholy of sad

choices, it never ended in such bleak irresolution as does *Unforgiven*: The hired assassin simply picks up and leaves, as is emphasized in the end credits when his figure appears at the upper right at his wife's grave and is quite suddenly simply gone from the screen. These latter-day revisionist Westerns have pretensions to realism, but you don't get real by just inverting the given myths; you get ugly. The new terror is no realer than the old types. But ugly as *Unforgiven* is, it gives a brilliant lesson in the postmodern perversion of a classic genre.

The movie *Shane*, too, bears the marks of its contemporary society, albeit seen through the happy haze of the fifties. To observe how the intrusion of social life modifies the pure Western genre, one need only compare the novel *Shane* with the movie script. Schaefer's sharply-honed mythical poignancy is everywhere muffled in the movie to achieve a comfortable romantic family tale: "Beautiful Dreamer" is the theme song. In seminar and in dinner conversations we collected a score of evidently deliberate changes—transfers of speeches, transposals of events, and the like—all to the same effect. Let me mention just a few of the most telling ones. The first set of these has to do with exploiting the nature of the moving medium to achieve certain effects, the others seem less determined by the contingencies of movie-making than by a systematic desire to tone things down.

First, then, is the fact that in the book the story is told retrospectively by the adult Bob, Joe and Marian Starrett's son. The boy Bob is somewhat older than the renamed Joey of the movie. Both facts, the new age and the new name, serve to make the boy, movingly played by de Wilder (who sadly died young), more his parents' son—in the book there is a tension as Bob's love is fixed on the stranger. But the main defusing comes from the fact that all four, the elder Starretts, Joey, and Shane, are seen by the camera in one and the same visual plane externally and panoramically—just as it periodically pans the Tetons that form the spectacular backdrop to the farm and the town only in the movie—while in the novel, *Shane*, seen through the boy's eyes, looms larger and darker as an inner vision and no gratuitously glorious scenery intrudes its spectacle.

In a famous early essay on the nature of the cinema (a word that is, I can't help noting, just Greek for movie) the art historian Erwin Panofsky observes that the moving medium not only temporalizes space—meaning that it moves through space in time, but also spatializes time—meaning that in moving pictures the

intense psychic internalities need to be spread out to view in external action. And that is exactly what the movie does to the novel, in numerous other instances besides the shifting of the narrative source: For example, whereas in the book, Shane, wanting to keep Starrett out of the final gunfight, deftly lays him out cold with a sideswipe of his pistol butt, in the movie there is a prolonged and nearly equal tussle. Joey is here as elsewhere seen watching with a boy's absorption, but the concentrated worship that young Bob bestows on the man of myth is damped as the watcher is watched.

Classical Westerns are in black and white and so, one might say, is the novel. Some members of the seminar argued that color is the medium of fantasy, and that may well be, but so much the more does it seem to me that black and white is the medium of the mythical imagination. *Shane* is a good instance. Schaefer's Shane is, except for his final departure, always seen from the front, and Bob notices that he takes care, like a hunted and haunted man, always to sit with his back to a wall; there is something at once candid and shadowy about him. When Bob first sees him riding into their valley he appears dressed in dark clothes that have a kind of formidable elegance—and he is, strangely, gunless. Alan Ladd, a soft-faced golden boy, is first tracked by the camera from behind, riding out of the mountains wearing a beige buckskin shirt and his gunbelt—a considerably less ominous figure, who continues to move through the movie with uninhibited grace. The color makes for a prettier but less poignant scene.

The relation of Stevens' Shane to the Starretts is considerably toned down from the tensions Schaefer's Shane brings with him. It is accomplished in dozens of little modifications. A Fourth of July festivity is introduced into the movie—the social dimension—at which Shane dances with Marian in candidly innocent elegance, Joe watching with pleasure. Joe and Shane fight side by side—in companionable equality—when Shane is reluctantly forced into a fistfight in the saloon; in the book Shane fights alone. The wonderful stump scene in which Shane, in gratitude for trust shown by Starrett, attacks with an axe a huge stump, a symbol of nature's recalcitrance to land-clearing, is fraught with danger in the book. One at a time both Joe and Shane get under the stump, each putting his life in the other's hands, and when Marian gets so intensely involved that she burns her apple pie, Shane recognizes the equivalence of rebaking the pie and battling to conquer offending nature: "That's the

best bit of stump I ever tasted." In the movie the stump scene comes right away and is merely a friendly axe-flailing match. Altogether, Jean Arthur's Marian is more sappily feminine than Schaefer's, and more coyly romantic about Shane. In the novel it's Joe Starrett who warns Bob not to become too attached to Shane because one day he'll drift away, and Marian who spiritedly refuses to leave the farm once Shane is gone; in the movie it's the other way around.

