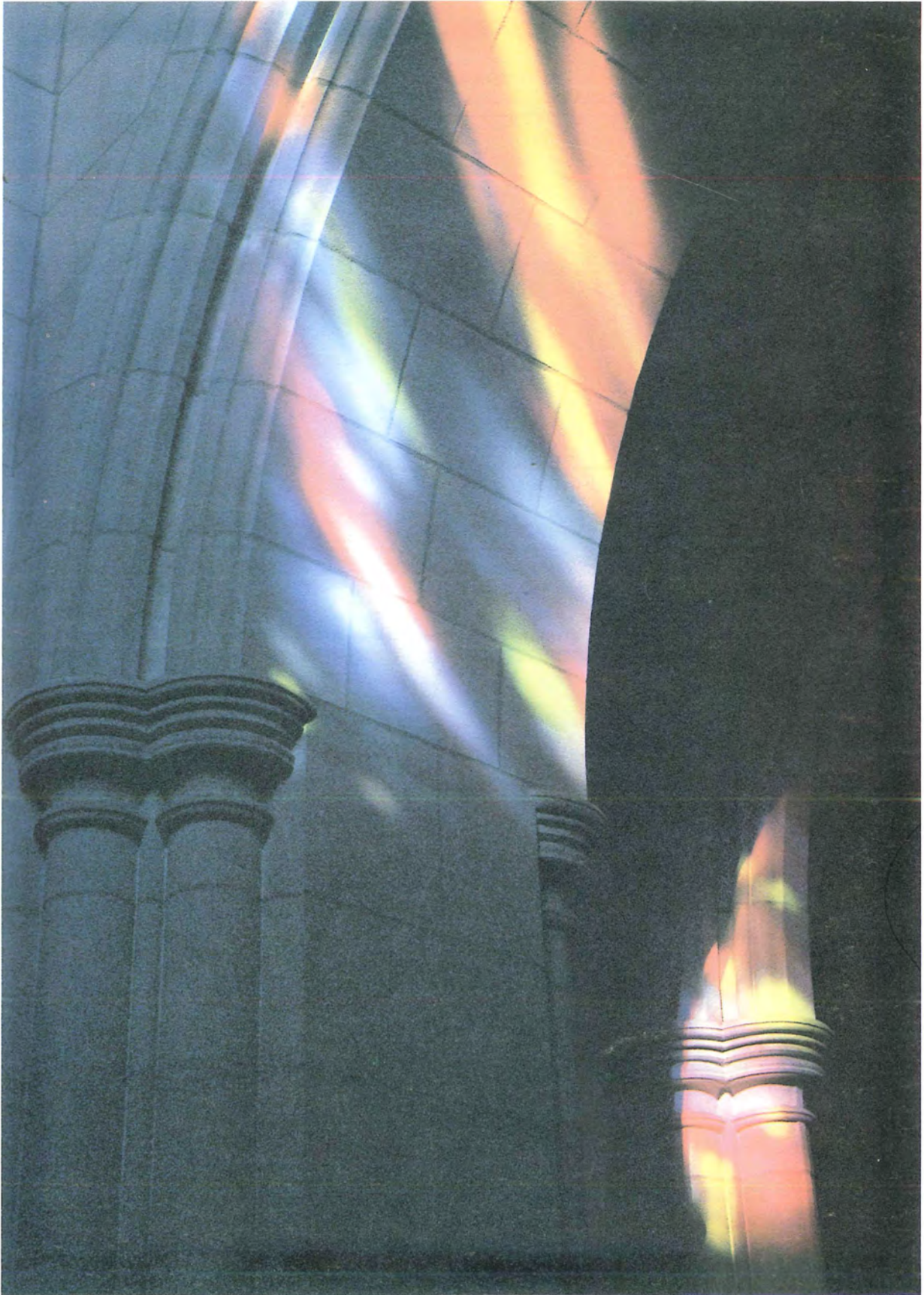


ENERGIA



ENERGEIA: The activity in which anything is fully itself.

η . . . νου ενεργεια ζωη . . . (Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 1072b)

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Front: Craig Sirkin
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Pastoral

Judy Seeger

Domingo Herrero was 80 years old, twice my age, when I met him in northern Spain in February 1985. He was a retired shepherd. I had left my husband to care for our two daughters and had come to Spain on a post-doctoral grant to collect oral traditional ballads. Although a less likely pair could scarcely have been imagined, Domingo and I later agreed that we both knew the day we met that we were going to get along just fine. The miracle was that we had met at all.

I recall our first encounter very clearly. That morning when I opened the shutters of my hotel room in the small town of Almanza brilliant sunlight greeted me for the first time since my arrival in the province of León. Colleagues in Madrid had suggested I search for traditional ballads in Almanza, but now, an endless week after I had arrived, my world seemed to have shrunk to that tiny, sparsely-furnished room. Chill, relentless, late winter rain had been falling since the first day. From my window I could see huddled shapes across the rain-slick highway, shepherds in dark slickers, keeping lonely company with their grazing sheep. I would turn from the window, turn on the light, and climb into bed with a Spanish novel. Knowing I would never find oral traditional ballads in a hotel, I forced myself to go out once a day, to knock on doors, to hear that the old times were gone. Then, having done what I regarded as my duty, I would retreat to my room. Not many people seemed to live in Almanza, and of those who did, few opened their doors to me. Why should they? What was I to them except an importunate stranger?

With little else to guide me, I had begun seeking auguries in the weather, in faces, in the intricate linkage of words. It was by feeling my way along what I envisioned as a tenuous chain of signs that I had reached Almanza. But the burnished afternoon that had welcomed me there had proven false. I knew I would have to move on, and at last, that sunny Saturday morning, I had another lead. The local priest had assured me that he knew of no one in his depopulated parishes who could help me find what I was seeking. But if I went north into the mountains, he suggested, to a town called Prioro, I might find someone. The people of the mountains were said to be more open than those of the plains, and to retain traditions longer. The priest in Prioro, he added, was a young man interested in old ways. He might be able to assist me. Here was another link for my fragile chain. So I put my tape recorder into the trunk of the small white car I had rented in Madrid and turned toward the glittering snowy peaks I could see for only the second time since my arrival.

The crystalline sunshine faded as I entered the valley of the Cea River. The moist earth seemed to breathe, its misty exhalations rising from the river first in wisps then in billows,

brimming over the banks of the road. Through gaps in the swirling white curtains I could see leafless poplars reaching for the sky, yellow fields, and, on the hillsides, oaks whose dry brown leaves clung thickly to their branches. As I drove, the valley narrowed. I passed towns that looked nearly deserted. Smoke rising from chimneys denounced occupants in a few whitewashed stone houses. Tightly closed shutters sealed the windows of most. Some, long since abandoned when their dwellers had died or moved to the cities to seek work, had tumbled into heaps of brownish stones. The mountains loomed rockier and steeper. I began to wonder if the priest had directed me to the end of the world.

Then, after winding my way between nearly vertical green rock walls crowding so close that they hardly left room for both the river and the road, I suddenly was no longer in the narrow valley. It seemed to have widened into a bowl, though I had no more than an impression of light and openness, for the fog was so thick I could barely see the roadway. One of the small black-lettered signs that announce every Spanish town informed me, as I inched past it, that I had arrived in Prioro. Narrow muddy roads departed the highway on both sides, but I was afraid to follow them. They looked better suited to the cow-drawn carts so common in the region than to cars. As the highway climbed out of the valley, I saw on my right, half hidden in a cloud of mist, the bell tower of a stone church. I pulled into the square in front of the church, stopped, and pondered what to do next. The church doors were tightly closed. There was no one in sight. I left the car, sought out someone to ask directions, and was directed to the only inn in town — it looked like nothing more than an unusually large house — where I was told the priest, Don Francisco, was a boarder.

“No, no,” Don Francisco protested when I tried to show him the documents I had brought from the granting agency in Madrid, official indication that I was who I said I was. “That’s all right. It’s not necessary. Listen, I can’t do anything for you myself. I have four parishes and I just don’t have time. But if you would like to come with me I will take you to someone who can help you.” He inserted his slippered feet into a pair of the three-pronged wooden shoes I had seen people wearing in the fields surrounding Almanza. The shoes were not worn near the capital of the province where he had been born, Don Francisco explained, but he had learned to appreciate them in the muddy roads of Prioro. Worn outdoors over felt slippers, they kept one’s feet warm and dry, and, left at the door, they kept the mud outside where it belonged. Later, I, too, would learn to walk in that clumsy-looking but eminently sensible footwear. That day, though, tiptoeing into Prioro in my leather

city boots, I hugged the flaking walls of old houses and tried to keep pace with Don Francisco, who strode with a speed and grace I would not have believed possible down the rutted and hoof-marked middle of the muddy street.

Twisting and turning, following the narrow street and narrower alleys, cutting between houses attached to their stone barns, scattering hens and roosters, shooing curious goats and suspicious dogs, we made our tortuous way down the steep western side of the hill the church surveyed. In traveling I had cultivated the custom of looking closely at new surroundings so as not to get hopelessly lost. Yet I knew I never could have found my way into the town of Prioro without a guide, and I was not looking forward to having to retrace my steps alone.

"I'm taking you to the house of the oldest woman born in Prioro," Don Francisco explained over his shoulder. "She's 93 years old, and she's blind, but she remembers a lot about life as it used to be here. She and her husband don't keep animals anymore, so they aren't busy with chores. They'll be able to help you find what you're looking for." He veered off the street into a muddy yard whose narrow boundaries were defined in the back and on the left by a stone wall and on our right by a small house which looked even older than those we had passed on our way. A few bedraggled flowers grew in a tiny flower bed beneath a blue-framed window, imprisoned behind a wire mesh fence whose purpose, I later learned, was to preserve the plants from the depredations of passing chickens, goats, and sheep. Across the yard from the house, beside another small fenced garden, stood a tile-roofed shelter which protected a stack of firewood and an aged two-wheeled cart from the worst of the elements.

Leaving his wooden shoes on the flagstone at the entrance, the priest pushed open the weathered wooden door of the house and entered the dark hallway calling, "Aunt Sabina! Aunt Sabina! Where are you?" He turned to me: "You may come in. She's a little deaf, but I'm sure she's here. She almost never goes out, not even to mass anymore, and she hasn't been well recently." There was a wide wooden staircase at the end of the hall, and an entryway on the left into a narrower and darker hallway. Don Francisco without hesitating turned right, put his shoulder to a light blue door, and led me into the room called the kitchen, which, in the old dwellings of northern León, serves as living room and dining room as well.

Uncomfortably aware of my muddy boots on the worn wooden floor, I saw to our left a closed door and an aged light blue breakfront which held plates and cups. Straight ahead under a window looking onto the street was a small sink with a single dripping faucet. The hearth, to the right of the sink, dominated the room. Something was boiling in two tall reddish pots pushed nearly into the flames of a brightly burning fire. On the white tile counter over the hearth stood a large, ornate, glass-encased figure of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and a television set. Wooden benches upholstered with tattered

cushions ran along both the wall that met the hearth and the wall to the right of the doorway. Dark links of smoke-dried sausage and curls of dried orange peel hung from nails hammered into a beam.

The priest approached a stooping figure dressed in black from her headkerchief to her slippers. She was watering potted plants which stood on a tile shelf where the thick wall became a window overlooking the flower garden outside. Concentrating on feeling for the plants, she was oblivious to our arrival.

"Aunt Sabina!" Don Francisco touched her shoulder and she turned. Her hair was white and her eyes a clear and striking blue.

"I see two shapes," she said. "Who are you?"

"It's Don Francisco, Aunt Sabina. I've brought you an American."

"A what?"

He repeated more slowly, and louder, "an American. A lady from the United States. She wants you to tell her some stories."

"A lady from America in my house? Mother, Mother."

"Yes. She's collecting songs and stories. I told her you were the oldest person born in Prioro and that you know a lot. She's looking for the old stories and verses, like the ones you told Fidel when he was recording last fall."

"Does she have a tape recorder?" The priest looked at me and I nodded.

"Yes."

"Mother, Mother . . . I never knew many songs, though I once knew a lot of stories. Everyone used to say 'nobody can keep up with Sabina.' Now I have no memory anymore. The years are many, and, as you know, I haven't been well. I didn't leave this house all January."

"She'll record you here, Aunt Sabina. You don't have to go out. You'll remember the stories. All you need to do is think a little."

Creaking noisily, the kitchen door opened. Don Francisco turned. "Uncle Domingo," he said, "I've brought you an American."

Domingo was a slight man, about half a head shorter than I, with thick white hair and eyes of faded blue. He was wearing old clothes: a maroon turtleneck sweater, dark gray pants that bagged at the knees, a black beret of the sort worn by most Spanish men of his generation. Domingo's smile was broad, and as warm as the fire that burned in the hearth, yet he smiled with his mouth closed. I later discovered that he had no more teeth than Don Quixote after his unfortunate encounter with the shepherds.

"Well, I leave you in their care." The priest shook my hand and left.

Sabina and Domingo told me that morning that they had no children. Their only child, a boy who would have been fifty-two years old in 1985, had been stillborn after a long and

difficult labor. Another had "begun," as they said, but had miscarried, and then there had been no more. Resigned to God's will and yet longing for a child, Sabina and Domingo had taken in other people's offspring. They had reared a nephew whose mother had died two days after he was born. They had kept for four years (until his unmarried mother decided she wanted him back) a little boy who had come to their house one day wearing only underclothes and begging for food. They took the priest's injunction to care for me most seriously. He had brought me, like an orphan, to their door. They were determined to treat me well.

Sabina offered that, given a little time to think, she could probably recall and recite a long story in verse. Domingo and I left to fetch the tape recorder from the trunk of the car.

"Do you like things of the church?" he asked as we climbed the hill. And me a lapsed Lutheran who had first set foot in a Catholic church the week before . . . My "yes," sounded faint and forced to me, but it was the best I could do.

"Come in, then. I'll show you our church." He removed his beret at the doorway, and pushed open the heavy door. I vaguely remembered hearing that women should cover their heads in a Catholic church, so I pulled my scarf over my hair. Domingo crossed himself; I didn't. The old church was large and airy in the lifting mist, the altar spare, the empty pews vanishing into the darkness at the rear of the nave. I looked around, and Domingo looked at me. "Shall we go?" he asked.

"Yes."

We emerged into the mist, through which patches of blue sky now shone with the hard brilliance of lacquer.

"Is this your car?"

"Yes. Well, it's not mine. I rented it in Madrid." I moved toward the trunk to get the recorder.

Domingo contemplated the little car. "Wouldn't you like to go up to the pass? There is a beautiful view."

The last thing I wanted to do was more driving. "Is it far?"

"No. It's very close."

"All right, then. Let's go." We rode as if alone in the world that misty morning, following the narrow road in ever tighter curves up the steep slope of the mountain. The sky cleared as we broke through the mist, and the view from the pass was indeed beautiful. Looking south toward Prioro we could see pasture land whose pale grass was still winter dry, then fenced greener fields (hayfields, Domingo told me) irrigated by trickles diverted from streams. Below the fields clustered the red tile roofs of Prioro, still half hidden in mist. North of us lay another, deeper, valley, beyond which rose the Cantabrian Mountains, the distant glistening peaks I had seen from Almanza. On the forested northern side of the pass, dwindling patches of snow lingered in the shadows of trees and rocks. Domingo said, "If you continue on this road you get to a town called Riaño. We could go there to have coffee, but I didn't bring any money."

Where is this old fellow taking me, I wondered, and said, "I have enough money to pay for coffee. But your wife, won't she be worried? She's waiting for us to return with the tape recorder."

"She won't worry." That seemed unlikely, but he was older than I and should know his own wife. So we followed the even more precipitous curves of the twisting road down the shaded side of the mountain and into Riaño. Once a regional capital, Riaño was destined to be submerged in a reservoir which would provide water for irrigating the fields of dry Castile. The dam across the Esla River, Domingo told me, had been in place for nearly twenty years, but the gates that would block the river's course and flood the valley could not be closed until the town of New Riaño, being constructed above the future water level, was complete. Work was proceeding slowly. "I won't see this reservoir," Domingo said. "But another day, if you would like, we could go to see the dam."

Old Riaño, under sentence of death by drowning, had not succumbed quite yet. Though the narrow streets were lined with crumbling buildings abandoned to their fate, Riaño still supported a town hall, a school, a post office, a gas station, several stores, and plenty of the small bars typical of Spanish towns. We had coffee in one of them, and in high spirits and happy companionship returned to Prioro, where the sun was shining brightly and Sabina was as concerned as I had expected and as forgiving as Domingo had known she would be.

That was the first of many trips Domingo and I took together. He had a vocation for traveling. Domingo had been a shepherd, a transhumant, who traveled with the Merino sheep. The delicate *merinas*, cherished for their fine wool, had for centuries spent the summers grazing in the high, cool mountain passes north of Prioro and had wintered in the warm western province of Extremadura, where their owners, most of them titled, owned vast expanses of pasture. Hired shepherds, almost all of them from northern Spain, accompanied the sheep throughout the year. Domingo told me that before the Spanish Civil War a friend and he had counted over one hundred shepherds from the town of Prioro alone. In 1985 there were only two. "No one wants to be a shepherd anymore. A shepherd today earns a very good wage, but these days no one wants to work as hard as we did then," he said.

When Domingo was a boy, the men of the mountain towns — with the exception of a few tavern keepers, makers of wooden shoes, tailors, millers, and masters of other trades — chose from two professions. Boys inclined toward studies began attending boarding school in preparation for entering the priesthood. The others, future shepherds, fulfilled their apprenticeships by assisting the adult shepherds in the summer pastures. Domingo had begun spending his summers in the mountains when he was seven. In 1919, the year he turned fifteen, he left school and his family for the first time to make

the trek to Extremadura.

Beginning in September the shepherds would prepare their baggage. Into linen sacks, woven at home from home-spun thread, they put their clothing, the hooks and needles they needed to darn the bags and socks they made themselves, leather punches and beeswax to wax the heavy thread with which they sewed loose soles back onto their shoes. They filled other sacks with homemade sausages, hams, and cheese to eat on their journey, as well as knives, and spoons they had carved from ram's horn with which they cooked and ate. Onto pack horses, in addition to the rest of their belongings, they loaded the large iron pots in which one of the six or seven who traveled together would prepare their communal meals over an open fire. By October the shepherds would be ready to begin the long walk from León, through the province of Castile, over the Guadarrama Mountains to grazing lands near Cáceres, Badajoz, or smaller Extremaduran towns along the Guadiana River.

"From here to Extremadura is about 700 kilometers," Domingo told me. "It would take us nearly a month to walk each way. And don't think we walked in a straight line. We had to walk back and forth taking care of the sheep, so really we walked much farther than that. I remember very well the first time I went to Extremadura. My father bought me a new pair of shoes. When I took them off that first night, pieces of skin came with them. There were little huts in the mountain passes and in Extremadura where we could eat and sleep when we weren't in charge of watching the sheep during the night, but on the way we ate and slept outside. I remember waking up more than once and realizing it was raining and I was sleeping in a puddle. How cold those nights were! I don't know how we did it. We were as hard as hailstones."

Domingo had worked as a shepherd, except during the Civil War, until he was forty years old: leaving home in October, returning in June, taking only one year off, when he turned 21, for obligatory military service. His father managed through a friend in the army to have Domingo, who knew how to read and write, assigned as an orderly. His job was to clean offices. With a friend who was also a shepherd he would type letters on the officers' typewriters. "We wanted to show them we knew how to type," Domingo told me. "Of course, we didn't know anything about it. We would hunt all over the keyboard for the letter we wanted, then 'PLAS!' hit it and start looking for the next one."

That day Domingo and I were on our way to a town north of Riaño, snacking on unconsecrated communion wafers I had swiped from the warm kitchen counter where Don Francisco had spread them to dry out before taking them to the church. I asked him to tell me about his Extremaduran girlfriend.

"Who told you I had a girlfriend in Extremadura?"

"No one told me. I just thought you might have had one."

"Well, I did. She was very beautiful. I think I still have a picture of her. Her name was Jeroma. Her mother was very

funny. When she saw me she would call, 'Jeroma, doggone it! Get out here! Here comes Domingo!' On the weekends some of the shepherds would come into town from the pastures to dance. We had good times together."

"Why didn't you marry Jeroma?"

"I thought about marrying her, but there was no way to make a living in Extremadura. A few people owned all the land, and the rest didn't have even the smallest plot. In Prioro we may not be rich, but everyone has a garden or two for planting potatoes and cabbage and garlic. Here we have orchards of fruit trees — apples, cherries, plums — and we have fields to plant hay and grain for the animals during the winter. The town owns all the land you can see looking south from the pass, and more, enough spring and summer grazing land for everyone's cattle and sheep and goats, and the burros we used to keep. In Extremadura there was nothing.

"When the young women saw us coming in the fall they would shout, 'Here come the mountain men!' To make money they would sell us water when we were passing through long dry stretches, and wash our clothes in the river when we stopped. The shepherds ate little meat, only the sausage and ham we took with us, and lamb on Christmas and Easter, and sometimes when a lamb died and our employers would let us have it. In Extremadura I ate garlic soup with bread until I never wanted to see it again. But many of those from Extremadura never ate meat at all, just gazpacho. I didn't spend many years in school, but most of them had never studied anything. Only a few could read or write. When they saw us writing letters home they accused us of showing off the little learning we had. There was so much poverty.

"My father visited me in Extremadura once. He told Jeroma's mother that if her daughter married me he would buy us a pasture there. That wasn't true. He wasn't going to buy us any pasture. He just said that to see what they would say. My father was a bit of a *pícaro*, a rascal, like all of us from the north."

"You, too?"