The relation to the cattle baron who is trying to drive out the farmers—"nesters" as they were derogatively called—is also softened. Fletcher in the book is mostly absent and acts through agents. Renamed Ryker in the movie, he appears in person to give a long, rather persuasive speech about the rights of the cattlemen who were there first and about the necessity of maintaining the open range. As it happens, Schaefer was deeply sympathetic to the cattle and cowboy world and wrote movingly of its passing in his long novel *Monte Walsh*. But the book *Shane*, although set in 1889 when the rising homesteaders were fully embattled with the waning cattlemen, eschews the social problem, or rather turns it into a moral standoff between bad henchmen and frightened farmers.

Jack Palance as Stark Wilson makes a marvelously cold and conscienceless hired gun, but the movie, by making Shane bright and Wilson dark, loses the finely detailed antithetical brotherhood of Shane the gunfighter and Wilson the gunman. Shane, who had hoped to put his gun away altogether, thinks one gun is all a good man needs, Wilson packs two; Shane goes by a mysterious single name, Wilson boasts a scary given name; Shane is distinguished in his dress, Wilson is a dude; Shane inspires awe, Wilson spreads terror; and, finally, Wilson is fast on the draw but Shane is faster.

The movie *Shane* is thus a soft, though lovable, fantasy, while the novel is a classical Western. So perhaps the time has come to say what I mean by "classical."

Winckelmann (1717-1768), the first historian of Greek art, gave a famous characterization of antique classicism: "Noble simplicity, silent grandeur"—"simplicity" in the sense of naïveté, "silent" in the sense of quietly reserved. Speaking more generally, one might say that works in the classical mode are never *sui generis*, one of a kind, by the deliberate creative intent of the maker. What is classical is not only classy individually but belongs to a class, a genre, and tries for the perfection of its type, for the consummate realization of its codes and conventions in a particular individual, be it

god or hero, horse or weapon, on Olympus or in the American West.

Let me mention here that in our 1996 field trip to Western movie locations near Santa Fe, the genre character of the Western was reinforced—if it needed reinforcement—by the fact that these magical movie ghost towns are resurrected over and over for new productions with small changes, a paint job, a new sign. Tomes could be (and probably have been) written about the utilitarian unreality of these charming wooden sets, with their realistic rendition of the peculiarly American propensity for homespun reminiscences of classicism.

It is not so absurd to look for this classicism in the Western, whether in novels like *Shane* and *Monte Walsh* or in movies like *Red River* and *High Noon*. These works certainly have moral simplicity as opposed, say, to the raucously realized sophistication of *Unforgiven*. The heroes try for nobility within their human type and the movie-maker does not revel in saleable bloody-minded baseness. If the hero fails he fails grandly, playing out the Western counterpart of the Greek tragic flaw: He is in an unresolvable moral dilemma where human viability demands one thing, such as running away or shooting first, and his unambivalent code of honor another, such as putting himself in harm's way and waiting out the villain's first draw.

But simple isn't stupid. The classical Westerner is mentally acute and observant, a characteristic the directors honor by the intelligent detailing of his world. In particular, the Westerner, be he cowboy or lawman, is supremely competent—just the myth-making best: the best horse-breaker, the best rider on the trail, the most self-sufficient loner, the best leader of a posse, the best eradicator of varmints and badmen. His closest classical counterpart is Heracles who won his place in myth by a special competence for the work to be done: ridding the world of monsters, animal and human.

To my mind, a central feature of the ideal Westerner is a sort of speaking laconicism. These heroes are not so much taciturn as quiet, silent from reserve, self-sufficiency, and bashfulness before their own excellence. They are, to be sure, also finely expressive, but more in body-language and action than in words (and this is why the Western type is made to be depicted in moving pictures). Their words are few and at crucial moments insufficient—that is a part of their pathos.

Thus in *Red River* it is Groot the comic chorus who is loquacious. Tom and Mat never say quite enough to each other. Thus in *High Noon* Will cannot

explain his unbending resolution. He can articulate one part of it, what Kant would call the maxim of his action, the rule determined in accordance with experience and foresight; he briefly indicates thoughts along these lines: "This is not a private feud for me to fight out on the open plains; the town must be the place where the destroyers of civil life must themselves be destroyed; even if the judge has decamped, taking with him the American flag, we must prevent the community from returning to the state of nature." But he can't express that other element of duty that has to do with what Kant calls the practical reason, a person's capacity for willing freely in accordance with his self-conception. Will is too reserved to speak readily of his innermost self in its integrity. That is why Will's moral inarticulateness is winning to the heart rather than irritating to the mind.

I cannot keep from pointing out a fact germane to this college. We live by Socrates' continual injunction to his partners in conversation: "Try to tell me . . ." Perhaps in this lies the crux of the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy: Heroes of poetry are often nobly silent; participants in philosophy *try* to tell—it's a different sort of nobility.

Shane too is silent. Not only are his communications, both in book and movie, mostly gestural, but, although his rare speech is elegant, discerning, and courtly, there is a great silence about him, about him and his past. Little is revealed of his origins except that he is, as are so many Westerners, from the South, from Tennessee. But his coming is mysterious:

He was the man who rode into our little valley out of the great glowing West and when his work was done rode back whence he had come and he was Shane.

Recall that "going West" is an idiom for dying, and indeed Shane goes off into oblivion—and for Bob into myth.

The cause of his great silence is, the book reveals (and the movie obscures), not so much that he has killed and is hunted but that he knows something unspeakable about himself: He is a man of virtue who truly lights up only in violence; violence is his fate, his dark forbidden glory and trouble. Jim Sorrentino pointed out that his name differs from "shame" only in a stroke. His teaching to young Bob, that a gun is only a tool, as good as the man who uses it, has the pathos of a self-exonerating half-truth. A man has to

be preeminently good to turn a gun into a tool for living; he needs the most finely-honed reflexes, the speediest judgment, and the most steadfast virtue. And even then, it's a mighty strange tool.

Shane and Kane then share the laconic nobility of the classical Westerner, and yet the genre permits them to be deeply different. Will, the quondam marshal and shopkeeper-to-be, acts from the disillusioned but unbudgeable will to do his duty as he construes it; Shane, the solitary gunfighter temporarily turned farmer's hired hand and friend, acts out of his nature because "he is Shane"—a phrase several times repeated in the novel. Their modes of action are to each other as willed character is to fated being.

So finally Shane has the greater pathos and the more mythical status. (*High Noon* is often referred to as the first psychological Western, and though this seems to me a misnomer—"characteriological" would be more apt—the description does intimate a slight decline from classical purity; this was, I suppose, the motive for Hawk's remake of the Cooper character in *Rio Bravo*.) Shane is a savior who takes on the burden of evil for his adopted family. When he has gone, he is said still to be "all around us and in us," and perhaps not subject to ordinary mortality. Schaefer took account of this aspect of his hero by writing in a letter (April 18, 1975) that his Shane does in fact qualify as a savior, but not as a Christian one; he is more universal, "more an alpha primate male fulfilling his genetically ingrained obligation to his kind" (*Shane: The Critical Edition*, edited by James C. Work, 1984, p. 352). Well, I don't know about alpha primates and genetic obligations, but the drift is that Shane acts from his very being, a mythical being.

A myth is, as Giambattista Vico put it in a deep paradox, a "particular universal." Therefore myths are the natural material for any classical mode, for, as I ventured to say above, the classical seems to be the intersection of the uniquely best with the perfectly generic. That, incidentally, also seems to be the reason why classical works always arise within a genre, that is, within the collection of respectable attempts to realize the givens that frame the path to this particular sort of perfection. And the Western is the genre of genres.

I must say that to me America seems lucky to have a genre that has such myths and such classical moments. And yet there is no getting around the fact that the West is gone, a fact that gives current non-revisionist Westerns an elegiac tinge. The highly spe-

cialized competencies and peculiar virtues of the Westerner seem to be well past their date of expiration; even the lanky Anglo-Saxon rawhide types in which they were embodied are rarities nowadays. So we might ask: Why open oneself to such myths?