Domingo shrugged. "When I went into the service, Jeroma sent me a letter. She asked me if I didn't love her anymore, and why I didn't write to her. But I didn't answer, and after my military service I worked for someone else, so I didn't go back there. Later they told me that she married well, to a man who owned a store, I think. Probably she did better by marrying him than she would have if she had married me. Shepherds' wives in those days led terrible lives, plowing the fields by themselves. Some of the fields, as you have seen, are very steep, so steep the carts would overturn. No wonder they prayed so much. They worked the animals, without a husband, eight months a year. Even when we were home, we spent only every other week with our families. It would be one week in the passes with the sheep and one week at home to help bring in the hay, then back to the sheep again, all summer. As Sabina says, that life was slavery."

Since most of the marriageable bachelors in Prioro were shepherds, the young women of the town had little say about the profession of their future husbands. Surely, though, they must have been at least ambivalent about marrying men who spent so much time away from home, and not only because their own lives were so hard. Shepherds lived most of their lives in the company of each other and of animals, at the margin of society. In songs, poems, plays, and stories they are occasionally portrayed as romantic figures, but more often (unless they are young noblemen in pastoral disguise), their role is that of ignorant rustic or bestial boor. Even in Prioro, some people who had more schooling looked down on the shepherds. Yet the women of Prioro defended their men, even as they lamented their own lot. One of the best-loved traditional songs in town included the verse, sung with much feeling:

They say that shepherds smell of tallow;
This little shepherd of mine smells of rosemary.

Yet, tradition and necessity aside, I asked Domingo why any woman, knowing the difficult and lonely life in store for her, would really want to marry a shepherd.

"Why? Because in those days marrying a shepherd was like marrying a king. We were the only ones who had any money." In the mountain towns, cows gave enough milk for the family that owned them, chickens provided eggs until they went into the stew pot, and pigs were raised to be slaughtered and eaten at home. A farmer might sell a calf to make enough money to buy a piglet or two, or a couple of pigs to buy a calf. Women, who worked in the fields most of the year ("so many hours we didn't have time to wash our clothes until after the harvest, and we would fall asleep in church," Sabina told me), would spend the long winter evenings spinning flax and yarn or weaving their thread into cloth while men carved wooden shoes to be sold in the "land of fields," as they call the treeless plateau to the south. With the money earned from selling cloth and wooden shoes they would buy wheat and wine made from the grapes that cannot thrive in Prioro's chilly climate. Only the cash brought home by the shepherds was not destined for the purchase of basic needs.

Domingo and Sabina were married in August of 1930. He had just turned 26; she would be 39 years old in October. When people wondered, as they had ever since the wedding, why a young man would choose to marry a woman so much older, Domingo replied simply that he had grown to know and like Sabina when his older brother was courting her, and that when his brother did not marry her, Domingo had decided he would.

Sabina, when she married Domingo, was a poor and pious woman. She was also a capable weaver, an exceptionally gifted needleworker, and an artist. Until she lost her sight,

Sabina dedicated her few moments of leisure to fine embroidery and crochet work, fashioning flowers and religious ornaments of cloth and paper, and constructing an elaborate and lovingly detailed Nativity scene which permanently occupied a small room of their home. To judge from her conversation, Sabina was uncommonly blessed with both intellect and wit. Yet, despite her virtues and talents, she had remained single long past the age at which women usually wed. Sabina was known for speaking her mind; perhaps her plain-spoken intelligence had deterred potential suitors. Her poverty certainly had. Sabina and her younger sister, Petra, had been orphaned while in their teens. Their father, like Domingo's, had kept a tavern in his house. Drafted during the Spanish-American war, he returned from Cuba stricken with a mysterious malady from which he never recovered. When he died, the girls were left with the house in which Sabina and Domingo were living when I met them, a few fields, and little else. They had been struggling for years to make a meager living when Domingo's older brother, Miguel, came courting. Sabina and Miguel had loved each other very much, she told me, but his parents refused to allow him to marry her. Sabina would bring nothing to the family, they said. Miguel, like Domingo, was a shepherd and, until he married, his income would go to his parents.

"They didn't want to lose Miguel's money," Domingo said, "but they ended up losing him." Miguel, disgusted at being forbidden to marry at the age of 31, had moved to Barcelona, where he set up a photography business and married a woman Sabina and Domingo called Fat Mary.

"I used to visit Sabina with Miguel," Domingo told me, "and when he left for Barcelona, we decided to get married. My parents didn't want me to marry her either, but they were afraid I would leave, as Miguel had, so there was nothing they could do."

Domingo proposed in July. They were married the next month, and spent their week-long honeymoon in a mountain pass where Domingo was watching sheep. "We had to walk, of course. When I showed Sabina where we were going, way up there," Domingo told me, gesturing toward the rocky peaks that towered over Riaño, "she didn't believe me. Every day we left the sheep in the care of the boy who was helping me, and walked down to the towns to look around and to buy things." After their honeymoon, Domingo moved into the house Sabina shared with her sister, Petra, who never married, lived with them until her death in 1980, and helped Sabina work the fields while Domingo was away. The two women had little luck with their cows. "The animals never thrived until I came back to take care of them," Domingo said. "Sabina and Petra were so used to having nothing that they didn't feed them enough. Every grain in their house was counted, so of course the cows died."

Domingo was working as a shepherd when the Civil War broke out. One year too old for military service, he was not drafted into General Franco's army. Nor did he join the

Republicans. The fratricidal passions that fueled the war flared as high in Prioro as anywhere else in Spain; but Domingo, who claimed to understand nothing but the care and feeding of animals, remained aloof. He did not, however, remain unaffected. Domingo was captured one summer by the "Reds," as the Republicans were called in Prioro. His captors were miners from the neighboring province of Asturias who invaded the mountain passes where the shepherds were guarding their employers' sheep. They killed the thousands of sheep that belonged to the titled owners, but spared those the shepherds were allowed to keep as part of their pay.

"The Reds weren't so bad," Domingo told me one snowy afternoon as I sat in a chair drawn up to the kitchen hearth while he and Sabina sat on the bench, "but what a waste! They ate some of the sheep, but most of them they just killed. If they had sent them to people who could have eaten them, it would have been better. There was a lot of hunger in those days. They let all the shepherds leave except me. I was a good cook, and they wanted me to cook for them. There was one, a woman, who liked my hair. It was black then, of course. She would run her fingers through my hair and say, 'what a cute little Castilian.' I never knew whether she was serious or just teasing me.

"I wasn't afraid of the Reds. What I was afraid of was the Nationalists. The Reds drank a lot, then they fell asleep right where they were, out in the open. We all slept outside on the ground without even a guard. I was afraid the Nationalists would come and kill us all. It would have been so easy. One day the Reds' leader took me into town in his car to buy supplies. As we were driving down the mountain, my knees began to shake. He said, 'Shepherd,' — they always called me 'Shepherd,' — 'what's happening to you? Why are you shaking like that?' I told him I couldn't help it, that I was frightened. They had let everyone go home but me. My family didn't know where I was and would be worried. He was a good man. He said I could leave the next day, and he kept his word. The next morning he told the others, 'The shepherd wants to go home, so we're letting him go.' They wanted to know who was going to cook their meat for them. Since they had hardly ever eaten meat, they didn't know how to cook it. The leader told them they would have to learn to cook it for themselves. I had a burro then. He let me take it, and I came home. I don't know what happened to them after that. I didn't return to the passes until the war was over."

Domingo spent the remaining years of the Civil War at home, caring for his animals and fields. He and Sabina and Petra lived relatively well on the money he had saved. While men with large families struggled to feed their children, Domingo had plenty of milk for his calves, which grew sleek and fat. When the war ended, he returned to the sheep, working for a countess who had managed to rebuild her flocks. The modernization that swept Spain after the war had changed the shepherds' lives. They now traveled with the

sheep in trains between the summer and winter pastures, instead of walking the old route.

In Extremadura in 1944 Domingo suffered an attack of colic so severe that he was sent home. When a doctor warned him the pain might return at any time, he decided to retire. Since he and Sabina had no children to inherit, there was no reason to work hard to make money. Domingo said that without children there was no *ilusión*, a word which to him meant both hope and joy. He asked a friend to care for the mares and Merino sheep he had acquired over the years, and went home to stay.

Two weeks after I met Sabina and Domingo I moved to the inn in Prioro, run by Basilia, whose husband, a tailor by trade, worked in a tire factory in the Netherlands. The inn filled with vacationers every August, but business during the winter months was slow, so Basilia had taken as long-term boarders all the single professionals in Prioro. The priest, who was about my age, had lived in the inn for two years. A paramedic, a woman in her twenties, had lived there for six, and a forest ranger, probably in his late thirties, for nine. We ate together at the long table in the kitchen, which, with its hearth, was the only room suitable for habitation in the unheated building. At night we would often play cards or watch television before retiring to our icy beds.

My day now began with breakfast of bread and a bowl of coffee with milk, followed by mass at 9:30. After mass I would return to the inn to handwash and hang out a few clothes. Then, sitting at the kitchen table, since my room was unbearably cold, I would work at transcribing tapes and writing the letters home that also served as my journal. On week days after our 2 o'clock lunch I would leave the inn to record people who lived in Prioro or simply to visit those in the households where I was welcome. People told me I should have come in August, when the town was filled with young people, when tourists from the south fled to the mountains to escape the summer heat, and those born in Prioro who had left to find work returned with their children for a few weeks in their home town. Prioro's winter population was little more than three hundred, but during August, they claimed, it swelled to ten times that. All the shuttered houses were open. The town was alive. You could hardly walk in the streets for all the cars. Every night the young people would hold dances and parties, and in the daytime they would sunbathe and picnic in the mountains, feasting on what I was assured was the best food in the world: roast lamb eaten in the shade beside a cold spring. Many were openly astonished that someone had come from so far away to huddle by the fire while water dripped from the eaves or great moist snowflakes drifted like ragged bits of lace onto the mud. For me, though, the forbidding weather was a boon. People were bored, imprisoned in their kitchens. Those who on warmer, drier days would have been

out working in the fields were delighted to have someone new with whom to sit at the hearth singing and discussing matters so well known that they aroused no one's interest but mine.

Whatever else I did, I never let a day pass without visiting Sabina and Domingo. I knew that Sabina, whose health had improved enough for her to visit her niece up the street, did not leave the house during the hours she expected me to come, but I did not go out of a sense of obligation. I went because I felt at home there. Everything about the old house, from its well-worn furnishings to its odors of woodsmoke and age, was becoming dear to me. I brought Sabina news of the inn, the latest stories of the priest's doings, conversations and gossip from the other houses I visited. On Saturday and Sunday afternoons, Domingo and I would head for one of the nearby towns where he had friends whom he would convince — after an hour or so of reminiscences and a snack of homemade sausage, cheese, home-cured ham, bread, and wine or coffee — to sing and talk about old songs. Sabina, who suffered from carsickness, never went with us, but Domingo on his return would tell her of all we had seen and done. Occasionally the two of us would go to a weekly market in another town, and he would bring back the long soft loaves of bread Sabina preferred to the round rougher loaves available in Prioro, as well as oranges for his breakfast, fish and lamb for their midday meals, and the apples he baked every night in the ashes to accompany their supper of garlic soup with bread.

It soon became clear to everyone in Prioro that Domingo and I preferred each other's company to that of anyone else, and as the town was small, people talked. They teased us about invented exploits, they asked Domingo if I wasn't paying him for his help, and they asked me if he wasn't buying the gasoline consumed on our trips. "Pilar asked me who was that foreign woman I have been spending so much time with," Domingo laughed one afternoon as we shared small sweet cakes around the hearth. "I told her you were a long-lost relative from California."

I objected, but more from surprise than dismay, for the notion did have a certain appeal. Creating a kinship would enable us to avoid having to justify our improbable affection for each other. If we were to be relatives, though, I wondered how I should address him. As uncle? Great-uncle?

"No," he said after a moment. "Let's be cousins. You already told me that you have no first cousins, right? Well, if I am your cousin, then you'll have one: a Spanish cousin! And now, since we're cousins, you can call me *tú*." Sabina had been calling me by that familiar term since shortly after meeting me, pointing out that she was a lot older than I was. Domingo also had been calling me *tú* since I had asked him to do so, feeling, as I explained to him, that we had shared too many adventures for him to continue being so formal. As they were so much older, however, that I could not address them as anything but the formal *Usted* until Domingo's fiction that my mother was his mother's youngest sister gone to America

leveled with a single stroke both social and generational barriers.

Domingo actually related more than once, and nearly straight-faced, the scarcely credible story of the meeting of two cousins from different worlds who for so many years had not known of each other's existence. Listening impassively, or perhaps nodding in complicity, I began to wonder if I was discovering a hitherto untapped picaresque vein of my own. If his listeners didn't believe his tale (and many, of course, knew or at least strongly suspected that there was not a word of truth in it), we didn't really care. The fun, at first, was in the telling. Then we enjoyed telling how the story had arisen. And as we told it over and over, the magic of the tale almost transformed us into what we claimed to be. Even alone, we often called each other cousin. Domingo said, "Cousin, let them say what they want. If they complain that we spend too much time together it's because they're jealous."

Spring came late to northern Spain that year. The "little shoes," yellow flowers of the ubiquitous broom plants, which should have gilded the hills in April, were slow in opening. As if availing themselves of this chance to display their splendor, thousands of other wildflowers bloomed, splashing the fields with demure white, pink, lavender, pale and gaudy yellow, showy purple. It was a good year for wild mushrooms. I learned to recognize the dark green crescents where they grew, and, parting the soft grass with my fingers, delighted in discovering a few of the light brown caps to be carried back to the inn and fried in butter. Domingo and I returned from our recording trips laden with armloads of delicately fragrant daffodils we gathered in the fields and forests, or drooping branches of sweet-scented lilacs we robbed from untended bushes, or bouquets of bright red poppies picked from the roadsides: flowers with which we decked Sabina's Sacred Heart, the Virgin Mary who stood prominent in the church throughout the month of May, the kitchen of the inn, and the bar newly opened by one of Basilia's sons.

My husband and daughters were coming to Spain in early June. I was to meet them in Madrid and drive them to Prioro. My friends and acquaintances were delighted. They were eager to meet the girls and frankly curious about the man who was willing to assume responsibility for two small children so his wife could go so far away for so long.

Domingo, when I told him my family was coming, appeared as pleased as anyone. "You must be glad your family is almost here," he said many times as we drove through the mountains.

"Of course," I would answer, wondering why he kept saying that. His insistence was revealing to me the uncomfortable truth that my delight in the prospect of seeing my family again was dimmed by the knowledge that our strange shared happiness was coming to an end.

"When they come you won't have room for me in your car. You should take them to all the places we have been, so

they can see them.”

Domingo knew the girls were small and that all five of us would fit in the car. He was being polite, I assumed, *formal*, as he called it, offering to remove himself from my life to spare me the awkwardness of removing him. Instead of appreciating his gesture I found myself resenting it. I answered shortly that we would just have to see how much traveling they wanted to do.

As the time approached for me to leave Prioro to meet my family, Domingo, always proper and dignified, became stiff and distant. I suppose I reacted in kind. Conversation came easily, as it always had between us, but instead of making plans for future trips, which were, of course, not to be, we talked about the past. The day before I was to depart for Madrid we joined a pilgrimage Don Francisco's parishes were making: four busloads to visit the ancient basilica of San Isidro in the city of León. Domingo and I sat together on the bus. On the way we all joked and sang (even Domingo, who, everyone assured me, had never sung a note in his life), but on the way back the two of us sat nearly silent, smiling only when we shared a pack of chocolate cigarettes I had brought because I knew he loved chocolate and hated cigarettes. We sat isolated in the pervasive gloom of that rainy evening. "It's as if everyone on the bus were sad," Domingo remarked.

The next morning I went to bid Sabina and Domingo good-bye. I embraced Sabina, who promised to pray to the Sacred Heart for me and my family on our journey. Then I turned to Domingo, who was squatting, shepherd-fashion, to prepare their meal as he had done ever since Sabina had lost her sight, in a heavy iron pot over the fire. He was paying no attention to me. "Domingo," I said, "I'm leaving," and when he stood up, his eyes suddenly brimmed over with tears.

"Leave me. This is nothing," he said, blowing his nose in one of the handkerchiefs he always carried. "I cry whenever anyone goes away. I'm ashamed, but I can't help it. All those years I was a shepherd I cried every time I left home."

Domingo did accompany us on the few trips my family and I took around Prioro. Whether traveling with us or welcoming us into his house, he radiated joy. He loved listening to the girls talk, though he understood not a word they said. The gentlest of men, Domingo was one of the few in town who respected my nine-year-old's reluctance to be grabbed and kissed by strangers. The more approachable six-year-old he courted most carefully, and was finally rewarded with a kiss on the cheek the day we left. When that day came, Domingo asked me not to forget to write and tell him and Sabina we had arrived safely. I sent him a post card from New York, and shortly afterwards received the following letter:

Prioro 27-6-85

Sra Dña Yudi

Dear Cousin,

This very day I received your post card, which filled us with happiness to know that you arrived well with your husband and your dear daughters. Well, we are fine, always remembering Yudi. Sabina asked the Heart of Jesus to help you arrive safely and to find your parents well. Everyone asks if you haven't written to me.

Nothing more. A firm greeting from your cousins,

Sabina and Domingo Herrero

I had some pictures developed and sent copies to Domingo, some for him to keep, others to give to those in the pictures. He wrote:

Prioro 5-8-85
Sra Dña Judith Seegr; Esteemed cousin,

You can't imagine the joy I felt when I received the photos, and the happiness with which everyone has received them. All tell me to thank you; and, I don't know, a million thanks . . . I haven't forgotten the days and afternoons we spent in Valdeón, in Caín, Lario, Argovejo, Villacorta, Caminayo, Tejerina. I will never forget León. Everyone asks me about the American woman. It makes me sad to remember those times we spent. Well, Sabina is very content because everyone says she is the one who came out best in the pictures. I don't know what else to tell you. A million kisses for your daughters, and for your parents and parents-in-law a very firm greeting. You receive what you most want from your cousins,

Sabina and Domingo

Send me pictures of your parents and parents-in-law, and tell them if they have a lot of money to come to Spain.

I discovered that thanks to my frugal living and a strong dollar I could afford to return to Spain. My husband and I agreed that Christmas would be a good time. I would see Prioro during the season when the women and the few men who were not away used to gather nightly. There in the kitchen, while the women spun and the men carved wooden shoes, they would pass the long dark evenings singing, dancing, playing cards and practical jokes, and telling tales. Those gatherings are gone, but the winter months are still the time

for slaughtering the pigs, another occasion for people to get together and celebrate with lavish meals as they have for centuries.

I left New York on December 22nd, and arrived in León, by train, in the rainy darkness of the 23rd. The train had been packed with people going home to visit their families for the holidays. Cursing the weather and my heavy luggage, I made my slow and painful way around clusters of people hugging, kissing, effusively greeting one another. The streets of León, strung with huge snowflakes crafted of small white lights, were thronged with Christmas shoppers.

When the taxi driver I finally found to take me to the car rental agency wondered aloud why a lone woman from across the "pond" was arriving in northern Spain two days before Christmas, I replied with an ease that would have surprised me had I not already discovered that fiction and even certain truths flowed more fluently in a language that was not my own. The foreign language hung between me and my words like a fine veil, and, safely shielded behind it, without a second thought I told the taxi driver I was going to spend the holidays with some cousins who lived in the mountains. "They are quite elderly," I told him, "and I am very much afraid that if I don't see them now I won't see them again." That last part was true, and the rest was close enough.

The bone-chilling cold of that time stays with me now. Heavy snow fell almost every day of my three-week stay in Prioro, nearly isolating us from the rest of the world. The streets were deeply rutted and pitted with dirty and treacherous ice. The temperature of my bedroom hovered around freezing, and every morning I would awaken enveloped in the moist cloud of my own breath. I attended pig-killings and the feasts that accompany them, helped stuff blood sausages, went to masses in the unheated church so cold that my legs were numb to the knees when they were over, celebrated Christmas, the New Year and Epiphany in a town I remember as dark and chill, so different from the long, glowing, flower-fragrant days of May. I spent at least part of every afternoon with Domingo and Sabina in their kitchen by the fire, and on the few fine days of my stay Domingo and I went as we had before to visit his friends in the small mountain towns.

It was nearly the last day of my stay before we were able to drive over the snow-choked mountain pass to Riaño as we had the day we met. Our plan was to arrive in a town called Lario at lunchtime, where Domingo hoped that some of his old friends would offer us lunch. We had always been fortunate with impromptu invitations to meals, but we had never schemed to be invited, and that day our luck ran out. Leaving his friends' house we agreed that the sherry and homemade sugared cakes they had offered us had been very good. "But when she brought out the tray, I didn't like it at all," Domingo said, "because I knew they weren't going to ask us to lunch."

Knowing he felt insulted, I defended his friends. There had, after all, been only one small pot on the stove for the three

of them.

"Maybe," he shrugged it off. Domingo believed that if unexpected guests showed up for lunch, all you had to do, if you could do no more, was add water to the soup. "But they were wrong. The food isn't important. The important thing is the company. Anything tastes good in good company."

We began to look for a restaurant. "Listen, don't tell Sabina about this," Domingo warned. "Even though we have plenty of money, she will scold us if we tell her we ate in a restaurant instead of eating at home." Lario had no restaurant, so we drove north to the next town, Azevedo. There we found an inn, but it was serving nothing but fried eggs and sausage, which Domingo couldn't digest.

It was nearly 4 o'clock, late for lunch even in Spain. Hungry and downcast, we were wandering the narrow snow-packed streets, when Domingo was suddenly inspired to look up the daughter of a woman he had known many years ago when he was summer apprentice to the shepherds in the mountains that rose in a solid wall west of Azevedo. "I haven't seen the daughter since she was a little girl," he said, "but her mother was very beautiful, and very cheerful. Since there weren't many young men in this town the young women used to come up into the mountains to visit the shepherds when we were here in the summer. They would come up to the passes and hide and watch us. What good times we had!" That particular young woman had given birth to three sons by unknown fathers (not the shepherds, Domingo assured me, and, seeing my skepticism, added that in any case he had been no more than a boy at the time) before marrying a shepherd from Prioro and having as the fruit of their long and happy union her fourth child and only girl. She and her husband had died, and her sons had gone to Mexico, but the daughter, Domingo felt sure, was still in her home town.

We found Petra's house just as she was putting lunch on the table for her husband. Clearly, she had inherited her mother's good humor, for she invited us to join them in the warm kitchen, though she did not remember Domingo and of course had no idea who I was. The only problem, she told us, was that lunch that day was turnip stew. I couldn't help recalling the single time Basilia had tried to serve us turnips at the inn. Normally used for fodder, they had been stringy and tasteless, and all of us, like naughty children, had followed the priest's shocking example, balancing little pieces of turnip around the edges of our plates so we could enjoy the cabbage and bacon in which Basilia had tried to disguise them.

"Well?" asked Domingo. He wasn't used to eating turnips either, but the day was waning and we were not likely to receive another invitation to lunch.

The sky was still bright when we reluctantly turned south on the highway, but Azevedo already lay deep in the blue velvet shadow of the mountains.

"You know, Domingo . . ." I began.

"What?"

"Those turnips were good. Really. I never ate such tasty turnips."

"I liked them, too," he agreed. "You see, I was right. In good company even turnips taste good."

By the time we reached the valley of Riaño the only trace of daylight was the glowing pink snow on the same lone faraway peak that had glistened like diamonds on my first day in Prioro. My little red Citroën was chilly, for if its heater was capable of doing any more than taking the edge off the cold, I had not figured out how to convince it to do so. We rode warmed by the shared euphoria of having eaten such wonderful turnips, and arrived in Prioro late that star-strewn night.

As soon as I returned home I wrote to Domingo, but more than a month passed and I heard nothing from him. He had told me that writing, which he used to enjoy, had become more difficult for him as he grew older; and since I knew by now that he expressed himself obliquely, I supposed he had been warning me not to expect many letters. Still, I couldn't help becoming concerned. My daughters had written thanking him and Sabina for gifts they had sent: scarves and an umbrella. Even if he did not feel like writing to me, surely he would have written to them. Finally a letter arrived:

Prioro 14-2 year 86

Dear cousins:

I have received the post card and the letter from the girls, which made me very happy, and also yours, Judith. Since it is time for me to write to you I will tell you that we had a very heavy snow storm and it has been very cold. I hardly see anyone. I go to mass, but few others do. Juana and her father don't leave the hearth. I will tell you that I had news from Azevedo and Lario, and they told me they had so much snow that the doors were blocked, so that in the morning they had to climb out by the balconies to open them. It has snowed a lot.

For the girls I have already thought what I want to say. Elisa and your little sister: tell your daddy something, but he will tell you we didn't send him anything. Sabina said to me "and you didn't send anything to Antonio." Another time . . . Elisa, your father who makes a lot of dollars, tell him to give you some so you can send me a little present which I would like to have from some American girls in Indiana, a small present from that dear land. Nothing more, girls. I await your answer. A firm greeting for all and thank you,

Sabina and Domingo Herrero

The girls and I put together a package with a picture of

them, a potholder woven by the younger one, and a chocolate bar wrapped in a piece of paper she decorated with a picture of violets and the poem "Roses are red, violets are blue," which I translated. Domingo wrote and thanked us. But he did not reply to my next letter. Instead, I received a letter from a friend who wrote that he had suffered a stroke and was hospitalized in León. Domingo and Sabina had no telephone, so twice I called some friends only to be told he was still in the hospital. The third time I called he was waiting in their house, and told me he was feeling better but very bored, since he was too weak to go out. I began sending letters and small packages so he and Sabina would have something to look forward to each day, and in May I received a short letter from Domingo:

Prioro 5-5-86

Sra Judith cousin:

You will have to pardon me because every day the postman comes with your packages. Today I received two and already I have I don't know how many without answering. It is not that I don't remember, but I am very weary and don't feel like eating, and Sabina is not very well. In the end it will be as God wills, but I have little hope. In another letter we will see if I can tell you anything. Have a good time with your parents-in-law. Kisses for the girls and for you a greeting from

Sabina and Domingo Herrero

For Antonio a firm greeting

Domingo

I received only one more letter from Domingo, toward the end of June, in which he seemed to have recovered his health and spirits, asking me to come visit again. But my next letter from Spain came in August, from a friend who wrote that Domingo had returned to the hospital. An operation had revealed advanced cancer, and on the day she wrote they were sending him back to Prioro to die. I wrote to Domingo once more; but a second letter from a friend, which I received in September, told me he had died at home on August 13th, nine days after his eighty-second birthday.

My last day in Prioro, the previous January, I was faced with a long and daunting journey: by car to León then by train to Madrid, where I would catch a plane for New York the following morning. "If you want to say good-bye, you will

have to come before mass," Domingo told me the night before. "I want to be sure to go to church tomorrow, so I can pray for your safe journey."

The day dawned gray and dismal. I knew before opening my shutter that the temperature was below freezing, for I could not hear the icicles dripping outside my window. Quickly finishing my breakfast, I loaded the car with my suitcase and duffle, as heavy with gifts for the return as they had been coming, and drove slowly down the rutted road to Domingo and Sabina's house. The heavy door was barred against the night, but I knew how to unlatch its little window, then reach in and slide the bar back so I could open it. Domingo had seen me coming; I heard the "*pasa*" with which he always invited me into the kitchen. There was no time to chat. The air smelled of snow, and I feared being caught in a storm.

"So you're leaving."

"Yes, I have to go."

"One who has to depart must not be restrained. We will pray for you. Give our greetings to your family and write to us when you are safely at home."

"I will."

"Go, then."

And, as he would have written it, "*A Dios*."

Maxwell's Field: An Examination of the Role of Method in Science

Julie Meadows

James Clerk Maxwell's *Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism* was a milestone in the history of physics. His contributions were both mathematical and conceptual. He derived twelve equations which later made possible the connection of electromagnetic phenomena to the wave equations of light. He successfully placed a theory of the whole, the field theory, in opposition to the reigning conception of nature as composed of discrete parts.

What kind of "whole" is this? Is the field a material whole, a body of matter with discrete boundaries? Does it necessitate the postulation of an ether? Is it an Aristotelian whole, a united product of matter and form? Is it, to the contrary, merely a whole for the purpose of investigation, its boundaries drawn arbitrarily to separate what will be examined from what will be disregarded? Is the wholeness of the field the end of Maxwell's inquiry, or is the field a whole in order to be a means to his true ends?

I believe the nature of the field is a consequence of Maxwell's method. The method by which an investigator examines a problem shapes the meaning of the results. Before he can even begin a methodical study, he must already possess an idea of Nature, and of the consequences of this relation for inquiry. The method determines the criteria for evidence, the role of experiment, and the direction toward which the research is aimed.

I must admit to the hope that Maxwell's interest in electricity and magnetism extends beyond the mastery of them. I desire to know where electricity and magnetism fit into the larger scheme of things, where their place is in nature. To investigate this question I will compare Maxwell's method to one aimed directly at the mastery of nature. I will take the method of Descartes as a paradigm of inquiry for the sake of application, as set forth in the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*.

The need for a method is felt before the method is developed. While Descartes claims that his method is the starting point for investigation, he founds it upon his view of science and nature. Descartes believes that we are not capable of direct knowledge of objects which surround us. In "Le Monde", he says that sight is interposed between the object and the mind, and

...even though everyone is commonly persuaded that the ideas that are the objects of our thought are wholly like

the objects from which they proceed, nevertheless I see no reasoning that assures us that this is the case. (M, 13)

He extends the difficulty to touch and hearing, making it clear that no sensation is reliable evidence of the nature of any object. There is no reason to suppose that the qualities we perceive in objects have any actual connection to the objects.

Descartes creates an "imaginary" world, but matter and nature as he describes them there are as much as he believes we can know of matter and nature here, in the world of our own experience. Matter, then, is homogeneous and fills all space. Its primary characteristic is extension - "I conceive of its extension, or the property it has of occupying space, not as an accident, but as its true form and essence." (M, 21)

Bodies are not the result of matter assuming any distinguishing qualities or distinct boundaries. All matter is alike, arbitrarily distinguished into parts by being given diverse motions. Descartes seems to think that any true separation of bodies would require space and void between them. But space or extension is the essential characteristic of matter, and does not exist separate from it.

Weight is an effect of motion, not a quality of matter. In the difficult eleventh chapter of "Le Monde", Descartes says that the force that keeps the earth together consists in something like centrifugal force. The earth has weight because it and its atmosphere are in motion in a plenum.

Nature is defined as the orderly alteration of matter. Alteration is local motion. Descartes specifically excludes

"the Philosophers' motions" that they think can be accomplished without a body's changing place, such as those they call *motus ad formam*, *motus ad calorem*, *motus ad quantitatem*...and myriad others."

Nature, as Descartes understands it, is entirely knowable, meaning that it is subject to mathematical laws. The laws of nature that will enable us to use nature for our own ends are laws of motion.

Though for Descartes nature is entirely knowable, our senses deceive us. They lead us to attribute qualities to matter of which *they* might be the creators. We must find a way to circumvent the deceptions of the senses and focus all of the mind's powers upon the problem at hand. These are the two purposes of method.

It is difficult to see the application of Descartes' *Rules* to physical inquiries, for they are stated in general terms in order

to be applicable to any sort of problem. Descartes' understanding of nature must be taken into account. I will attempt to present the method in the form most immediately useful - as a succession of steps.

Recall that for Descartes a body is discrete only insofar as it has a different motion from those around it. Physical problems, consequently, do not have self-evident boundaries to which their qualities can attest. They must be circumscribed before they can be examined, a process Descartes describes in Rule XII: "But in order that the problem be perfectly understood, we wish it to be completely determinate." (PE, 203) Again, in Rule XIII:

Actually, although something must be unknown in every problem...nevertheless this unknown ought to be designated by conditions so certain that we are directed to the investigation of this one thing rather than any other. (PE, 208)

Here method begins to focus the powers of the mind. Descartes cautions that we must be careful to draw the bounds correctly, neither encompassing too little nor too much. He can guide us no further than to make careful use of our own judgment.

Once the problem is clear, we must become familiar with its components. The person who wishes to understand magnetism "...will first diligently collect all the information he can obtain about this stone ..." (PE, 201) The problem is divided into the smallest possible parts, and the parts scrutinized. This analysis forms the basis for establishing some order in which the investigation which follows will be carried out.

...the order in which things are to be investigated frequently admits of variation, and depends upon the decision of each person. (PE, 172)

Once dissected, the problem is reformulated. To fully use our power of investigation, we must represent the problem to all of the mind's faculties. In addition to intellect, which will actually solve the problem, these are imagination, sensation, and memory.

The third and final step is deduction. It is here that we build chains of simple reasonings which connect the unknown to the fully known, the things we perceive clearly and distinctly. The student of the magnet, at this stage, will "deduce the combination of simple truth that could produce these effects." (PE, 201) The simple truths will be laws of nature, and the researcher's solution will relate the phenomena to laws of motion. These laws can be expressed mathematically. Once he understands the hidden order of things, the scientist will be able to use nature.

The laws of nature discovered in this way will be true even when they contradict our senses. In "Le Monde", Descartes asserts that

...even if all that our senses have ever experienced in the true world seemed manifestly contrary to what is contained in these two laws [of motion], the reasoning that has taught them to me seems to me so strong that I would not cease to believe myself obliged to suppose them in the new world I am describing to you. (M, 25)

The "new world" is the world of physics. It is the world as we can *know* it as distinguished from the exterior world made up of objects. It is a world where cause and effect can be known with certainty, unlike the world we walk in, where we cannot say what it is about a body that triggers our perception of certain qualities in it.

To a remarkable extent, Maxwell's ideas regarding science, nature, and method correspond to Descartes. Maxwell's ideas are not as explicitly stated; we will hold pieces of his system up to Descartes' for comparison. We will then have built up a context within which to examine the field.

Like Descartes, Maxwell believes that we are separated from the physical world. Influenced by Kant, Maxwell believes this chasm to be far greater than Descartes did. If bodies possess unity, we cannot perceive it. To examine any particular thing, we must abstract it from its surroundings and give it unity by an act of the intellect. The mind separates out objects from the world of experience.

Before we can count any number of things we must pick them out of the universe, and give each of them a fictitious unity by definition. (SF, 241)

What we call unity will depend on our vantage point; from different distances we will make different designations of things. In order to have any idea of the state of things, we must examine them from as many levels as possible.

The dimmed outlines of phenomenal things all merge into one another unless we put on the focusing glass of theory, and screw it up sometimes to one pitch of definition, and sometimes to another, so as to see down into different depths through the great millstone of the world. (SF, 242)

We cannot uncover knowledge of individual things. We must seek to know the relations between them, which will be relations of number. We will understand these relations by analogy to the order of thought. In "Are there Real Analogies in Nature?" Maxwell asks whether this analogy is actually drawn to nature, or whether we see nature as we do because the intellect orders our perceptions in the same manner as our thoughts.

Maxwell gives one example of a "real analogy" in the essay. Space is a condition of thought; the question is whether there is a correspondence between the three dimensions it has in thought and the three dimensions we perceive in the physical universe.

Now it appears to me that when we say that space has three dimensions, we not only express the impossibility of conceiving of a fourth dimension, co-ordinate with the three known ones, but assert the objective truth that points may differ in position by three independent variation of three variables. Here, therefore, we have a *real* analogy between the constitution of the intellect and that of the external world. (SF, 242)

The idea of cause in nature is an analogy. It comes from a relation between the workings of the mind and the order of nature, not solely from the observation of invariable sequences of events. Each of our thoughts is based upon reasons. By analogy, we consider physical events to depend upon reasons, and we name these reasons causes. In consequence, a cause can be no more in nature than a reason is in pure logic. Since "there can be no conflict of reasons" (SF, 243), it is only by misdefinition that we see any conflict of causes in nature. "Cause is a metaphysical word implying something unchangeable and always producing its effect." (SF, 243)

Force is cause in the realm of physics. A force has a certain strength, in proportion to which it produces a certain effect. Unlike cause, a force is never seen in isolation. There are always opposing forces.

Force, on the other hand, is a scientific word, something which always meets with opposition, and often with successful opposition, but yet never fails to do what it can in its own favor." (SF, 243)

Maxwell asks whether there are real analogies in nature in order to test opposing theories. The first is that all the problems of nature, including human thought, are complex problems of motion. In this case, "the resemblances between the laws of phenomena should hardly be called analogies, as they are only transformed identities." (SF, 244) That is, both the laws of thought and the laws of nature would be laws of motion. The other option is that we impose the order of thought upon nature, without any necessary basis in the phenomena. This is not an analogy either, for there is no relationship in nature to correspond to the relationship in thought.

Maxwell finds both alternatives unsatisfactory. He believes the laws of thought "which are found among the relations of necessary truths" (SF, 244) to be different in kind from the laws of motion. The rule of physical forces is that might makes right. Thought is supreme not by virtue of its strength "but in being right and true." (SF, 244)

Maxwell suggests that the interactions of physical bodies are only part of the picture. He seems to say that physical events *do* have some kind of meaning.

All that bystanders see, is the physical act, and some of its immediate consequences, but as a partial pencil of light, even when not adapted for distinct vision, may enable us to see an object, and not merely light, so the partial view we have of any act, though far from perfect,

enables us to see it morally as an act, and not merely physically as an event. (SF, 245)

We have a moral idea of justice, of necessary retribution as the legitimate consequence of all moral action. Maxwell suggests a possible analogy between this idea in the realm of morality and one in the physical realm of cause and effect. I take this to be a reference to Newton's third law. As in morality every action has its appropriate consequences, so in physics for every event (action) there is an equal and opposite event (reaction).

The domain of physics is the relation between things. The whole enterprise "supposes that although pairs of things may differ widely from each other, the relation in the one pair may be the same as in the other." (SF, 245) This is a supposition that Maxwell is willing to make; relation not only stays the same but can be perceived in mathematical terms. Thus there are real analogies in nature; we discover regularities there by analogy to our own thought. This is only possible, and only analogy, because the relations of thoughts to each other may be the same as the relations of objects or events to each other.

The quantity of matter is its ability to preserve its state of motion or rest. Maxwell's Kantian views of space and time lead him to criticize specifically Descartes' definition of matter. It is absurd, he says, to think that if you remove the matter from a place the space it occupied will collapse, as if matter and space were inseparable. "The fundamental dynamical idea of matter" is of something that is "capable by its motion of becoming the recipient of momentum." (TR2, 196)

Maxwell rewrites Descartes' principle of order, and seems to admit differences in matter into physical science.

The difference between one event and another does not depend on the mere difference of the times or the places at which they occur, but only on differences in the nature, configuration, or motion of the bodies concerned. (MM, 13)

While I have found no place where nature and configuration as qualities of matter are explained, Maxwell distinguishes two kinds. Gravitation depends upon the masses of bodies exclusively, "whatever be the nature of the material of which the masses consist." (MM, 120) He distinguished matter that behaves this way, gross matter, from ether.

The undulations of ether, rather than gross, transmit light and heat, even through spaces empty of gross matter (vacuums). Ether does not appear to have the property of gravitation, but there is no doubt that it is a second true form of matter. It is "capable of being set in motion; and of transmitting motion from one part to another..." (DT, 35) It has density and mass and it is "certainly material." (MM, 120) We will return to the ether later on, to examine how Maxwell employs these conceptions of it.

Motion is a change of the *configuration* of a system. The positions of bodies that comprise the system depend on our

vantage point, on the way that we focus the "dim outlines of phenomenal things". Once we have designated a system, motion is a change of the relative positions of the bodies within the system. In some cases, as when water freezes, we will know that motion has taken place, without having been able to discern it. The changes in configuration of a system are considered changes in quantity. When we assume that the changes are caused by matter in motion, rather than action at a distance, our theory will be a dynamical one.

When the mutual action between bodies is taken into account, the science of motion is called Kinetics, and when special attention is paid to force as the cause of motion, it is called Dynamics. (MM, 26)

Maxwell uses a methodical approach which is very like Descartes'. As could be expected, some of the operations are more extreme, but in some ways there is more freedom. There is a place left to scientific vision that no method can guarantee. In Maxwell's theory of electricity and magnetism, this place is filled by Faraday. I will trace Maxwell's method as applied to the problem of electricity and magnetism, as followed in the *Treatise*.

The first step in exploring the phenomena is to amass as much data as possible and to translate this data into mathematical language. Maxwell revises rather than discards the work of earlier researchers that was based upon the theory of action at a distance: their work was necessary to his undertaking. He presents this first phase of research to the reader in careful descriptions of experiments and mathematical theory. Experiments are carefully selected to bring certain aspects of magnetic and electrical phenomena to mind; Maxwell refers to them as "illustrations". Their purpose is to make the key phenomena clearly present to the mind. (TR1, vi)

Surveying the mass of accumulated data, Maxwell sees that the mathematics is based upon a theory of action at a distance. While the theory was useful, it does not seem to lead to further discovery.

...the idea of lines of force throws great light on the results, and seems to afford the means of rising by a continuous process from the somewhat rigid conceptions of the old theory to notions which may be capable of greater expansion, so as to provide room for the increase of our knowledge by further researches. (TR, 182)

Furthermore, action at a distance involves a process of abstraction by which the poles or charges are located within the system. This abstraction is contrary to nature, which is a whole first, and has parts only when the intellect imposes them. That is, nature is a whole for us "since all our perceptions are related to extended bodies, so that the idea of the *all* is in our consciousness at a given instant is perhaps as primitive an idea as that of any individual thing." (TR2, 176)

Searching for a more natural way to *redefine* the problem,

Maxwell's mathematical mind was sparked by Faraday's writings. Faraday provided him with the concept upon which to found a new mathematical theory. Maxwell saw in Faraday's "lines of force" the means to understand the phenomena in a dynamical way.

...Faraday, in his mind's eye, saw lines of force traversing all space where the mathematicians saw centres of force attracting at a distance: Faraday saw a medium where they saw nothing but distance: Faraday sought the seat of the phenomena in real actions going on in the medium, they were satisfied that they had found it in a power of action at a distance impressed on the electric fluids. (TR1, ix)

Maxwell believes this conception to be essentially mathematical. Once Maxwell has adopted Faraday's conceptions of the phenomena, his task is to translate these conceptions into a new mathematics.

Maxwell sees mathematics as a language, one in which the terms which are manipulated are as important as the choice of words in a sentence. The mathematics that had already been developed *expressed* a view of the phenomena. Its variables were distance and charge or pole strength. At the very basis of this mathematical view of things is the abstraction of "material particles" from nature. Integral calculus sums up these parts to describe the properties of the whole.

The field is abstracted from nature in the same way that material particles are. Maxwell usually refers to it as the *finite* field. He defines it as "that part of space which contains and surrounds bodies in electric or magnetic conditions." (DT, 34) The great difference is that once we carve out the area to be called a field, we treat that area as a whole. We consider the phenomena as produced by imperceptible alterations of the configuration of the Configuration of the system. We do not abstract material particles within the field and observe their relative alterations.

The mathematics attached to this system is the differential calculus. The equations are written in terms of potential and charge density, quantities measured in the field as a whole. We wish to understand the field in terms of quantities such as stress, to understand the condition of the spaces.