For several reasons. One is that the passing of a pattern of virtue is not so set a thing. The world at large may find the Western virtues outdated because the callings to which they pertained have lapsed—cowboy, homesteader, gunfighter, marshal. But the world is wrong, I think. Self-reliance and self-sufficiency, a lonely sense of duty, laconic competence, courtesy to the opposite sex, slow-forged human bonds, deep-seated love of a landscape and its figures, are ever-resurrectable virtues. It is just when they seem to have lost their place in the world in general that particular people will go looking to remake a place for them. Then, as the cause for being receptive to these local fictions will be a moral longing, so the effect might be to give it some definition.

But above all, it seems to me imaginatively sound that we should stay in touch with our past via myths. Now novels and movies, being entertainments enjoyed in receptive leisure and re-read or reviewed at pleasure, are pretty nearly the best we moderns can do by way of participating in the reenactment of myth. One might, to be sure, argue that figures like Dunston, Garth, and Kane are more composite idealizations than mythical beings because they represent the once-in-a-while, scattered excellences and flaws of the factual type compacted into one larger-than-life character. But Shane surely has this additional mark of a *bona fide* myth:

Although when pressed for a model, Schaefer said that it was his father, the Shane we know comes, a being at once uniquely himself and the perfection of his type, from a region beyond, from "the heart of the great glowing West." And when his work is accomplished, that is where he goes. ♦

ode to my mug  
Eve Gibson, A99

ode to my mug unexpected  
birthday present  
peace offering  
natural  
handmade  
massaged clay  
scored and slipped  
arched love  
blue beautiful  
unexpected mug.  
i love the way you feel  
in my large  
hands the  
way you feel  
on my lower lip.

mug of love  
better than a hug  
useful, practical,  
no one knows how much  
the mug is private love  
not public like embrace or kiss  
when i hold my mug  
i am holding my  
unexpected token of love.

LISTENING FOR PLANETS  
Alicia Potee, A02

suspended in an echo, spotlights fall  
on Saturn: how you straighten stockings with

a beat like blues (piano-banging teeth,  
like keys beneath trance-stricken fingers), all

your jazz-joints splitting plaster, cracking walls  
like paper pulse—sheet music to your breath.

Still rhythmless, i sway to match the wreath  
of resin you call skin, it's soundless... dull.

i'm hearing you (a woman moving-slick,  
just barely frictionless), and in this pit

of indigo, i sense my hips can hear  
you too. they dream of turning thin blood  
thick,

snapping elastic veins with one curved hit—  
that cosmic chord, still ringing in my ears.

## THREE HUSBANDS

Alicia Potee, A02

## I. the fighter

he was a high school  
 football star  
 with a taste for red meat,  
 curvy brunettes,  
 cocktail waitresses—  
 had a right hook  
 with the sting  
 of an ex-con.  
 he once drew back  
 his throwing arm  
 to the catcalls of three  
 grown men,  
 bloodied them all  
 in a single swing  
 before treating himself  
 to a beer.  
 for him,  
 one touchdown  
 was never enough.  
 the thrill was in  
 the tackle.

## II. the lover

a lady's man  
 since the day of his birth,  
 he kept a collection  
 of lipstick-stained napkins  
 with names,  
 scribbled pink,  
 like Cherry  
 or Vida.  
 he could charm  
 a snake  
 with his smile.  
 sobering up in '82,  
 forehead against  
 a deadbolted door,  
 near dawn at 4 a.m.,  
 he begged  
 for a three egg omelet,  
 or one last chance  
 to kiss his kids  
 before the money  
 ran out.

## III. the doubting saint

after ten years,  
 the birth of a child  
 who claimed  
 his buried father's eyes,  
 the death of a mother  
 who named him  
 from the Bible,  
 one out of practice  
 East Baltimore Catholic  
 still kneels  
 beside her holy wounds,  
 reciting a prayer  
 to one day know  
 the fable of  
 her secrets:  
*blessed are they*  
*who have not seen*  
*yet still believe*  
*amen.*

## (untitled)

Eve Gibson, A99

mood music move me  
 from these orange moon  
 table tops  
 and circular decals  
 I hurl you into orbit.

Spin Sex Wax,  
 Starbucks, and Sea World  
 Bumper sticker.

Away with you  
 regular, concentric, colored,  
 informational blurbs

on circular blobs.  
 I exile you from the  
 orbits about my head.  
 I'll throw you up in the air  
 like a fist full of coins  
 and drop you on the ground.

I'll play jacks with you  
 And when I think I have lost you  
 I'll step on your sticky side and  
 march you face down  
 into the ground.