It appears, therefore, that what we want is a knowledge of the forms of equipotential surfaces and lines of induction* in as many different cases as we can remember. (TR1, 178)

The applications of this theory are less apparent than those of its predecessor. There we could locate charges and make measurements. Here we have to consider the condition of an invisible medium.

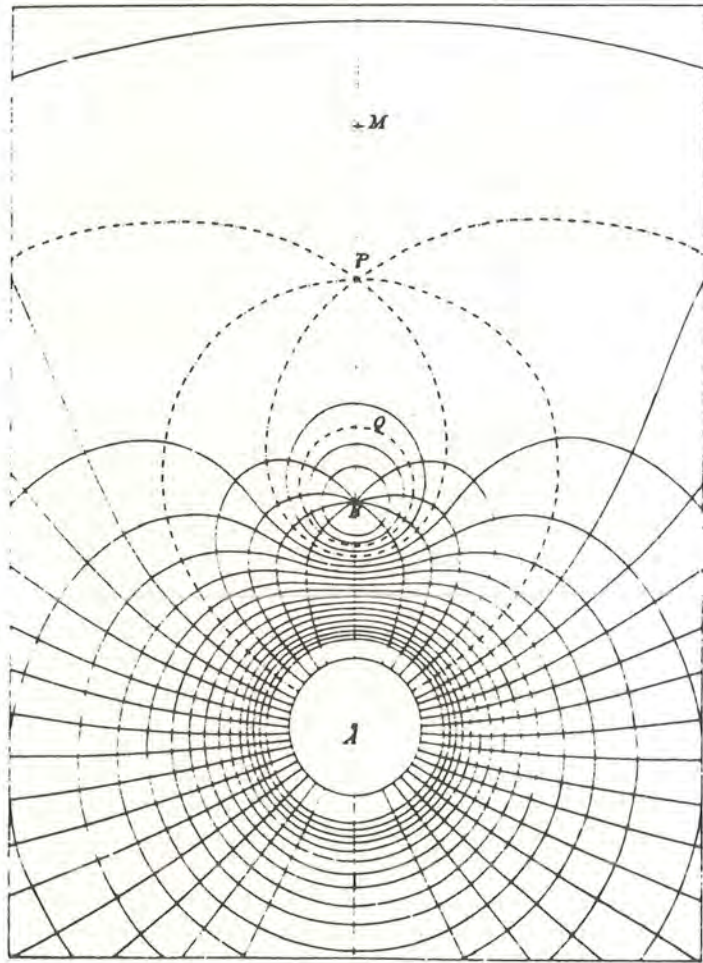
One exciting product of the differential equations is Maxwell's ability to *diagram* fields, using a precisely calculated version of Faraday's lines. We have a visual representation of the configuration of the field. From fields whose

diagrams we can calculate, we can learn to sketch approximate fields. Such sketches lead to mathematical solutions. The key equation is Laplace's equation:

$$\frac{\delta^2 v}{\delta x^2} + \frac{\delta^2 v}{\delta y^2} + \frac{\delta^2 v}{\delta z^2} = 0$$

To generate equipotential lines, we begin with an arbitrary charge e . We substitute in values for the potential, V , and find the radii of the equipotential circles r , since $r = e/V$. Potentials are additive, so we may also generate equipotential lines for groups of charges.

Using a similar process, Faraday's lines of force may be precisely drawn for a particular field. We begin with a variable which describes the whole: field intensity. By assigning a series of values to this intensity as we did with potential, we can find the angles necessary to draw in lines of force at appropriate intervals. In both operations, we begin with a characteristic of the field as a whole.



Lines of Force and Equipotential Surfaces

The results of this are astounding. Maxwell's hypothesis of the field led away from what was visible and quantifiable. It has now led to a visual representation of the stresses of the field. This representation adds enormously to the scientists' ability to control and utilize electric fields; it allows them to visualize and determine the distribution of electric force anywhere on the surface of many shapes of conductors.

If the surface of a conductor is of the form of the outer lobe, a roundish body having, like an apple, a conical dimple at one end of its axis, then, if this conductor be electrified, we shall be able to determine the surface-density at any point. That at the bottom of the dimple will be zero. (TR1,180)

The surface-density is represented in the diagram by the distances between the equipotential lines and corresponds to the distribution of the charge.

How are we to understand this diagram of a field? I believe that Maxwell would call this an analogy. The lines are not a representation of matter we are unable to see. They are not a picture of physical (material) reality, either. The relations of the lines in the diagram correspond to the relations of some unknown matter which comprises the field. Despite his earlier talk about ether, in the *Treatise* Maxwell is more interested in the stress between the particles than the nature or form of the particles themselves. It is possible to found a mathematical theory on the assumption that the phenomena can be explained through dynamics. It is not necessary to actually attempt a dynamical explanation. In Book Two, Maxwell comments on the role of supposing the field in developing a mathematics for the phenomena of current.

What I propose now to do is to examine the consequences of the assumption that the phenomena of the electric current are those of a moving system, the motion being communicated from one part to another by forces, the nature and laws of which we do not yet even attempt to define, because we can eliminate these forces from the equations of motion by the methods given by Lagrange for any connected system. (TR2,198)

We cannot define the forces partly because we know so little about matter. In a later discussion of magnetic action on light, Maxwell says that our knowledge of matter is so slight even in the visible realm that hypotheses about the fields would be premature. The electromagnetic theory is all the more scientifically rigorous because it does not speculate on the nature of matter. Maxwell contrasts this with his own hypothesis of molecular vortices to explain certain phenomena of light. He cautions that this is a "merely provisional" (TR2,461) explanation.

In the conclusion of the *Treatise*, however, Maxwell once more stresses the importance of the medium. Energy, as far as Maxwell understands it, must be contained and transmitted

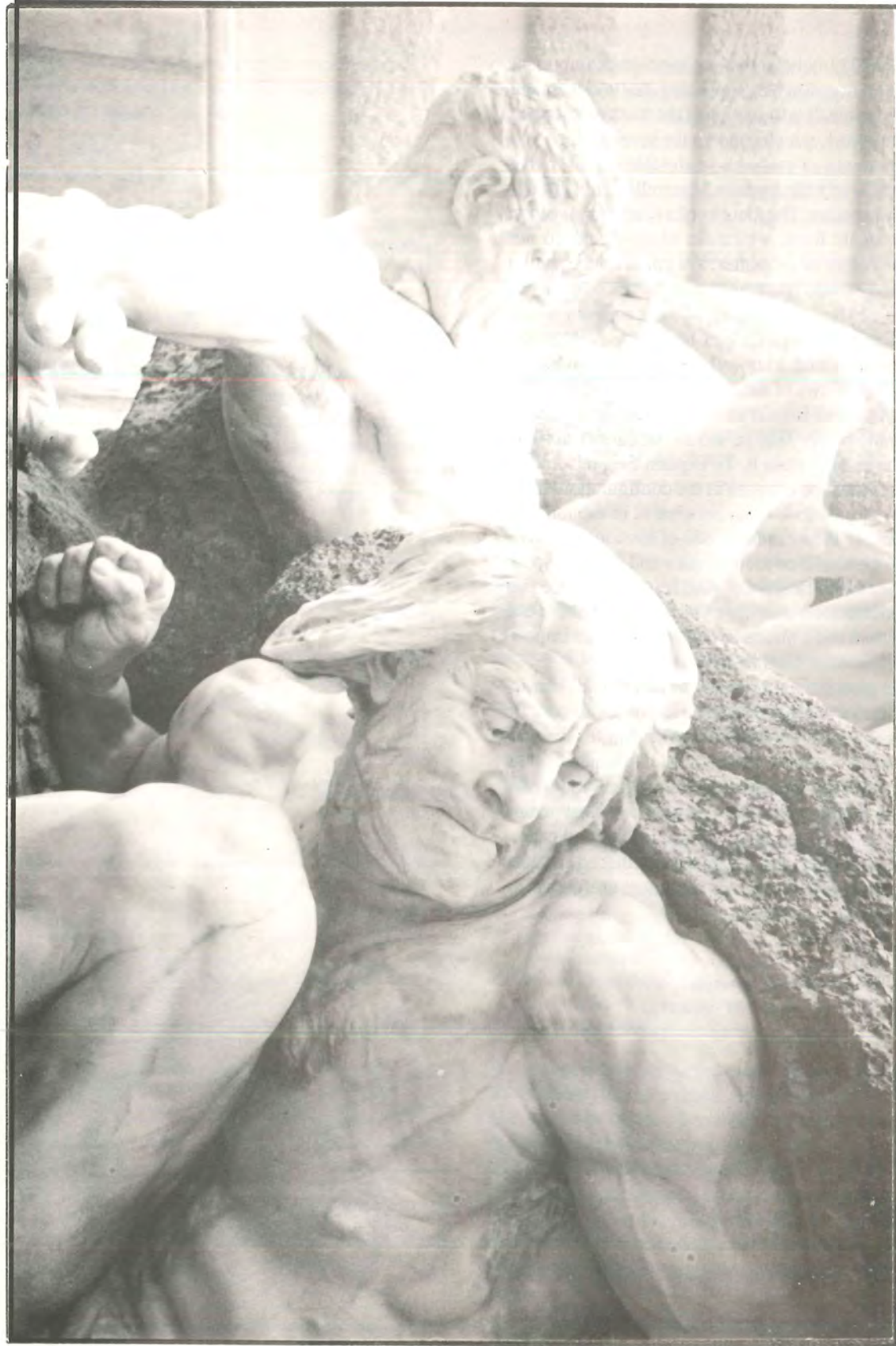
by matter. (TR2,493) I believe that the medium is important only because it is necessary in supposing that a dynamical explanation is possible. It is the action of the matter, described by such terms as stress, which concern the investigator.

The unimportance of matter is irrefutable evidence that the field is not an Aristotelian whole. Maxwell has not discovered a new body in nature. The identity of a whole for Aristotle is bound up with its form, which we observe and do not impose, and the nature of its matter. We could not be said to understand a body while ignoring one of these components. In the tradition of Descartes, however, we can learn to use nature without any understanding of her in the Aristotelian sense. For Descartes and Maxwell, such understanding is impossible, as their views of nature reveal.

The field is a *whole* insofar as we abstract it from nature, and treat it as one body. That is, we do not further abstract parts of it, in order to explain it. To explain the phenomena, we say that there must be changes in the configuration of the system, but we do not seek to know what is in motion. We describe the state of the medium as one of tension or stress.

Maxwell's emphasis on mathematics and the correspondence of his method to Descartes' give further evidence that his aim is utilitarian. The concept of the fields is not the end of an investigation, but a means to begin it anew. Its importance lies in its use rather than its identity.

Maxwell's thoughts on morality suggest that his restriction of what nature and cause are may be a conscious one. He admits the possibility of another kind of reason for the phenomena, but moral reasons will not lead to mathematical equations and practical applications. His progress in physics depends on his being completely restricted to that realm. Though I have reservations about the exclusion of all causes except mechanistic ones, this method does indeed produce useful results. Maxwell's aim is to make nature useful to man, and his achievement is a great one.



Untitled — Dominic Crapuchettes

The Anger of Achilles

Dominic Crapuchettes

Anger-

Sing now the anger,
smoldering within the proud spirit of Peleus' son, Achilles,
burning deep and bursting unexpected like wild fire.

Sing the violence which shakes thousands
of sturdy souls and hurls them to the hazy underworld,
but leaves their lifeless bodies lying,
a feast for half-starved scavengers.

Sing that we may feel
the burning ember trapped within our own spirit,
that we may feel the conflict swelling within our hearts
until it bursts forth into the bitter clash of bronze on fighting fields.
How like raging fire it sweeps through the enemy,
pouring forth its contagious black smoke
until even the wielder is blinded,
until everything is consumed,
and all that remains,
is ash.

Desire and Learning in the *Symposium*

Matthew Braithwaite

Preface

This essay is in two parts, is about a number of related subjects, and has two major themes. It has no thesis as such; what points of view it presents come about as the result of the author's search for meaning in Plato's *Symposium*. The first part of the paper is investigatory, consisting of an attempt to determine what Plato might be saying through the work's various speakers, and terminating in an examination of Socrates' linkage of eros and wisdom. The second part is more speculative. It examines the *Symposium's* implications for learning and teaching, with reference to its dramatic context, and with reference to the nature of Socrates' speech and Plato's writing.

Part One: Desiring Learning

If it is true that nobody is ever entirely wrong about anything, it would be right to assume that each of the speakers at Agathon's drinking party has something to say about eros; that they are not there merely to make Socrates look good. Socrates' explanation, of course the most satisfactory and comprehensive, is also remarkable in that it is synthetic of those given before it. The speakers preceding Socrates lack complete understanding; they mistake their experience of eros for its entirety. Eros, like virtue in the *Meno*, is not given to us "whole and unbroken," (79c) but as its many facets, and it falls to Socrates to reveal the single gem to which they all belong. But Socrates does more than synthesize: his definition of eros both defines and ennoble the philosopher, and man as well, insofar as he is philosophical. Like Eros, men are between two worlds, and like him, we are creatures of desire. Socrates' genius is to link eros to our peculiarly human status as seekers after wisdom.

As Plato speaks not only through Socrates, but through each character in the dialogue, it seems wise to view the speeches preceding Socrates' as also expressing parts of the dialogue's meaning. Plato had a unique dramatic opportunity in this dialogue, for its format permits all its characters to develop Plato's point of view while still allowing each to develop at length complete ideas of his own. One defining aspect of Socrates' speech is that he is always willing to begin with the thoughts of his companions; his is great speech because it is conversational, not lecturing. And so, as readers of the *Symposium*, we will profit from first examining Socrates' speech through an examination of those which precede it, and only then examining his speech on its own merits.

I. Phaedrus

One of the first points made by Phaedrus, the first eulogist and "Founder of the Feast," is that Eros is among the oldest of the gods, suggesting the later discussion by Socrates of the parentage of Eros. Phaedrus' citation of Hesiod describes Chaos, Earth, and Eros as having been created in that order. Eros is the first of these which is proper to a living being, though not to a reasoning one (but Socrates later shows that there is an eros proper to man as well). And thus the first thing said about Eros is that he is prior to all life. In this case, as in Socrates' genealogy, we are meant to take Eros' position among gods as his place in the scheme of things, and so Eros' priority to all life suggests that he represents one of the things which characterizes it. Socrates later agrees with this in saying that "the mortal nature seeks as far as possible to be forever and immortal," (207d1) for to him that seeking after immortality is mortal eros.

Phaedrus' next point also prefigures an aspect of Socrates' speech, though again in a limited and narrow sense. But the observation, that eros can impel men to do good (and also evil, which Phaedrus does not mention), is undeniable:

...we have [Eros] as the cause of the greatest goods, for I can hardly point to a greater good for someone to have from youth onward than a lover, and for a lover, a beloved. For that which should guide human beings who are going to live fairly throughout their lives can be implanted by neither blood ties, nor honors, nor wealth, nor anything else as beautifully as by love. (178c2)

Although Socrates would probably agree that as a motivation love surpasses wealth, he would do so for a reason other than the one Phaedrus gives. To Phaedrus, Eros is a cause of doing good because he induces "shame in the face of shameful things and honorable ambition in the face of beautiful things." (178d1) This is, of course, an excellent description of Alcibiades, for it is exactly (and unfortunately *exclusively*) his love for Socrates that causes him to feel shame, as he later says. (216b2) But Alcibiades' example makes the poverty of this conception of morality immediately obvious, for the implication of his feeling shame before Socrates alone is that he feels none before himself. Phaedrus' notion seems to be that right shame and right ambition are noble even when they come from without. Although he is right to say that to act rightly for love is nobler than to do so for money or honor, this is damning with faint praise, for right action by reason of any external motivation is manifestly inferior to right action through internal motivation, the magnitude of which differ-

ence he seems not to recognize:

...there is not one so bad that, once the god Eros had entered him, he would not be directed toward virtue—to the point where he is like one who is best by nature. (179a7)

Though the depth of Phaedrus' mistake is striking, his contribution is a useful one because of how well it describes Alcibiades. What Phaedrus has done is to remind the reader that many things short of solid character (itself short of a reasoned morality) can impel men to right action, and that among these love incurs perhaps the least opprobrium in doing so because it seems to be inherently noble, whereas such impulses to right action as love of honor or of wealth do not. This is the quality of love that makes it not only a guide to better action, as Phaedrus says, but also to betterment, an idea first brought up by Pausanias. Of all the wrong reasons for right action, it is only the shame and ambition brought about by love that can ever give rise to the right reason. The possibility of this is the great contribution of Phaedrus' speech, and the dashing of the reader's hopes that this might happen to Alcibiades is particularly painful because it so clearly exposes the limits of Socrates' power.

Phaedrus next says that "lovers are the only ones who are willing to die for the sake of another," (179b4) which makes clear the important difference between acting rightly because of the shame or ambition caused by love, and acting nobly through the self-sacrifice which love inspires. Phaedrus seems to think that all right actions motivated by eros are generically equivalent, but in fact the noble action which love can inspire is generically different from the sort of right action that, say, Alcibiades may perform for his love of Socrates. Love is a powerful force for betterment, but where the latter sort of action is not noble because it is not nobly done (a distinction made by Pausanias), the former sort is not only noble, but divine, as Phaedrus says. The difference is between temporary "virtue" brought about by love, in the latter case, and virtue augmented and made divine by love, in the former. When Antigone buries her brother in defiance of Creon's order, or when Achilles girds himself to avenge Patroclus, these are actions of virtuous men impelled by love to greatness of spirit, and the magnificence and divinity of such actions has inspired wonder and admiration throughout the ages. Though Achilles and Alcibiades both perform admirable actions out of love, this is a divine thing in the former and pitiable (even contemptible) in the latter, for in his case it is not nobly done. But why is such an action as Achilles' divine? Socrates will later furnish the answer to this question suggested by Phaedrus' speech: such actions secure "an immortal remembering of [the actor's] virtue," (208d5) and insofar as an action makes someone immortal, it makes him divine.

Phaedrus ends his speech with the statement that "Eros is the...most competent of the gods with regard to the acqui-

sition of virtue and happiness by human beings..." (180b6) and though this statement is agreed upon by the speakers who follow him, each understands the reasons for its truth differently from the others. How, then, does Phaedrus mean that eros leads to happiness? When he discusses eros as a cause of good, we assume that happiness comes to men through good, as Socrates later says, (204e6) and good through virtue. But whatever sort of virtue comes of the shame and right ambition caused by eros is surely a transitory and inferior one, so the sort of happiness which comes from it must have a similar nature. This sort of happiness that results from affection, and from things done rightly through affection, is the happiness of the political friendship, the happiness brought about by honor; a somewhat immature conception and thus quite in keeping with Phaedrus' ideas of virtue. A substantially more sophisticated idea of how eros is a cause of happiness in men is not found until the speeches of Aristophanes and Socrates.

II. Pausanias

As said above, Pausanias' speech corrects a flaw in Phaedrus' thought. He introduces the idea that the character of an action is in the manner in which it is done:

Every action is of the following sort: When being done in terms of itself, it is neither noble nor base. For example, what we are now doing, either drinking, singing, or conversing, none of these things is in itself a noble thing, only in terms of how it is done in the doing of it does it turn out to be the sort of thing that it is. For if it is done nobly and correctly, it proves to be noble, and if incorrectly, base. (180e4)

This distinction suggests the one above noted between the two ways that love can promote right action. So Pausanias' first great contribution is that eros can promote action both noble and base. Although Pausanias and Socrates both introduce a differentiation of the objects of eros, Pausanias' differentiation is far more confined than Socrates', which expands the range of eros' objects beyond the human. Interestingly, it is Agathon's speech, vapid though it is, that makes the first small step in this direction by introducing an Eros of the beautiful, which is the jumping-off point from which Socrates proceeds to the intellectual eros.

Having made this distinction, Pausanias makes the first try at identifying the noble and base eros. In saying that some "are in love with [others'] bodies rather than their souls," (181b3) Pausanias starts the consideration of eros' objects, which Socrates will resume and complete. But Pausanias' thought that proper love is of souls is not elaborated upon, and so one hearing Pausanias' speech has no idea what love of a soul would constitute; it is Socrates who will make this clear. Pausanias refers continually to the lover being "gratified" by the beloved, and to the beloved "granting favors", which makes his talk about loving souls, not bodies, amount to very

little; if anything, his message seems to be that a lover should seek sexual gratification only from good beloveds, which is a funny sort of "love of souls", and a far cry from the more mutual and intellectual relationship that Socrates describes. Pausanias' speech, which sounds like a defense of established custom, describes a relationship where an older man confers the benefits of his age upon a younger in exchange for sexual favors. This is the sort of relationship into which Alcibiades tried to ensnare Socrates:

Really, my dear Alcibiades, you're no sucker if what you say about me is really true and there is some power in me through which you could become better. You must see, you know, an impossible beauty in me, a beauty very different from the fairness of form in yourself. So if, in observing my beauty, you are trying to get a share in it and to exchange beauty for beauty, you are intending to get far the better deal. For you are trying to acquire the truth of beautiful things in exchange for the seeming and opinion of beautiful things; and you really have in mind to exchange "gold for bronze." (218d7)

Socrates here describes what is wrong with Pausanias' love: it is absurdly unequal, and even somewhat crude. One wonders what sort of virtue a beloved would wish to acquire, or would in fact acquire, from such a lover as Pausanias describes. Socrates isn't saying that love is a business exchange, of course, but simply that there is something base about the exchange of real wisdom for gratification. The two parties in such a relationship would be making a sordid exchange on the basis of reciprocal need, not love, a fact reflected in the political character of Pausanias' speech. Nevertheless, Pausanias, in narrowing our discussion to noble eros of noble objects (that is, souls), develops a notion of eros as a means for betterment (as distinguished from merely better action) by introducing the idea of enslavement to virtue:

...for it is customarily held by us that if anyone is willing to devote his care to someone in the belief that he will be better because of him, either in regard to some kind of wisdom or any other part of virtue whatsoever, this willing enslavement is not disgraceful nor is it flattery...the [lover], in serving a beloved who has granted his favors, would justly serve in anything, and the [beloved], in assisting him who is making him wise and good, would justly assist. (184c3)

And here we have another description of Alcibiades' actions, or rather nearly so, for Socrates refused to allow him to "enslave himself." The reason for the difference in action between Socrates and the lover Pausanias describes is that Pausanias has no concept of loving for really noble and selfless reasons, but only out of need. His lover betters the beloved in exchange for favors, but a really virtuous man would require nothing at all. Socrates, more virtuous than Pausanias' lover, confers his lover's gift of wisdom on every-

one, asking nothing in return. As Alcibiades suggests, there is little one can offer Socrates, whose apparent attraction to beautiful young men is a ruse. In light of Socrates' love, Pausanias' conclusion that "for the sake of virtue alone it is noble to grant one's favors" (185b4) sounds like a self-deceiving attempt to ennoble an ignoble custom. Even so, his idea that one may become virtuous by devotion to a virtuous man is the diamond in this setting of brass.

III. Eryximachus

Although Eryximachus' speech is somewhat silly in characterizing the world in terms of erotic duels, his description provides a powerful metaphor for the education of the soul, or the generation of virtue. He describes a possibility Pausanias missed: that good and bad eros can both exist in the same person. Eryximachus, the doctor, paints his profession as that having expertise in the "erotes" of the body:

Now, there is one love that presides over the healthy state, and another over the sickly. Just as Pausanias was saying, it is a fine thing to gratify those who are good among human beings and disgraceful to gratify the intemperate, so too, in the case of men's bodies taken by themselves is it a fine and needful thing to gratify the good and healthy things of each body (this is what has the name 'the medical')... (186b7)

If we were to transplant one metaphor into another, replacing the body with the soul in the above description, sickness and health would turn into virtue and the lack of it. The love presiding over the sickly state is the love of honor, money, and power, and that presiding over the healthy state is the love of knowledge, wisdom, and learning. The gratification of the right desires of the soul is the turning toward the philosophical, as Socrates will suggest, and so one skilled in the erotes of the soul, such as he, is a sort of doctor, or guide. By this extension, Eryximachus' speech also suggests another way of seeing Alcibiades: a man unhealthy in his soul, which is a description few would disagree with. So extended, the speech also names the reason for that illness: warring desires within his soul. "I have succumbed to the honor I get from the many," (216b5) says Alcibiades, and that sickly desire fights his healthy desire of what Socrates offers. History relates the unfortunate outcome of this conflict. Socrates' abilities as a doctor of the soul include prescription, but not surgery. He can give Alcibiades a healthy desire to oppose the unhealthy, but it is up to Alcibiades whether or not his desire for change is equal to his need of it.

Eryximachus' concept of the healthy state is revealed by his frequent use of the idea of harmony. Extending this idea of health to the soul furnishes us with a description of another aspect of Socrates' nature. What would it mean to achieve harmony among all the soul's desires—be they for learning, for wisdom, for honor, for money? Following Eryximachus,

such harmony would be the right proportion of all these desires, such that they all agree in the pursuit of a happy and healthy life, under the direction of reason. Alcibiades' report of Socrates' conduct in the Potidaean campaign could hardly furnish a better description of how such a harmony would appear. In addition to ascribing to Socrates all the martial virtues, Alcibiades makes it clear that Socrates is supremely temperate (but not an ascetic!), never gets drunk, is calm under pressure, humble, uncomplaining in hardship, and so forth, all of which suggests a man who is at peace with himself, enjoys the benefits of every kind of virtue, and whose desires are well-trained and focused on the happy life. The *Symposium* is certainly shot through with a "Socrates-as-exemplar" motif, and it here becomes clear that one reason for his being such is that he is a virtuous man who understands his "erotes" and has completely mastered them.

IV. Aristophanes

Aristophanes' is the first of the speeches which has any brilliance. It is genuinely funny, it is well-crafted, and it does not immediately strike the reader with its inadequacy. Although like the others, his speech does not attain the same level of depth and comprehensiveness as Socrates', unlike them it is a complete description of eros in and of itself, as opposed to a right-thinking but frustratingly short-sighted account, as was, for example, Phaedrus'. Aristophanes proposes a reasonable idea of eros' object, and Socrates' criticism of his account seems to attack it rather superficially, apparently taking what Aristophanes says for what he means:

"And there is a certain account," she said, "according to which those who seek their own halves are lovers. But my speech denies that eros is of a half or of a whole—unless, comrade, that half or whole can be presumed to be really good; for human beings are willing to have their own feet and hands cut off, if their opinion is that their own are no good." (205d10)

Aristophanes is also the first to develop a plausible idea of eros as a means to happiness, an idea which Socrates will later take up and advance:

For Eros is the most philanthropic of gods, a helper of human beings as well as a physician dealing with an illness the healing of which would result in the greatest happiness for the human race. (189c8)

The illness to which he refers is the ancient separation of men from their other halves, but the search for the one who can undo this damage resembles the seeking after the good which Socrates will describe. This is most obvious in that both accounts describe a seeking, but in addition, each also suggests happiness as the reward for attainment of the goal, and each intimates that this attainment may not be possible.

The men of the past, according to Aristophanes, "were

awesome in their strength and robustness, and they had great and proud thoughts..." (190b5) Aristophanes, in looking backwards through time, looks not at men's surroundings as being then better, as one might expect, but at man himself. Man, that is to say, has fallen from a state of greatness, of which the seeking to regain is eros. This idea, not that of being separated from one's half, is Aristophanes' contribution to the evolving definition of eros, and it is an idea that Socrates does not directly touch on: to interpret Socrates in Aristophanes' terms, our search for beauty, by means of contemplation, is perceived by us as a search to regain. We recognize our need for wisdom (or we would not seek it, as Socrates says (204a3)), but in addition, the idea that its attainment is possible persists in us, driving our quest, despite the haunting thought that we may never succeed. This drive toward the attainment of what we constantly fall short of is, I think, an indication that on some level we have a *potentiality* for it. Is Aristophanes really saying that we seek perfect happiness in union with our other half? Of course not; Aristophanes' story is a myth, certainly a format to which Plato was no stranger, and a counterpoint to the more directly philosophical speech of the rest of the dialogue—but he is saying that belief in that potentiality is what moves us. In the same vein, Socrates will suggest that it is our potentiality to attain immortality, god-hood, and true knowledge (or at least our belief in that potentiality) that spurs us to strive for these impossible ends—and in this similarity we find that Aristophanes and Socrates both have hit directly on one of eros' most important aspects: the human potentiality to achieve a divine state. Because of the manner of his speech, it would be fruitless to try to pin Socrates down on whether he really believes that this potentiality may be actual in life; at worst, this belief is a "functional myth" or "noble lie". Plato has paid Aristophanes the very high compliment of allowing his character to introduce one of the major themes of the dialogue, for Aristophanes has presented the first argument for eros as a seeking after happiness that resists disproof and does not ring hollow.

But Aristophanes' straightforwardness and sincerity, even passion, should not encourage us to miss the inadequacy, according to Socrates' ideal, of what he says. Aristophanes and Socrates say similar things about the utility of eros (a guide to happiness), the means by which this happiness is sought (impetus to strive toward a state of greatness), the human potential for that greatness, and eros having genuinely noble ends (as opposed to those discussed by Phaedrus and Pausanias). But Socrates has in mind an eros of intellectual things, not of human things, and describes a desire to be united with the former rather than the latter, and in this there is all the difference between these two speakers. Aristophanes comes across as a defender both staunch and eloquent of a humanistic idea of eros and of human purpose. By the time of the symposium, Aristophanes has written *The Clouds*, so the reader is expected to know where Aristophanes and Socrates

stand in respect to each other: the argument implicit in their very similar but importantly different accounts of human desire is the great important debate of the dialogue, and it is over how one should seek happiness. Socrates defends the pursuit of happiness through pursuit of knowledge, a position of which the reader of *The Clouds* knows Aristophanes to be mistrustful at best, just as Socrates mistrusts the passions. With all the depth of feeling in his poetic soul, Aristophanes, it seems, warns Socrates not to renounce too much of the human in his taxonomy of desire. The close correspondence of many elements of their speeches suggests deeply held feelings over the essential point of difference: whether the pursuit of knowledge is a key to happiness. Aristophanes surely believes that there is meaning in such things as drama: human, earthy, passionate creations; and that a happiness founded only on pure intellectual contemplation would be hollow and cold. But Socrates' speech, if seen with care, does not advocate this; uncharacteristically, it is quite sympathetic to the poets, granting them their place in the sun; and Plato weaves themes of drama into this conversation set in the house of a playwright. Despite his sympathy to what Aristophanes is saying, however, Socrates does mistrust it—and Agathon's speech shows the reader why he does so. The significance of Agathon's speech is a counter-argument made by Plato, a warning against the dangers of an eros that stops at the human. Plato wishes to point out that Aristophanes, though right as far as he goes, does not go far enough. Agathon's speech, beautiful but devoid of content, reminds us why Socrates seeks humanity's purpose in the realm of the intellect: there is less chance that reason will go awry than will passion.

But Aristophanes is convincing despite the obvious danger posed by such as Agathon or Gorgias—and the debate between these two points of view is one which, we may see here, Plato was never able to resolve comfortably. Poetry is Plato's vice, the addiction he tries to break: in this and other dialogues he alternately disparages it and flirts with it, never finding it within himself to advocate unreservedly pure, transcendent contemplation. In the *Republic*, Poetry is dismissed as mere imitation, but the Socrates who quotes Homer so freely must feel uneasy about denying it all claim to wisdom:

"It must be told," I said. "And yet, a certain friendship for Homer, and shame before him, which has possessed me since childhood prevents me from speaking. For *he seems to have been the first teacher* and leader of all these fine tragic things. Still and all, a man must not be honored before the truth, but, as I say, it must be told." (595b)

Like much of Plato's work (which is itself dramatic), poetry can teach through metaphor and indirection; perhaps this is what Socrates meant. In view of this sympathy, it is hardly surprising that in the *Symposium* we find a treatment of the role of the poet which is, so far as I am aware, uncharacteristic in its lack of overt criticism, sympathetic, and perhaps even praising. Aristophanes says that he "shall try to initiate you into [Eros'] power; and you will be the teachers of everyone else," (189d3) mirroring the words with which Socrates closes, and highlighting the debate between these two conflicting teachings. The *Symposium's* presentation raises the question of whether, in the *Republic*, Socrates exiled poetry more because it is dangerous than because it is intrinsically bad.

V. Agathon

Socrates' remark that he is afraid of Agathon's speech thus emerges in a double light, because Socrates knows that this minor contest for the better speech is paradigmatic of the greater battle for the hearts of men he sees between philosophy and rhetoric. So we must see Agathon's speech as a parable about the dangerous power of the merely beautiful. The brief conversation with Socrates which precedes Agathon's speech serves to illustrate Plato's view of this danger:

"What's this, Socrates?" Agathon said. "You really do not believe that I am so wrapped up in the theater as not to know that to a man of sense a few who are sensible are more terrifying than many fools?" (194b6)

So Agathon knows his transgression: although he calls his audience ignorant, he does not walk the harsher path of trying to guide them to the truth, but displays instead the facile beauty that will bring him honor from fools—a defect of character similar to Alcibiades'. Socrates' charge against Agathon, subtly put but nonetheless an accusation of wronging the ignorant, is this:

...for I know very well that were you to meet any you believed wise, you would think more of them than of the many. But I suspect that we shall not prove to be of the wise, for we too were present there and were part of the many; but if you were to meet others who were indeed wise, then you might be ashamed before them—if you were perhaps to believe that you were doing something that is disgraceful. (194c2)

Though Agathon fears Socrates' scrutiny, and thinks his present audience more fearful than the previous day's, he nevertheless employs his beautiful rhetoric at the cost of thought. With the sole exception of Socrates, this new audience does not justify his trepidation, and his easy seduction of them with the beautiful but untrue wholly justifies the fear Socrates feels. He fears the outcome of what Aristophanes

described in *The Clouds*: the conflict between Δίκαιος Λόγος and Ἄδικος Λόγος for the souls of men. Just before Agathon begins his speech, Socrates asks him, "But you would not be ashamed before the many if you believed you were doing something disgraceful?" (194c9) But Phaedrus intervenes before Agathon can answer, leaving the reader to ponder the terrible implications of a negative answer. One need look no further than Alcibiades to see the effects of such a case.

Agathon is not, however, unscrupulous, but simply young and foolish. He venerates the beautiful, but as he does not truly know what he venerates, he cannot do so properly. In this he is like Phaedrus, for as Phaedrus does not recognize that the love he speaks of can impel men to the bad as well as the good, so too does Agathon fail to recognize that (in Socrates' terms) eros with an eye fixed on such an idea of beauty as his own can lead men astray from the truth as well as to it. Phaedrus' human eros and Agathon's eros of the beautiful take their power from the passions, and Socrates must leaven these powers with reason, that such eros may lead to eros of truth. But all this is yet to come.

In its content, Agathon's speech furthers the ongoing distancing of eros from the concrete and human in saying that "all good things have resulted for gods as well as for human beings from loving the beautiful things." (197b8) Agathon, as Socrates will do later, connects the good and the beautiful, and though this takes eros somewhat in Socrates' direction, Agathon proceeds without understanding. As Socrates admonishes him, "you leave no argument unturned and dedicate each and every argument to Eros." (198e4) Socrates, like Agathon, will give eros a role in wisdom, in the arts, in beauty, and so on down the list, but he does so in a reasoned way; his sophisticated refutation of Agathon's sophisticated argument is intended mostly to show that Agathon was speaking fluff, and not contemplating the object of his speech. Agathon's speech suggests the similarities between the various descriptions of eros, the one describing, and the manner of description, and nowhere is funnier than in the contrast between the speeches of Agathon and Socrates: Agathon, young, and beautiful, beautifully describes a tender and beautiful Eros; while Socrates—older, crusty, shoeless, and unbeautiful, in a comic point-by-point opposition to Agathon describes an eros who is like himself in a manner that, also like himself, is beautiful in its content apart from its form. The fact that Alcibiades, who has every conceivable charm of youth, makes fun of Socrates' looks but despite them calls Socrates "the only deserving lover of [his]," (218c7) is a strong indication that content can render form unimportant.

VI. Agathon and Socrates

Once Agathon has been praised for his beautiful but empty speech, Socrates undoes the damage done to our evolving understanding. First, as mentioned above, he wishes to

show Agathon's speech for what it is: an arid desert of adjectives. But Socrates is not just using sophisticated tricks to discredit Agathon; as in all his sophisticated tricks there is a point, and here it is that truth and beauty are things sought (and, he here implies, not achieved). Agathon has suggested that Eros makes those he is with like himself. Though Socrates would agree with this, he looks on Eros more as a metaphor for man than as man's muse, and for this reason it is crucial for him that Eros be like what man already is, rather than like what man strives toward (as Diotima says to Socrates, "You believed...that the beloved is Eros, and is not that which loves." (204c1)) As Agathon reveals when he says that "[Eros] is a poet of such wisdom that he can make poets of others too," (196e1) he sees the relation between beauty and truth far differently than Socrates, for to Socrates a wise poet is a contradiction in terms. A wise poet would have true knowledge; and this recalls Socrates' critique of poetry in the *Republic*:

For it is necessary that the good poet, if he is going to make fair poems about the things his poetry concerns, be in possession of knowledge when he makes his poems or not be able to make them...and do the good poets really know about the things that, in the opinion of the many, they say well? (598e3)

This speech, in turn, points to a similar passage in the *Symposium* itself:

'Or don't you realize,' she said, 'that only here, in seeing in the way the beautiful is seeable, will he get to engender not phantom images of virtue—because he does not lay hold of a phantom—but true, because he lays hold of the true...?' (212a2)

These passages, in combination with what has already happened, make clearest of anything Socrates' belief about truth: only the true is both really beautiful and really virtuous (or excellent), but what appears to be virtuous or beautiful often seems to be true. Socrates' skill at dialectic is the skill of knowing the difference between these, and its guiding principle is a kind of suspicion, a systematic doubt of and searching for substance in attractive and seductive λόγοι.

The refutation of Agathon concludes with a clear idea of the object of eros, in the course of the argument changed by Socrates from "beautiful things" to "beauty". With the idea of the non-beautiful desiring the beautiful the stage is set for Socrates' speech. It is my hope that as a result of the preceding discussion, we arrive with an understanding of how what he says is both a logical and literary continuation of what has come before. Although the dialogue seems to be a debate between points of view, it is also the evolution of a single one, the logical and dramatic culmination of which we are now prepared to examine.

VII. Socrates

When Socrates resumes his argument with Agathon by taking up Agathon's role and placing Diotima in his own, the example he chooses to illustrate the middle ground between ugliness and beauty sets the tone for the rest of his speech:

"Don't you know," she said, "that to opine correctly without being able to give an account is neither to know expertly (for how could expert knowledge be an unaccounted-for matter?) nor lack of understanding (for how could lack of understanding be that which has hit upon what is)? But surely correct opinion is like that, somewhere between intelligence and lack of understanding." (202a5)

It is part of what we know about knowledge that truth about human things is elusive. In the case of such things as justice or the beautiful, not just right opinion, but pretty much all human thought ranks somewhere below expert knowledge of what is. The first metaphor of Socrates' speech, then, is a ladder of belief, whose steps correspond roughly with the ladder of eros discussed later. Perhaps the rungs of this ladder might tentatively be identified as ignorance, thought, right opinion, and expert knowledge; that is, true knowledge of the thing itself. It is our human quest to ascend this ladder, as Socrates later makes clear.

It is only during a part of Socrates' speech that Eros is personified, and Socrates does this that he might better show what traits characterize the seeker: Eros is between the world of gods and the world of men, and the things he strives for are the things that belong to gods. The objects of our own lives are of course the same; and since Eros and man alike seek the things that belong to god-hood, Socrates presents the genealogy of Eros to show our composition through his. Our metaphorical father is Τόπος, or "Resource", which also connotes "a means of doing", or "a device"; and man has well deserved the name of the the Great Artificer. Supremely inventive in thought and action, the human race is, as Socrates describes Eros, always seeking knowledge and trying to trap truth with every device available to its creative intellect. Resource himself is the son of Μητις, a word similar in meaning, but with more connotation of planning, advising, and even scheming, which lends additional shades to our existence as hunters. Our "mother", Πενία (or "Poverty"), could be seen as tarnishing and limiting the skill and cunning given us by Resource; but Πενία also means "Need", and this brings her coupling with Resource out in a different light: Πόρος gave us the means of seeking, and Πενία the desire to do so. Without her heritage, our nature would be different indeed, for we would have the machinery to seek wisdom, but it would lie idle in our ignorance of our want thereof. Socrates furnishes an accurate description of what this would be like:

Nor, in turn, do those who lack understanding philosophize and desire to become wise; for it is precisely this

that makes the lack of understanding so difficult—that if a man is not beautiful and good, nor intelligent, he has the opinion that that is sufficient for him. Consequently, he who does not believe that he is in need does not desire that which he does not believe he needs. (204a3)

So the metaphor of Eros for humanity is in actuality limited, but in potentiality, one would hope, limitless. That is to say, not everyone recognizes his need for wisdom, so not all are seekers after it, but, it seems, all may be made to see their need, so that all are seekers potentially. To philosophize is to actualize the inheritance of these two parents, to fully recognize our need for wisdom and to hone the resources needed for hunting it—to train the mind in thinking (and particularly in dialectic, though this is implied only by the nature of the conversation itself). To philosophize, in one way of looking at it, is to become fully human by recognizing what the nature of humanity is. Men are in the situation of Oedipus: inadequate self-knowledge condemns us to unhappiness. We cannot achieve our "erotic potential" (which is the same as our human potential, unless our resources should ever prove adequate to our needs) as seekers after wisdom unless we know ourselves for what we are: the sons of Resource and Need, born under Aphrodite's star. With that realization, we must become philosophers; lovers of wisdom, which "is one of the most beautiful things." (204b2)

Socrates' discussion of generation illustrates another aspect of our betweenness. "The mortal nature seeks as far as possible to be forever and immortal," (207d1) as he says, and it is thus another defining characteristic of man that we seek perpetuation through our "children," our creations. Everything made by man, intellectual or physical, is a means of his perpetuity. Although Socrates perhaps does not literally mean that all human creation has immortality as its aim, there can be no doubt that bringing forth out of ourselves is among the most necessary and definitive of human actions. As born ourselves, and as changing beings, ours is the realm of the born and the becoming. But our bringing forth takes place only in the presence of what partakes of the beautiful, and thus giving birth is best, and best achieves immortality, when it is performed under the beautiful itself. Behold the importance of seeking wisdom to the creator: knowledge of beauty is his muse, required for his "child" to be truly divine and immortal. And as Plato seems to say, (599a4) the one who has true knowledge of anything would not choose poetry as his child. His children are true virtue, brought about through "beautiful and magnificent speeches and thoughts." (210d4)

Once eros is established as "engendering and bringing to birth in the beautiful," (206e5) Socrates shows how we, as humans, ascend the ladder of eros (which is the ladder of comprehension of our need) in order to attain the beautiful, that we may bring to birth in its presence that which will make us divine and immortal. But is Plato saying that we seek

knowledge for the sake of creation? This hardly seems like him; rather, once one's eros is in the presence of true knowledge, or pretty nearly, the means of pursuit and the thing engendered are one and the same. That is to say, when seeking wisdom, the λόγοι engendered are the means of the seeking. This clarifies the nature of Socrates' endless conversation. The idea of the ladder of love contributes the notion that there is a certain kind of virtue brought forth corresponding to each gradation of eros. How close one is able to come to bringing forth true excellence depends on how far one has advanced one's idea of the beautiful. According to Socrates, the greatest thing to which one can give birth is moderation and justice, and by this he can only mean some λόγος thereof. But here we have to be careful with equating creation to giving birth, for Socrates uses the language of "being pregnant" with virtue, which leaves open the question of who does the impregnating. Let it for now suffice to point out that Plato's language does indeed leave open the possibility that the things given birth to, for which I have used the word "created," have an ambiguous point of genesis. This suggests the idea of learning as recollection in the *Meno*: that the things given birth to are within the creator potentially, and brought forth by him, rather than given their genesis within and by him.

The ladder of eros is a curiously mixed metaphor. It is described in two separate passages; the first explains the nature of pregnancy in soul, and the second describes the path one must walk to "be initiated into [the perfect revelations]." (209e5) In the first, someone pregnant with virtue is described as going to a beautiful person, and

...to this human being he is at once fluent in speeches about virtue—of what sort the good man must be and what he must practice. (209b7)

And, as he goes on to say, one who sees the beautiful in a beautiful person gives birth to such children as did Homer or Lycurgus. This is appropriate, for one whose beauty is found in other men will create such children as are appropriate to men: poetry or laws. But Socrates wishes to go further: he wishes to create children appropriate to men not as they are, but to men he aspires to be. He wants children created under the beauty of true knowledge, and here describes how they too might be got.

The first rung on the ladder to procreation in the true beautiful is to "love one beautiful body and there generate beautiful speeches." (210a7) This, in one interpretation, can be seen as describing Agathon, for he is young and blinded by beauty, and with his limited and superficial conception of beauty he creates what is appropriate to his character: merely beautiful speeches: one who loves with the passions creates what is appropriate to them. But as one climbs, and the attraction to bodies fades, eros turns toward the beauty of souls and the creation of the things appropriate to that beauty; that is,

"speeches as will make the young better; in order that [the lover], on his part, may be compelled to behold the beautiful in pursuits and laws." (210c1)

Or, to put it another way, one must investigate the causes and the nature of virtue in men through investigating the political (perhaps Pausanias' emphasis on laws places him at this point in Socrates' scheme), and this draws one further away from the superficial understanding of beauty which Agathon has. From there, the lover and beloved journey on to "the sciences" and give birth to speeches and thoughts, for (if one sees the political rightly) this naturally evolves from trying to understand virtue through the political. This investigation eventually leads one to seek the form of beauty, in which the engendering of true virtue is possible.

And so we have Socrates' sketch of the human purpose. As humans, we are aware of our intermediate status, between gods and animals. We are aware of a better state, one of immortality and wisdom and perfection, but may be unable to achieve it. Caught between, we strive to give birth to something out of ourselves which seems to partake of the world above ourselves, so that we may partake of the divine through procreation. When this striving for and not achieving immortality seems frustrating, we should remember that Plato's vision is really an affirmative one. This seeking is what is proper to us as mortal beings: since we are creatures of change, our joys come in part from mortal things, and in part from the divine. If we can make something which partakes of our nature and of the divine nature, such as the children Socrates describes, we have truly done the best thing possible for a man, and will move closer to happiness. This bringing to birth is the action which reveals our limits, certainly, but it also defines our potential for greatness.

This is, I think, the significance of the process Socrates describes. But there is still much to be said about the process itself, for the ascent of this ladder cannot be made without help.

Part Two: Learning Desire

The existence of Plato's dialogues, their content, and their structure all attest to his belief in the learnability of matters important to the virtuous life. Diotima's description of the ladder of eros makes it clear that the path to this knowledge is not trod alone. And so, much more immediate and real than the *Symposium*'s implications about our nature are its implications about the interactions between men by which knowledge is sought. As we know from the *Meno*, virtue cannot be taught, for nobody knows what it is, and this problem renders unteachable all other similarly noble objects of investigation. The distinctions between these objects are somewhat blurred, in fact, as Socrates suggests that virtue, knowledge of the beautiful, and knowledge of the good all progress in tandem. Where the *Meno* might leave the reader

despairing of ever coming to know virtue, the beautiful, or the good, the *Symposium* is not only more optimistic, but even prescribes a formula! However, Diotima's speech contains only the vaguest outline of the progression toward these things; it is full of ambiguous terms and incomplete descriptions. Fortunately, it is possible to fill in many of these gaps by interpolating from what Socrates does and how Plato writes.

The ladder that Diotima describes is general in its scope. Although "the ladder of love" is a tempting name for it, it is a ladder of at least six things. When she switches from "the beautiful things" to "the good things", (204e1) Socrates can say that men seek the good things in order to become happy. The eros which has the name of the whole, which is a specific kind of aiming at happiness (that is, "engendering and bringing to birth in the beautiful" (206e5)), must aim also at understanding the beautiful. So since Socrates has said that the good things are beautiful, the reader is strongly inclined to suspect that the converse is true also, or at least that the distinction matters little. The understanding of the beautiful is for the sake of the begetting of virtue, and it would seem this requires being virtuous. And so the ladder of eros seems to be also a ladder of wisdom, of knowledge of the beautiful, of virtue, of knowledge of the good, of happiness, and possibly of age, though this is only hinted at. The ladder is thus nothing less than Plato's formula for living the good life, and a complete description of the philosopher's journey.

Diotima's description of the ladder of eros seems to describe both how one becomes a philosopher, and how one makes a philosopher of others. We are fortunate enough to have the examples of Socrates and Plato to refer to for explanation of this passage, for though suggestive, Diotima's language is obscure. In the sense that she speaks of a lover and a beloved, her story vaguely resembles ordinary Greek pederasty, as described by Pausanias. But she also adds a third character, ὁ ἡγούμενος, "the one guiding," (210a7) whose role she does not elaborate on. So we are left to question what role the one guiding has in the ascension of the ladder. The beginning of Diotima's speech suggests one answer:

"Now perhaps, Socrates, you too might be initiated into these erotics; but as for the perfect revelations—for which the others are means, if one were to proceed correctly on the way—I do not know if you would be able to be initiated into them. Now I shall speak," she said. "I shall not falter in my zeal; do try to follow, if you are able." (209e5)

That is to say, she is "the one guiding" Socrates, and Socrates is the lover. From the occasional reference she makes to Socrates' sluggishness of thought and improper desires, we can infer the nature of her contribution. As Socrates said at the very beginning of the speech, Diotima taught him erotics, and it is clear now what this means: she trained him in desiring, along the path that she describes.

Training someone in desiring clearly means a number of related things. As is plain from the various speakers, eros can be of many things. Clearly, the pedagogical role has as its first intent to help the one led (the lover) to climb the ladder. From what Diotima has said, it is clear that all men are lovers of some sort, but vary in their ideas of what beauty is. From this it follows that the pedagogical role is not particular as to its subjects, and that it also accomplishes its aim by helping the lover see a higher form of beauty with reference to eros' objects. Few men know what the truly beautiful is; the role of the guide is to move the lover's eyes toward the successively greater sorts of beauty; that is, the guide must help the lover to see his need of a beauty beyond his limited conception of it. The guide must of necessity be a philosopher, and his role is to make philosophers out of others, as a sophist makes sophists of others.

What, then, are the characteristics of a "guiding philosopher"? From the many things that Alcibiades says of Socrates, one inference is particularly relevant: it helps for the guide to be a virtuous man. Because Socrates is a virtuous man, Alcibiades is shamed by him (for he is a lover after Phaedrus' description), and whatever power for good Socrates has over Alcibiades comes from this. But it is clear that Socrates is unable to do much with Alcibiades, for he knows not how to teach virtue, but only the desire of it. In the *Meno*, Socrates says of virtuous men that

This was the reason why they were unable to make others like themselves—because their virtue was not grounded on knowledge. (99b)

Which echoes Agathon's words in the *Symposium*:

...for what one does not have and does not know, one could neither give to another nor teach to another. (196e5)

Inarticulate virtue, that is, cannot perpetuate itself. From this, it seems that the one who reaches the top of the ladder of eros is the ultimate teacher, for

...[he will] get to engender not phantom images of virtue—because he does not lay hold of a phantom—but true, because he lays hold of the true... (212a3)

That is—he is capable of teaching true virtue to others, not just the desire of it, and this is what every true philosopher strives for: to be a sophist worthy of the name. The philosopher, however, must be satisfied with helping others see their need of wisdom. His role is one of exposing ignorance, which raises a further question: how does he do this? One who has knowledge of his ignorance, in accordance with Agathon's words, can certainly teach it to others, but by what means?

Socrates' conversation with Meno will not tell one who hears it what virtue is, but one can hardly hear it without knowing more about virtue. The ignorance of the subject

which Socrates proclaims is not feigned, but neither is it the sort of ignorance which Meno has at the start of the dialogue. Meno has a number of false ideas about virtue which lead him astray, and which Socrates removes. He has given Meno the "torpedo's touch", (84c) and when he does the same for Meno's slave, Meno thinks the slave the better for it. Perplexity, that is, is better than false opinion (though both are called "ignorance"), most particularly because it sets one to desire knowledge where one did not before. Perplexity is prerequisite to the desire and pursuit of wisdom, and so the guiding philosopher must have the "torpedo's touch."

Socrates' method of producing this perplexity is dialectic, and one would be hard-pressed to suggest a better or even another method of doing so. However, Socrates' arguments are seldom logically air-tight, nor are their aims frequently obvious. Socrates, thinker that he was, cannot have been unaware of the spuriousity of his arguments, and if he knew his conclusions not to follow logically, he must at least have thought them good. He must have thought that the conclusions drawn by his often spurious arguments would be *useful if believed*. It is not without reason that he describes Eros as a sophist. The failings in the logic are an invitation to look deeper, to ask what may be underneath the argument and *why* Socrates thinks the conclusion useful. A reader of the *Meno* may ask why it is important that virtue be one, not many; or a reader of the *Republic* why Socrates argues that justice is a certain kind of "minding one's own business." This is a surprising (though inevitable) conclusion, for it implies that Socrates' professed ignorance is not as blank as that which he succeeds in producing in Meno; that he has some ideas under it.

Socrates' many myths furnish a more obvious example of the same phenomenon: something he says is not strictly "true," but is somehow useful. It is wrong to call these things "principles" or "beliefs," since Socrates seems in earnest about his ignorance. Rather, they are heuristics, and only as such, if at all, that Socrates can be said to "believe." The trouble about these heuristics is that they are never exposed to question; they are insulated by poor interlocutors who are snowed by Socrates' illogic. Neither are they ever stated explicitly, so inevitably one who would argue with Socrates must, in producing a "definitive" interpretation of him, impose his own ideas on what Socrates means. From these things it is clear that a Socratic conversation is only secondarily a subject of proof or disproof, and primarily something about which one should seek understanding. The hidden and indefinite "meaning" of a Socratic argument, coupled with its complexity and spurious logic have this as their intent: that Socrates is trying to avoid a presentation which encourages argument without understanding, and opts rather for one which encourages the hearer to question and investigate the subject himself, using his conversation as a guide. Socratic conversation is hence marvelously capable of teaching from

afar, as Alcibiades says:

But whenever any one of us hears you [Socrates] or another speaking your speeches, even if the speaker is very poor, regardless of whether a woman, man, or lad hears them, we are thunderstruck and possessed... When I heard Pericles and other good speakers, I thought they spoke well, but they could not affect me in any way like that, nor did my soul grow troubled and become distressed at my slavish condition. (215d3)

Because it is open to interpretation and invites the reader to seek meaning by means of it, Socrates' conversation has the power to make men question. This is the hallmark of an ignorance which desires: it asks questions, and Socrates gives us a framework from which to begin to do so well, for his conversations suggest questions of the first importance. Even at two thousand years distance Socrates can make philosophers of others.

Plato's contribution to this should not be underestimated. The manner in which Alcibiades describes Socrates' speeches applies equally well to Plato's presentation of them:

For were one willing to hear Socrates' speeches, they would at first look altogether laughable. The words and phrases that they wrap around themselves on the outside are like that, the very hide of a hybristic satyr. For he talks of pack-asses, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and tanners, and it looks as if he is always saying the same things about the same things; and hence every inexperienced and foolish human being would laugh at his speeches. But if one sees them opened up and gets oneself inside them, one will find, first, that they alone of speeches have sense inside; and second, that they are the most divine and have the largest number of images of virtue in them; and that they apply to the largest area, indeed to the whole area that it is proper to examine for one who is going to become beautiful and good. (221e1)

Plato's literary genius allows him to present philosophical ideas in an uncommonly rich manner, augmenting the powers of Socrates' speech with those particular to his own unique format. The *Symposium*'s very structure reinforces the idea that certain speeches have power. Socrates' words come to us as Plato's account of Apollodorus' rendition of Aristodemus' retelling of Socrates' recollection of Diotima's speech, and it should be noted that Apollodorus has an audience of more than one. (173e5) And though the speech has passed from Diotima through many retellings (the unreliability of which Plato seems to have made a point) it has always had an effect. When Apollodorus says

As for me, whenever I make any speeches on my own about philosophy or listen to others—apart from my belief that I am benefitted—how I enjoy it! (173c2)

it is strong testimony for the power such speeches can have if

one simply hears them. In addition, where most of Plato's dialogues make one feel close to the action, the many veils over Diotima's speech emphasize the fact that the *Symposium* is a dialogue of listeners, not speakers. The role of the lover is spoken of by Diotima; that of the guide mostly implied. The *Meno*, too, ends in Socrates' exhortation to Meno to teach Anytus the same ignorance he himself has come to. It is hard indeed to see how a philosopher could fail to be a guide also. One who knows his ignorance wants to share it with the world.

Gorgias' speeches (to which Socrates compares Agathon's), in being persuasive, may seem akin to Socrates', but Alcibiades' speech reveals the crucial difference between the two: the speeches of an orator depend on his oratorical proficiency for their power, but those of Socrates do not; the former derive power from their words, the latter from what their words represent. This suggests the differing mechanisms through which persuasion by λόγος and persuasion by conviction operate: where conviction succeeds through a kind of flattery (as Socrates suggests in the *Gorgias*) and by inflaming the passions, persuasion in the manner of Socrates succeeds through different methods. Gorgias' persuasion and Socrates' aim at a different sort of object: Gorgias' at (incidentally false) opinion, or conviction, and Socrates' at producing ignorance. Where the argument of a sophist can be pulled apart by an acute observer, a Socratic "argument" cannot be pulled apart so easily, for there is nothing definite to lay hold of and refute. As objects of investigation rather than logic, it is hard to meaningfully predicate "true" or "false" of anything Socrates says, unless, mistaking Socrates' logic for his meaning, one engages in the somewhat trivial exercise of trying to poke holes in it.

Though this slippery speech here sounds ethereal, it proves solid enough in its effects, as in the case of provoking shame in Alcibiades, and in provoking thought and perplexity in its hearers. This is the genius of Socrates' dialogue: it is designed to withstand and promote sustained examination of its content, but is presented in such a way that it is difficult to argue the content away unless one knows precisely what is being said—and the confidence that one does is unwarranted. Socrates never goes so far as to present something that passes for true knowledge; rather his discourse has the aim of setting one on the path to thinking rightly about an object by clearing away false presuppositions about it. We must assume, though, that Socrates, knowing the false logic in many of his arguments, had in mind a hypothetical character for his heuristics. Socrates did not merely clear away false presupposition; his act of setting an interlocutor on the path also consists of a starting-point.

This starting-point may have something of the character of the "noble lie" discussed in the *Republic*. In his arguments, Socrates's ideas come across with a logical certainty that he knows does not belong to them, though perhaps they have another kind of certainty. Is he presenting what he does not

know to be true in the guise of truth? This is an ugly light to put matters in; it would perhaps be better to say that his interlocutors have opinions which are manifestly wrong (or even harmful), and whatever Socrates replaces these notions with has not the same character. Socrates does not replace one incorrect certainty with another, but with uncertainty; the worse sort of ignorance with the better. The one is ignorance which pretends to know; the other is ignorance which knows it does not know and what it does not know. The first is the ignorance of the satisfied, the second of the seeking. And so if Socrates does tell a "noble lie," if he does instill some hypothesis as a starting-point, it is for the sake of creating that ignorance which knows itself. Socrates does not put into anyone's head something pretending to be the truth of a thing, but only some hypotheses as to the thing's nature. The nature of putting someone on the path requires this; one cannot search for something without some such ideas to start with (Need must have some Resource), and it is best that these ideas have a hypothetical, not a dogmatic character: Socrates is no sophist, though he uses some of the tricks of that trade. This action is also validated by Socrates' virtue, for a man who is manifestly virtuous and knows he doesn't know what that means is likely to suggest the best possible hypotheses for beginning an investigation of virtue.

If Socrates' state is as above described (self-aware ignorance with some hypotheses), one has to ask how this ignorance resembles knowledge so closely. It may be that what is possible in this sort of ignorance, namely, having some idea of the nature of a thing, is as close as earthly knowledge can come to truth. Socrates' hypotheses (for example, his definition of justice in the *Republic*) are like metaphors. True knowledge is not imaginable, but only thinkable. We don't know what kind of eyes one would have to have to avoid being blinded by the light. Socrates can speculate about what it would be like to have such knowledge, but the effects of having it would be so huge that one who knows only right opinion and perplexity cannot conceive what communion with the truth would be like, so much so that it may only be attainable when one is freed from earthly trappings. The truth illuminates this world, and perhaps we may know an approximation of truth from the physical approximations that surround us. Socrates' heuristics describe what the truth of a matter is like; they are similes for truth. Is simile like right opinion? Perhaps it is, for it seems that to try to describe the truth in similes is to acknowledge that one does not know it, but can only make a likeness of it. It may also be the case that, if true knowledge is inaccessible to the earth-bound, similes are a kind of "earthly truth", the closest one can come to truth before death—we cannot look at the light of the truth, but by observing the shadows it casts we can discern something of its nature.

Socrates is therefore something between the virtuous man who cannot make others like himself, and the mythical

teacher of virtue (the virtuous man who can do so). The first sort of man has the ignorance of Meno or Glaucon, the ignorance which is satisfied with itself; and the second sort of man has the knowledge which is satisfied with itself. As Diotima says, neither those ignorant nor those wise desire to become wise. (204a1) As a complacently ignorant man may impart his complacent ignorance to others, and as a wise man can impart his wisdom to others, so does Socrates impart what is appropriate to his non-complacent ignorance: perplexity and a starting-point from which to seek. Complacent ignorance is appropriate to the sophist, and is perpetuated by dogmatism; desiring and questioning and dissatisfied ignorance to the philosopher, whose method is dialectic.

At the base of all this, of course, is the fact that the philosopher is a lover not just of wisdom, but also of others, for climbing toward the top of the ladder does not preclude having one foot a rung down. The roles of lover and guide unavoidably mingle; the process of making someone better (which is the role of the lover) cannot help but turn into making that person into a philosopher (which is the role of the guide). The relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, for example, is an erotic one, but each perceives it differently. Alcibiades wants to ensnare Socrates into a relationship such as Pausanias describes, but Socrates is willing to confer all the benefits of his wisdom for none of the benefits of Alcibiades' youth and beauty. Socrates is the greatest kind of lover of man there can be, precisely because he also loves something higher.

Translations

- Benjamin Jowett, *Meno* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1949).
- Seth Bernardete, "Symposium" in *The Dialogues of Plato*, (New York: Bantam, 1986). (This edition does not contain line numbers; those that appear herein have been interpolated and so some may be incorrect.)
- Allan Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1968).



Untitled — Erin Martell

In Our Fear We Make an Image

Heidi Francie Roberts

Preface

After having spent four weeks watching and concentrating on Bergman's "The Seventh Seal," I have become continually haunted by the film's images. I close my eyes and see the quiet, pain-ridden face of the knight as he leans against a rock pondering his chess game with Death, or I awaken in the morning with the image of self-flagellating people unshakably clear in my mind. Bergman's moving images of mankind have become part of me, in such a way that I cannot escape them. I have become obsessed by a creation that is both enlightening and tormenting.

In my essay I want to capture the humanity and intensity of emotion in this film. My ardor and belief in the film's importance are such that I have often felt unworthy to do so, but the need to convey the movie's beauty and meaning has also been rendered so great by my love and admiration for the film that it overwhelms these other feelings. My goal in this essay is to show that the artist and his image fulfill a unique and essential role in the quest for self-knowledge, which I believe to be the responsibility of all mankind. In order to achieve such a goal I must both explain and justify the emotion, intuition, and understanding of humanity that are present in all aspects of the film.

For this reason I have gone out of my way to do much more scene description than I would normally allow myself. The reader will doubtless note that I quote large portions of dialogue. There is a script of "The Seventh Seal" published in book form, but this book is taken from the original script that often differs greatly from the dialogue and action in the film's final cut. Therefore I have tried to ignore the script as much as possible and have attempted to recreate a sense of only the final, completely edited film; and this often involves quoting large portions of dialogue.

There is a wealth of emotional experience within me that is tied to this film. I want the reader to see what I see in order to love what I love, in order to understand what I have come to understand about this most magnificent of films. In order for this understanding to happen, there needs to be a bit of translation done. The visual images and the music must be put into words so that their significance can be understood without their more immediate emotional impact being lost. These sounds and images must also be explained in terms of the dialogue. Then, and only then, the camera of the mind must pull itself back for a long shot, in order to analyze the significance of all these images in terms of larger themes, some of which even Bergman may not have been aware of when he

created the film.

I have put much effort into selecting, from the myriad of images in Bergman's film, those which are most crucial to the few themes that I have chosen to dwell upon in the essay. I have tried to order and describe these images to best facilitate a discussion of these topics and to encourage further thought and questioning by the reader. Without allowing the reader to sever any emotional ties to the film, I wish to help him see some of the subtleties, both visual and thematic, that he may have missed upon first, second, or even third viewing. It is a great desire of mine that the reader will finish this essay wishing to watch "The Seventh Seal" again and again. I hope to be able to bring out the richness of the movie's content, how impossible it would be to ever absorb all the meanings, and how rewarding it can be simply to attempt to do so.

The Unique Beauty and Usefulness of the Image

"In our fear we make an image," says the knight. "And that image we call God." Indeed, mankind has always been drawn toward the making of images, often in fear and often he knows not why. In Achilles, Homer created an image of man's stubborn pride, and Plato used the charioteer image to describe the human soul. I claim that the images we make are not themselves gods, but that they reveal something of the nature of the one true God, of our innate knowledge of Him, and of ourselves. Furthermore, I claim that the making and interpreting of images is one of the greatest pursuits of all mankind.

Bergman gives his viewer images of a very troubled and philosophic knight, an atheistic squire, and an acrobat who sees visions of the Virgin Mary, all living in the midst of plague-ridden Europe during an age of great faith and great despair, when the existence of Satan and the mercilessness of God are taken for granted by the masses, but where people believe that the devil can be warded off by "a mixture of blood and the bile of a big black dog." Each of these characters reflects a piece of every person so that taken together, all the characters form a sort of personification of the soul of man. From the minds and souls of his characters, from their interplay with one another, and from their reactions to the surroundings and circumstances with which they are presented, Bergman's images offer a profound commentary on the nature of mankind and what its true salvation might be. As something inside the knight forces him to ask and seek answers to the

most difficult questions, so does Bergman force his viewer to do the same, offering insight into these questions through the words and actions of all his characters.

An interviewer once commented to Ingmar Bergman that it seemed as if Max Von Sydow, who plays the knight in "The Seventh Seal," often seemed to play the character who speaks Bergman's own ideas and opinions in Bergman's movies. "Not really," replied Bergman; "all the characters are me." Bergman is one person creating a story with many characters, and because the story is born from his own imagination each character contains a piece of himself. Each is made of some fragment of Bergman's personality and all are taken from his own mind. Therefore, an examination of all the characters together offers insight into the whole man, the whole mind and soul of Bergman. Furthermore, just as each character can be seen as a fragment of Bergman, so can each character be taken as a fragment of humanity in general, Bergman himself being one small example of the general state of mankind. Considered in this fashion, each character is a sort of snapshot of the human condition and all the characters taken together form a flipbook, a moving image, albeit a primitive one, of the human soul. They therefore prompt one to search one's own soul.

Within the film, Bergman offers a short commentary on the act of image-making which includes a partial explanation of why he chose to create this film, why he chose to use this particular medium as an outlet for his soul-searching. In this scene the squire Jons enters a small stone room where an artist is painting a mural depicting tales of the plague. The painter stands on a scaffold as he paints, his brushes and other materials strewn about on the scaffold. For a moment, Jons quietly surveys the artist's work.

"Why do you paint such nonsense?", Jons asks the painter, suddenly and bluntly.

"I thought it would serve to remind people that they must die," says he. The painter encourages thought.

"Well, it's not going to make them feel any happier," replies Jons.

"Why should one always make people happy? It might not be a bad idea to scare them a little once in a while," answers the painter, meaning that from painful thought real benefit often arises.

Beyond this brief insight, it is unlikely that even Bergman, if he were asked, could explain why he feels compelled to create this film. There is present in man a deep-seated need to create images of himself, of God, of death, and of every other thing that is at all in the realm of experience or imagination. Man's own ineptitude to explain or even define the soul is overshadowed by a deep-seated longing to obtain some sort of self-understanding. If man is indeed the rational animal, as Aristotle defines him, then it is a torment greater than any other that the one special trait, this rationality, allows him to gain nothing, not even an understanding of himself. No real

knowledge can be grasped through rational thought. Instead, one reaches only the dead end encountered by Hume, who found himself doubting the existence of absolutely everything. Even Hume acknowledged that he could not live in such a way; he might sit all day philosophizing and doubting the existence of everything, but at night he sat and played backgammon with his friends, assuming the existence of his friends, the backgammon board, and the so-called tangible world in general.

Bergman would have each viewer revel in his humanity, not deny his own existence. Emotion, passion, and intuition must not be overwhelmed by the purely rational. If one is ever to discover anything about oneself, no facet of human existence can afford to have its significance denied. With logic alone one becomes as unfortunate as Hume, the rational self admitting to a complete lack of knowledge, but the very soul crying out just the opposite and yearning for something completely different.

Bergman offers an image of the way that he believes things are and leaves the interpretation up to the viewer. He does not deny contradictions but brings them to the forefront so that each audience member is forced to face them individually, just like the painter who, by painting the mural of the plague, forces his viewers to think about death. The painter is not a philosopher; but based on what he perceives of the world, he creates an image that forces his viewers to ponder difficult questions, questioning being the first necessary step toward acquisition of self-knowledge. The painter paints an image of what he perceives both in the world that surrounds him and within his own mind. The viewer is then led to ponder the image. Questioning the perceptions of the painter may eventually lead the viewer to question his own perceptions, which, in turn, may lead him to seek after truth. "I only paint things as they are. Others can do as they like," the painter says. Others may come and read into his work, but he merely records what he finds within his own soul. Similarly, Bergman's film making is both a record of the state of his own soul, and a quest to understand this soul and the universe which surrounds him via the act of working out the image.

The knight's confessional scene affords an excellent example of Bergman's soul-searching through the film; it is furthermore an excellent illustration of how successful this method of soul-searching can be. Interestingly enough, the confessional scene is framed by the two scenes with Jons and the painter, bringing the issue of imaging to the forefront in this scene of beautiful images. The confessional scene is one of only four scenes where the knight reveals himself to another character and the one scene in which he most articulates his inner torment. It is also the one scene where all the main theological and philosophical questions of the film are raised. The images of this scene are not themselves answers, but they are a road that leads to further questioning and possibly, eventually, to some answers.

The knight enters a small, square, dark room. The walls and floors are empty and grey, but beyond the feeling of emptiness there is something haunting about the room. It looks like a face. We see the knight's back as he walks toward the altar. Two small windows on either side of the far wall, the only light sources in the darkness, stare out of the screen, like two eyes. The nose is a giant crucifix hanging between the two windows; the arch of the doorway both forms the hairline and frames the face. The altar is the mouth. One cannot be sure whose face it is that is mirrored upon the screen. It might very well be Death's. The knight walks straight up to the mouth. The only noise is of the bells ringing somewhere outside. Outside seems that much farther away; the room seems all the more silent.

The crucifix is an image of God, but it is also an image of Death. The camera closes in on the form of Christ, his arm stretched out unnaturally and his face tilted diagonally across the screen. (The diagonal is the most disturbing compositional line in painting, often used in paintings that depict some great torment.) The crown of thorns is pushed down upon the figure's head, a dark line of blood stains the forehead, the eyes and eyebrows are slanted down with a look of sorrow and pain. In the crucifix, we see the marriage of God and death. There is no greater sin or torment in all the history of man than the killing of God Himself.

The knight walks up to the confessional, and the bars that separate him from his confessor are like a black prison that separates him from God. They cast a dark shadow and forbid easy sight. The knight does not realize that he confesses to no priest at all but to Death himself. Only the viewer sees Death's face: its pale, distinctive shape, cleft chin, and round, dark eyes. The knight stands before the confessional, the palm of his hand curved against the edge of the wall as if he were trying to use his sense of touch to keep some contact with the tangible world. The darkness mirrors his despair; the emptiness in the room mirrors his sense of emptiness and unfulfillment. The agonized face of Christ stares down at him but says nothing as he wrenches open the doubts of his soul not to God, not to any member of humanity, but to Death.

He says, "I want to confess as openly as I can, but my heart is empty. The emptiness is a mirror turned toward my own face. I see myself in it and am filled with fear and disgust."

Death asks the knight what he is seeking, why he is not ready to die, and the knight replies that he wants knowledge. "You want guarantees," replies Death, as the camera again dwells upon the sad effigy of Christ. This Christ seems to be in such severe pain of his own that he could certainly not guarantee anything.

"Call it whatever you like," replies the knight, a stern look of recognition upon his face. He will not be brought down by what is, in some ways, a base interpretation of his motivations. He wants truth, not pleasure, at least not the sort of immediate

pleasure that most people seek. For the knight his own pleasure is definitely secondary to truth. He kneels down in front of the confessional. The shadows from the bars make an odd blackness on either side of him; the corner that he faces as he kneels is completely blackened by shadow so that his blonde hair stands out by contrast, not altogether unlike a halo. The dark emptiness seems about to swallow him.

Again the camera focuses upon the face of Christ. His face is a straight diagonal across the screen; his mouth is agape, but he is only an image and can give no direct answers.

"What is going to happen to those of us who want to believe but aren't able? And what is to become of those who neither want to nor are capable of believing? Why can't I kill God within me?", exclaims the knight, his voice louder, more vehement, tormented, almost angry. As he speaks, he stares straight ahead, his eyes expressionless, in the manner of one who has so much deep-seated pain that he cannot even bear to feel his own emotions.

Why does the knight want to kill God? The Christ-filled cross is ever present in torment, and even so the knight desires to commit again the greatest sin of all mankind. To deny the existence of God is to take up the whip with those who denied the possibility of truth in the claims that Christ made about his origins. If it is true that God's presence is made manifest within this world, as is claimed by Paul in the first chapter of Romans, then to deny God's existence, which he himself has made manifest, is to call God himself a blasphemer and to attempt to murder his existence by a sheer arrogant act of human will.

Paul says this in Romans 1:18-20, "The wrath of God is everywhere upon man, for since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." Yet if what Paul writes is true, then how can the knight's questions have validity? Bergman certainly portrays the knight's questions and torments as if they are meant to be taken seriously. Why then, if God has made himself manifest since the beginning of time, does the knight speak of those "who want to believe but aren't able?" and those "who neither want to nor are capable of believing?" What are the barriers that so prohibit faith?

To acknowledge the existence of God is to acknowledge the existence of a power higher than oneself, a power higher than human intellect, human passions, and human will. It is to accept one's own inability to achieve perfection, because it is to assert a power more perfect than any human power. The knight is a man who wants to attain knowledge. Paradoxically, to assert the existence of God is to assert that there exists a power capable of granting or denying knowledge to man; in other words, asserting that man himself cannot attain knowledge, which only God can give knowledge to man. For the knight acquiring faith would mean completely altering his method of searching for truth and the value he places on that

method, as well as completely rearranging all his perceptions as to what the very nature of truth might be. It is not a task of which he is technically incapable, but it is one of which he currently believes himself to be incapable, so weak is his will, so strong is his pride. Thus, he longs to "kill God within" himself, being tormented on the one hand by a great desire to know God coupled with the awareness of his manifest presence and on the other hand by his stubborn unwillingness to forsake his own power, logic, and will in the pursuit of the knowledge of God.

The camera shifts so that we see Death standing behind the bars to the left of the knight. Death gazes wordlessly at the knight. He too is unable to give any answers. Even he does not know how to reply to such questions.

"Why does he live on in this painful and humiliating way even though I curse him and want to tear him out of my heart? Why in spite of all is he a baffling reality that I cannot shake off?" Again there is the reminder of God's presence in his creation. Later in the film this will become crucial, as the knight comes to experience this presence of God in the lives of other people, being moved to action by their childlike faith and manifest love.

The camera focuses in on Death, who gazes down at the knight. There is a light source behind him, and the crisscross of the bars, like a mask, shields his whitened face from full view. The expression in Death's eyes makes it seem as if he were vaguely troubled, but his mouth is expressionless and resolute. Behind him on the left there hangs a crucifix. Is this an insinuation that God is also watching Death, or is it a reinforcement that they are actually the same thing? As the knight pulls himself up to the bars, Death turns himself so that we see only his profile. The camera is now inside the bars, and it is Death whose face we see without bars. He seems to be quietly calculating, as if he were checking all his pieces to plan his next move in a game of chess. Are men only chess pieces from his point of view? Is life no more serious than a game? Chess is the most serious and rational of games, but it is a game nonetheless. The pieces are images of people trapped by their places on the board that is their world, unable to move any differently than they were made to move. Their movements are limited to a certain type, and they are constantly in danger of being taken. Only the chess player could save them, and even he is not omnipotent, unless he breaks the rules of the game.

The knight's blonde-crowned face is shielded by bars. Christ does not answer. Death does not answer. The knight has closed himself off to all types of belief except pure rationality, logical certainty. Therefore, he has reached the same dead end that Hume reached. He doubts absolutely everything, including his own most basic intuitions. And yet he cannot shake off these intuitions. He feels the presence of God everywhere, tugging away at his heart in a way that he cannot deny, and yet he will not give in to belief, because he

can never have real knowledge of God's existence, in the sense of having logical certainty, and he is too proud to give in. In some ways it seems that God reaching out his hand would be breaking the rules of the game, but the chess player always moves pieces with his own hand.

"I call out to Him in the dark but no one seems to be there," says the knight.

"Perhaps no one is there." Not even Death has proof of the existence of God.

"Then life is an outrageous horror. No one can live in the face of Death knowing that all is nothingness." Here is the cry of a man who gazes into the abyss of which Pascal speaks but who doubts even the existence of the abyss. He feels so deeply a God whom he can neither touch nor comprehend and is filled with the sense of his own inadequacy and life's bitter futility; but he does not know whether the God whom he feels even exists, much less whether he can obtain any sort of salvation or discover any sort of meaning during his brief time upon the Earth. And so he sees his emptiness as a mirror and is filled with "fear and disgust." What is it that the knight sees when he gazes into the darkness? Is it his own face, is it "emptiness under the moon" as his squire will later claim? Is it God, or death, or nothingness? Even he does not know, and yet the image of the face remains. The mirror reflects emptiness, the room looks like a face, Christ's face hangs on the wall, and Death's whitened face is half-hidden but present. These are four faces staring out at the knight. Is any of these God, or are they all only images of Death and/or nothingness? Do we see through a glass darkly, or do we only gaze through an empty world into a mirror that reflects nothing but our own emptiness?

When his rationality can only lead him to a dead end, what is the great use of all the greatness of man without some other meaning beyond what little he finds in himself? Man's greatness is drowned in his own inadequacy and his life is mere futility amounting to nothing but dust and ashes, an outrageous horror.

"Most people never reflect about either death or the futility of life," notes Death, a truth that is reflected in the behavior of most of Bergman's characters. Pascal, in *Pensées* 166 and 168 observed the following: "Death is easier to bear without thinking of it than is the thought of death without peril," and "As men are not able to fight against death, misery, ignorance, they have taken it into their heads, in order to be happy, not to think of it all." And yet the knight is an exception to this rule. Something forces him to think about both God and his own mortality. There are several possible reasons as to why this is so. One is that he has seen much death and has not been satisfied. Another is that he is an educated man, a chess player, who has just returned from the Crusades. He is a nobleman, not poverty-stricken but rather well-off. He has seen many things that most people think of as bringing glory, honor, happiness, and fame, and has not felt at all fulfilled by

them. Instead he has only felt more thoroughly his lack of fulfillment. All these external things amount to only Pascalian diversion. He has also seen Death face to face and is therefore less able to deny the existence of death than those who have not encountered him on such an intimate level. Obviously it would be difficult to play chess with Death and not think of one's own mortality and relationship to the supernatural.

"In our fear we make an image and that image we call God" laments the knight. Again we are confronted with the word "image." The emptiness is a mirror in which one sees one's own face and is filled with fear and disgust. In fear he makes an image and calls that image God. Through Bergman's genius the fear, the disgust, and the images are all mirrored back to us via the images made by the camera. In other words, Bergman, who suffers the same fear and disgust as the knight, creates an image and throws it onto the screen to be watched by an audience of people who also fear and also create images. But Bergman's image of God is not complete. His image does not assert the existence of God, but merely raises fundamental questions just as the knight never claims the existence of God but merely questions. The assertion of God's existence or nonexistence is left up to the interpreter of the film.

If Bergman were creating an image in his fear and calling that image God, then why would he bother questioning God's existence? Perhaps Bergman and the knight are both unlike the general population in that they value logic and knowledge over happiness and are therefore unsatisfied with mere image-making. Instead, they question their own imaginations and are filled not with an ignorant and false contentment but with torment and agonized shame at the awareness of the inadequate nature of their own minds. Bergman does give in to the intuitive by allowing himself to create images in the form of this film, but he goes on to question the image he has created.

Because Bergman questions the validity of the image-making process, as opposed to merely making an image and calling it God, his imagination does not make him happy. If anything he is in even greater torment, because he realizes that due to his restless and questioning nature, no image that he creates can ever fulfill him. Like the knight, he wants knowledge, not false happiness, not guarantees. And yet he does create an image. One might do well to ask why. Like the painter he perceives some sort of truth in the images that he creates; he paints things as he believes that they are. In one sense these are false images, idols of the human mind, only fanciful creations born from an inadequate mind; in another they are embodiments of the most verifiable sort of truth that mankind has. They are an expression of one man's perceptions of the world played out in a way that, when viewed from a distance, helps both the creator of the image and the viewer to consider life in a slightly different light. In other words, from meditating upon the image itself some sort of awareness can be derived. Furthermore, if any truth can be obtained from

watching Bergman's film, then it has been proven that there is some important use of the intuition and the image-creating faculty.

As for the knight, either in fear his mind has created an image so deep-seated that he cannot dispel it, or there really is a God that he is simply too afraid to reach out and accept, being neither willing nor capable of deserting his proud, willful and deep-seated belief that certain knowledge is the one true God. In this latter case, the image that he creates in his fear and calls God is the god of logic, and the other God is the God who really exists. There is, indeed, something comforting about relying on logic for those who have been long used to doing so. It is hard to give up what the mind has long exalted in favor of an untried uncertainty, but logic too can become an idol.

And yet, even in the midst of this crisis of logic, the knight's real goal does not center on the rational. In this sense he is like Hume, forced to live his life in a way that contradicts his greatest understanding of what that life means, what is important in it. He says, "My life has been a futile pursuit, a wandering, a great deal of talk without meaning. I feel no bitterness or self-reproach, because the lives of most people are very much like this. But I will use this respite for one meaningful deed." Despite the depths of his questioning and his need to find God, he portrays his goal as more practical than one might think. He does not merely want answers for the sake of answers, or guarantees for the sake of comfort. His goal is far more noble. He wants to do good.

Yet what are the knight's motivations for doing these good deeds? He wants to do one meaningful deed with his own human knowledge and power. In some sense the search for logical certainty is a ruse. What he really wants is to be worthy of respect, self-respect. Perhaps he believes that by accomplishing one good deed he will earn for himself the ability to look into the mirror of his soul without being filled with fear and disgust. Perhaps, in some part of himself, he believes that in this manner he can save himself from the torment that he feels, without the aid of God. Again the knight is guilty of the sin of pride.

No real answers have been given, and yet all the agonized questions of the knight's tormented soul have been voiced to a treacherous Death; all of Bergman's gut-wrenching questions have been voiced to the blank stare of the camera as well as to the audience that is to come later. Death disappears from sight, leaving this scene uncomfortably cradled in the mind of the viewer.

The Image Played Out

Bergman has made the viewer feel the knight's emptiness from the very opening of the film, and he plays out these questions and images to the end of the film, offering insights

and possible answers through images. He purposefully sets a tone of uneasy desperation to pull us into the torments of the knight, making us feel as he feels and question as he questions. The film's opening shot is of an uncomfortably black sky. A burst of light smacks into the upper left corner of the screen accompanied by a short and almost violent outburst of choral music. Suddenly, a bird soars up against the darkness. All this has the effect of being quite disturbing and dismal. Neither the light nor the music nor the flying of the bird are in themselves unpleasant; it is the immediacy and violence with which they are all thrown onto the screen that achieves the effect of making one start, almost jump or shudder, when one watches the film for the first time. After the vaguely too still, too dark screen, the feeling achieved by the sudden and unexpected light-burst combined with the music is somewhat equivalent to standing alone in a completely dark room when, without any prior warning, someone simultaneously turns the lights on and slaps you across the cheek.

The effect is followed again by a profound stillness. A soothing, rather captivating voice reads from the book of Revelation. The surroundings remind one of the stillness in Heaven of which the voice reads. The camera changes to a shot of a rocky beach under a desolate sky underscored by the solemn and repetitive, almost calming and mesmerizing sound of the waves. There are neither trees nor life-forms anywhere in sight, nothing moves but the ocean. A short distance from the shore the ruins of a castle are repeatedly washed over by the waves. The camera then closes in on the sleeping form of the knight. His jaw square, his face and hair a sharp contrast against the dark and craggy rocks upon which he lies, he appears to be dead and not merely sleeping. One has to concentrate just to be sure that he is breathing. One is reminded that the stillness in Heaven mentioned in Revelation is a stillness that directly precedes Armageddon.

With these eerily gloomy images the film begins, as Bergman creates an impression of quiet desperation to introduce his audience to the unfolding of his tale. Bergman brings his viewer straight to the edge of the abyss and forces him to stare down into it, his eyes glued to the screen.

The knight's character is most developed through his relationship to other characters, and it is in these relationships that answers to many of the most difficult questions of the film are found. The relationship between the squire and the knight is particularly interesting, because it is the squire with whom the knight spends the most time. They have been together since before they left for the Crusades some ten years earlier, and they have endured everything together since that time. Considering this fact, their relationship seems incredibly distant and silent. They are never openly hostile to one another, but they are not particularly friendly either.

The first human interaction in the film takes place when the knight puts his foot on the squire's back to wake him up. The squire rolls over and hisses at the knight's back before

getting up and getting ready to leave. In this action lies an illustration of two things. The first is the squire's comic disrespect of his master, which is later shown to be the attitude he maintains toward humanity in general; the second is the lack of conversation between the knight and his squire. That is to say, the knight neither asks the squire to get up nor speaks to him when he does; he just kicks the squire with his foot and then turns his back on him. The two understand one another's actions well enough: the knight does not seem to doubt that the squire will get up and prepare the horses when he is kicked, and indeed the squire does do what the knight wanted. Essentially their relationship seems almost to be a business relationship. They travel together but are really not much more than two individuals traveling alone. Their conversation is generally limited to a practical discussion of what needs to be done; yet there does seem to be a real affection between them. They are like an old married couple who do not need to talk much.

The relationship between the two is largely a result of the knight's personality, but it is as much a result of the squire's. The knight is a tormented man in search of higher knowledge, the Pascalian aspect of the human soul. The squire, on the other hand, represents the denying, unbelieving element. He does not believe in God or truth. The image that he creates in fear is an image of himself as a man who does not fear, a blunt and coarse singer of bawdy songs of revels in the tangible world and expects nothing after death, who laughs at everything including himself, because he expects no good from anyone, including himself, and therefore assumes that amusement is his best hope.

Perhaps the best example of the squire's denial is found in the first of the two scenes with the painter. In this scene, Jons refuses to admit that he is scared by a description of what the plague does to its victims. When asked if this description scares him, he replies, "Scare? Me? You don't know me," and avoids the subject by pointing at a section of the mural and asking, "What are those horrors you've painted over there?", as if to say, "I'm not frightened at all; I can take even more of this."

The painter describes that section of the mural as the camera focuses on the simply drawn yet horrifying figures that are painted upon the wall, a procession of hunched bleeding people, some wearing crowns of thorns, some whipping others, others simply being whipped. He tells Jons, "Mobs of people, who call themselves Slaves of Sin, are swarming over the country, flagellating themselves and others, all for the glory of God."

The camera gives a full frontal view of the squire from the chest up. He looks absolutely horrified, and he swallows hard and uncomfortably, but he still refuses to admit his fear. He refuses to admit that he really does care about humanity and that he is both terrified and horrified by man's inhumanity to man, to himself. Instead he asks for some brandy.

Later, when the camera comes back to Jons and the

muralist, they are quite tipsy, and Jons is telling the painter that he and his master have just returned from the Crusades. He paints a figure on a small, rectangular stone slab. This image is meant to represent himself. He holds up the slab so that both the painter and the camera have a good view of the comically painted figure, its head jutting forward, shoulders hunched. He says, "This is squire Jons. He grins at Death, mocks the Lord, laughs at himself, and leers at the girls. His world is a Jons-world, believable only to himself, ridiculous to all including himself, meaningless in Heaven, indifferent in Hell." Here is the essential illustration of the fact that Jons has no real faith in anything; he does not feel certain of anything, not even himself. Therefore, he mocks everything, shielding all his passions within the guise of a joke.

The knight walks in as Jons is speaking. For a moment he stands and listens, then he walks up, grabs the slab from Jons' hands, looks at it, throws it down, and pushes Jons' shoulder with this hand, signifying for him to get up so they can leave. He walks out of the room. The squire puts down his paintbrush and once more hisses at his master's back before rising, grabs his bag, gestures goodbye to the painter, and follows the knight out the door.

It is no wonder that these two so very different personalities do not talk more openly. That part of the soul that seeks knowledge and yearns incessantly for God is diametrically opposed to that part that believes nothing and mocks everything. In action the knight and squire get along fine; in fact, they always seem to agree about what ought to be done in any given situation, without any discussion. A good example of this is found in the scene with the girl who is about to be burned in the forest. They do not stop to discuss her situation, but both desire to free her, although doing so goes completely against what their society deems acceptable. Yet their perspectives are so opposed that they have difficulty relating on a truly intimate, personal level.

The one person to whom the knight does reveal himself is Mia, the juggler's wife. She and her family are the only characters who help the knight forget his torments even for a moment, the only ones who help him find any solace. Just as the lack of interaction between knight and squire is due to their individual personalities and ways of perceiving the world, so is the ease with which the knight opens up to Mia due to both his personality and to hers and her husband's, as well as to the presence of their son, Mikael.

We are introduced to Jof and Mia relatively early in the film; in fact, they are the third and fourth living human beings introduced. Like the introduction of the knight and squire, the first shot of Mia and Jof is of them sleeping. Unlike the knight and squire, they certainly do not seem to be dead. They lie stretched out inside a wagon with a third person, Skat, the leader of their little acting troupe. All three lie straight out with their heads touching at the center of the wagon, Skat's snoring making it completely unmistakable that they are sleeping and

not dead. Jof awakens and smacks a fly that lands on his forehead. It leaves a mark there. He bears a happy, even goofy, grin upon his face. He crawls out of the wagon carefully so as not to wake the others. With the rest of his body outside the wagon, he stretches out a leg and shakes it. Once outside the wagon he does a forward somersault, jumps to his feet, and executes a few more gymnastic moves. All the while the silly, joyous smile remains on his face.

It is hard to watch this scene without smiling yourself. The sun shines full in the sky, and the leaves of the trees make shadows on the ground; in the air light sparkles between the leaves, creating an almost magical effect. It is as if nature were mirroring the beautiful simplicity of this man. Jof walks over to where a flask of water hangs from a low tree branch. He talks a large swig of water, gargles, spits, then scratches himself on the head. He steps over to his horse and pats its neck and flank. In a cheery conversational tone, with the same smile still on his face, he says, "Good morning. Have you had your breakfast yet? It's a pity you can't teach me to eat grass. Can't you show me how? We're a little hard up. People aren't very interested in juggling in this part of the country." He says this not with anger at his condition, or sorrow, or self-pity. He speaks matter-of-factly, even contentedly. He sits on a fallen tree branch and begins to juggle, the camera watching his profile. It is as if this man were in a completely differently world from the one that contains both the dismal sky and the rocky seashore of the first scene and the soul tormented by death. He is like a child playing with his toys, who reminds us not of death but of the joy and newness of life.

The sky is full of light, dancing between the trees. Jof seems startled by something, but not frightened so much as pleasantly surprised. He stops juggling and turns very slowly toward the camera, his whole body bathed in light. Upon his face there is a look of bliss that is warming and just short of being comical. He gazes out at something. There is beautiful music, like woodwinds and chimes, reminiscent of birds singing. The light, the music, and Jof's facial expression convey a feeling of spiritual bliss, especially when compared to the scenes of death that both precede and follow this moment.

The camera shifts its view to show us exactly what Jof is watching. Off in the distance, between two patches of trees, is a woman dressed as a noblewoman of late medieval times. In her hands she holds the hands of a small, naked male child, helping him to walk along his toes.

The camera reverts to a shot of Jof sitting upon the fallen tree branch, the light playing gently against his face. He raises his palms and slowly rubs his eyes. Suddenly, the music stops. After looking up once more, Jof turns and runs over to the wagon, jumps inside, and attempts to shake his sleeping wife awake.

Jof tells Mia of his vision, and her entire face erupts into a smile. She sits up next to her already seated husband.

Jof has obviously been waiting for her to ask to hear the story. As he talks animatedly, Mia leans forward, smiling and listening to his words. He says, "She was so close to me that I could have touched her. She had a gold crown and a blue robe with flowers." As Jof speaks, Mia gazes at him with a look of obvious love and devotion. Meanwhile, Jof is completely absorbed in the rapture of both his story and the act of telling it. He continues, caught up in a feeling of awe that transforms his face. "She was teaching the child to walk by holding him with a small brown hand. She saw me watching her... and she smiled at me. My eyes filled with tears... and when I wiped them away, she was gone. And everything was so still in the sky and on the earth. Do you understand?" Jof speaks of a stillness just as Revelation 5 does, but unlike the earlier stillness on the beach, this stillness is joyful.

"You don't believe me," says Jof, turning his head and beginning to put on his shoes. "But it was real, I tell you, not the kind of reality you see everyday but a different kind." Jof is like a small child who has just been told that Santa Claus is not real, but who believes no matter what he is told since he once sat on Santa's lap at the mall. Unlike a small child, however, Jof knows that what he believes goes directly against what others call "reality." As a character, Jof, with his visions, goes against everything logical and every form of normal human experience. He has neither the knowledge that the knight searches for nor the sarcastic and witty sense of humor of the squire. Somehow, he seems better off than either of these two, despite having what modern psychologists might call psychotic hallucinations. Why is this?

Jof, with his daydreaming and childlike nature, is willing to accept ideas that other people would not be open to. This openness is the nature that Christ refers to in Mark 10:14-15 when he tells his disciples, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Here is a complete contrast to the torment of the knight; here is the sort of belief that the knight claims he cannot have. Jof is not a man who feels that God is "hiding himself in a mist of half-spoken promises and unseen miracles"; he is a man who sees miracles with his own two eyes. What the knight cannot grasp with his intellect, the juggler achieves through a simple, childlike faith. The knight worries, but the juggler spends his days bathing in the light of the sun. The first always strives to be rational but laments that he is "imprisoned in [his] dreams and fantasies." The second has visions of the Virgin Mary but calls them "reality" and is content.

Mia smooths over her long, blonde hair with the palm of her hand. "Perhaps it was the kind of reality you told us about when you saw the Devil paint the wagon wheels red, using his tail as a brush."

Jof turns his head and mumbles, "Why must you always bring that up?"

"And then you discovered that you had red paint under your nails."

"Well, perhaps that time I did make it up, but that was just so you would believe my other visions. The real ones, the ones I didn't make up."

The irony here is that Jof, with his simple faith, is not exempt from human folly. He is no prim and proper saint, but is given to lying about the most saintly thing about himself, his visions. Furthermore, he not only lies, but he also does it poorly enough that he is discovered. He is more like a child than what most would consider a saint to be.

Mia and Jof go outside the wagon. Mia sets Mikael down on the grass, and the camera focuses on him until he crawls out of its view. They talk of Mikael's future.

One of the greatest differences between Mia and Jof and the other characters in the film is that they have a child. To have a son is to have both a legacy and hope for the future. Furthermore, to raise a child one has to be other-centered to a large degree. The members of a family must consider, in everything they do, what is best for the entire family; therefore, they have less time to worry about themselves, to be self-indulgent or self-pitying. In addition, a husband and a wife can discuss their problems with each other. One of the knight's greatest torments is that he is withdrawn into himself and has no one to bring him out of his miserable and agonized state. One of the squire's greatest problems is that he thinks about himself too much and has no one to chastise him or point out the inconsistencies in his behavior. The man who spends his life within his own mind winds up with a warped view of reality; the man who lives life for his family may not be wise in a philosophical sense, but he is certainly more in touch with the world than the first man.

Mia lays her head against his chest, places her hand against his left shoulder, and closes her eyes. There is something splendid in a way that seems even enchanted about Mia's personality, which allows her to accept and even admire (despite her chastising) Jof's faithful nature. Although she claims not to believe Jof's visions, she listens to them quite eagerly, even with a certain amount of obvious joy and admiration. She too is in some ways like a child who lets another person's joy become her own; she lets his ardor overwhelm her.

Jof gently begins to sing a song that is similar in mood and tone, but not identical to, the music that played when he saw his vision of the Virgin. The melody conveys the same spiritual joy, although to a lesser degree. The similarity of the music ties the beauty of the vision to the beauty of Jof's created image: his song to God is tied to the vision which is God's song to him. The words to Jof's song are, "On a lily branch a dove is perched/ Against the Summer Sky/ She sings a wondrous song of Christ/ And there's great joy on high." Jof's Christ is very different from the tormented crucifix of the confessional scene; Jof's is a joyous God. The Christ

whom he sees is the Child; the song that he sings is joy.

At this point the camera shows us Skat crawling out of the wagon wearing a Death mask, which looks remarkably like a cross between Death's face and the face of the dead peasant whom Jons and the knight encountered along the road. There are two eye socket holes and a pale, expressionless face. As Skat jumps out of the wagon he complains, "Is this supposed to be a mask for an actor? If the priests didn't pay us so well, I'd say, 'No thanks.'" Skat is that part of man's soul that, even in the face of the most gruesome death, thinks only of material and sensual gratification. He is definitely not the contemplative man. While the knight is tormented by a conflicting sense of logic and yearning for God, the squire chooses to deny that truth exists in anything and yet places value on life, and Mia and Jof share in a simple domestic faith, Skat seeks only sensual gratification and considers neither philosophy, logic, nor faith. His face is scruffy, and he wears an earring.

Skat puts on the Death mask and dramatically recites a monologue in an overly dramatic voice that is meant to be the voice of death. After he has finished reciting, he raises the mask onto his forehead using both hands, turns toward Mia and Jof, and says in his usual voice, "Will the women love me in this get-up? Will I make a hit?" Jof shrugs. Again the image of Death is tied to the most basic sensual aspect of life. Through Skat's offhand comment, the image of Death is rendered comic by the actor. The image that Skat makes is one of Death, but Death as a comic, sensual, even ridiculous figure. Skat slumps back over to the wagon. On his way inside he hangs the mask upon a tree branch, so that a stick pokes straight through one of the eye sockets, and the comic is again transcended by the gruesome.

Mia and Jof look at each other and laugh good-naturedly. They turn around smiling and Jof begins to juggle again. Mia stands behind Jof, leaning against the fallen branch and watching her husband juggle. "Jof!" she says suddenly, a look of profound contentment resting upon her face.

"What is it?"

"Sit still ... don't move."

"What do you mean?" asks Jof, still juggling.

Mia leans forward and says softly, "I love you." In the background is playing the same music as when Jof saw the vision of Mary, making this moment out to be just as spiritual, blissful, and important as the first. God's love for humanity is mirrored in the love that Mia and Jof have for each other. A profound smile crosses Jof's face; he stops juggling and turns to gaze at his wife. The scene fades away, and the music is gone. In this moment we are given the first major insight into the nature of man's salvation. Happiness and spiritual bliss are embodied in the simplicity of love. Mia and Jof's love is not a complicated love tormented by jealousy or guilt, or a love wrenched apart by a bizarre need to articulate and define its nature. It is an emotion that fills and then overflows into a smile of admiration, of devotion, of joy. Mia and Jof have a

love that is unconditional in nature, in the sense that one loves the other despite their actions. The unconditional love that they share is reminiscent of agape, God's love for man. They have a childlike faith in each other. They are a living metaphor, a God-created image of His love for man.

Whereas God's love is mirrored in the unconditional marital love of Mia and Jof, the most selfish, unloving character presented in the film is the one most closely associated with the Church. This is perhaps an illustration that the search for faith must happen on an individual level; no help can be expected from society or the Church as an organization. Although there is no hope given that the knight, or the viewer, may be capable of obtaining the faithful simplicity that Mia and Jof personify, there is an indication - in the play of light, the choice of music, the camera angles - that Mia and Jof ought to be admired and thought of as blessed. Quite different is the introduction to Raval.

Jons steps into a barn in a seemingly deserted little village to refill his water flask. A peasant woman lies dead, face down upon the floor, her arms outstretched. There is a noise from up in the loft and Jons hides behind the door as a man holding a large satchel backs down the stepladder. The man walks into the front room, bends down before the corpse, slides an armlet off her right wrist, and places it in his bag. He is startled by a noise and looks to see a young woman who has, at just that moment, stepped into the doorway.

The girl says nothing and makes no noise. He walks over to her and, standing so close to her that their noses nearly touch, tells her not to scream. He pushes her away from the doorway as Jons steps out from behind the door and stands facing Raval. "I recognize you," says Jons. "Your name is Raval, from the theological college at Roskilde. You are Dr. Mirabilis, Coelestis et Diabilis. Am I not right? You were the one who, ten years ago, convinced my master of the necessity to join a better-class crusade to the Holy Land." Jons slams the barn door shut as Raval looks away. "You look uncomfortable," says the squire to Raval. "Do you have a stomach-ache?"

Here is a man who steals from the dead, who would kill an innocent young woman to ensure not getting caught, and is also a doctor at a seminary. It is especially significant that this is the man who convinced the knight to go on the Crusades. People like Mia and Jof, who feel real love and experience love daily, would not likely advise anyone to go to war. A man who steals from the dead could easily condone killing. He is the complete hypocrite, who says that he is the messenger of God, but who really is only the messenger of hypocrisy, deceit, and Death. Raval represents the most evil and corrupt aspects of the human soul, the inclination to lie, steal, and cheat for the sake of one's own greedy ulterior motives present in all men, although more evidently in some than others.

Jons pulls Raval around by his clothes and throws him up against a chopping block for wood. He pulls out a knife and

puts it to Raval's throat. The girl in the doorway raises her hands to her face and screams. Jons looks up at her and then back down at Raval. "By all means, I'm not bloodthirsty," he says glancing at the girl, and lets Raval go.

The young woman is quite the opposite of Raval. This man, who was stealing jewelry from a dead woman who she had most likely known, was about to kill her, and yet she screamed when he was about to die a few moments later. This scream is particularly significant because it is one of only two occasions in the entire movie when she makes any sound at all. Later in the film, she attempts to give water to Raval as he is about to die, although she knows that by doing so she risks catching the plague from him. The girl represents the inarticulate instinct that man has to help his fellow creatures. Unfortunately, this trait, like Raval's hypocrisy, is more regularly seen in some people than in others. In some, like Raval, it seems totally crushed, forgotten, or ignored.

Raval is part of the Church as an institution, and he is a personification of a part of the soul, but he is also an individual. For Bergman, the individual is more important than the situation or the institution. The primary illustration of this is that he makes plot secondary to character; the plot is dependant on character and not vice versa. Even the camera is obsessed with close-ups of faces, the face being the signature of individuality. Bergman is not against individual faith so much as he is against the institutional aspects of the church, especially its tendency toward encouraging self-persecution. Into Mia's mouth he puts the statement, "I don't see why people have to torture themselves as often as they can." And he makes the most obviously gruesome scene in the film one that involves both the church and self-persecution, causing it to appear even more macabre by following what is probably the funniest scene in the whole film.

In a village, Mia, Jof, and Skat have set up their wagon, folding the back area out into a small, makeshift stage. Mia and Jof begin to sing a song, with Mia accompanying on drum and Jof on the lyre. The melody is an upbeat one, but the words are all about death and are reminiscent of the book of Revelation. The first verse is "The horse is up the tree crowing. The road is wide but the gate is narrow. The Black One lands on the shore." Each time an animal noise is mentioned, Mia and Jof make that noise. At the end of the verse Mia bangs the drum twice.

The bawdy and comical behavior of people is natural; juxtaposed with the macabre and unnatural act of self-flagellation, it is seen as a positive and important part of man's existence. Bergman focuses heavily on laughter and portrays it as a good. Self-persecution, on the other hand, is unnatural, even evil. A similar juxtaposition of the bawdy and comical with the horrific and macabre was seen earlier in the songs of the squire and the scene with Skat and the Death mask. Again it is seen in the songs of Mia and Jof.

There is something in man that perseveres even in the

face of Death, which allows humanity to survive without going insane; that is the ability to have fun, to be entertained. The ability to play, to daydream, and to make up stories is beautiful: it makes us artists; it makes us human beings. It is certainly not surprising that the two people who are happiest and together partake in a sort of salvation are jugglers and actors. Their whole life centers around entertainment and play. Even their portrayals of Death are playful.

Perhaps the difference between Mia and Jof and others (Skat or Jons, for example) is that although Mia and Jof are given to frivolity, they do not deny the existence of God or Death, but accept them.

Part of what is so beautiful about Jof is that he has the ability to daydream well and is not ashamed of it. The reason we are so compelled by his vision is that he is so drawn into it and his recounting of it. His description of his vision is very beautiful and poetic. In contrast, much of the knight's agony is derived from his inability to accept his own imaginations and intuitions.

Mia and Jof, smiling, finish their song with the words, "The sow lays eggs and the cat grunts. The night is soot and the dark remains. The Black One stays and stays upon the shore." The last few words fade into the deep Latin chants of an approaching processional. It is the people who call themselves the Slaves of Sin, the horrific figures of which the painter spoke, the image come to life. They are even more horrid, more macabre, than the painter hinted. Mia and Jof stand close together upon the stage with looks of great shock upon their faces. This self-persecution is beyond their comprehension.

The processional of people includes men and women in rags, children, a man missing one leg, a monk carrying a cross upon his back, the sound of wailing, crowns of thorns upon bleeding heads, and a man who whips his own forearm. Some of the people are whipped by others. Some can hardly walk any longer.

All the people who had just been watching the performance now stand or kneel before this spectacle. Some have expressions of disbelief upon their faces, others of shock, sadness, fear, and some register no emotion at all. There are nothing but faces, so many close-ups of faces. Soldiers kneel, the crosses of their swords pressed closely before them; a woman falls on the ground weeping, her hands clutched desperately in prayer. The sound of moaning, weeping, and wailing rises into the air like the smells of smoke and rotting refuse rising into the air above a burning trash heap.

The very same crucifix seen during the confessional scene rests diagonally against the stage. A flat-nosed monk begins to speak. It is none other than Raval, the seminarist. He shouts at the crowd, pointing accusing fingers at various people, proclaiming that they are all doomed and that their deaths may come at any moment. The presence of the crucifix

from the knight's confessional scene links together the knight's mental torture and the people's unholy self-mutilation. The diagonal composition once more echoes the pain. And in the mouth of the only truly evil character in the film Bergman puts the words, "Do you know, you insensible fools, that you shall die today or tomorrow, or the next, because you have all been doomed? Do you hear what I say? Do you hear the word? You have been doomed, doomed, doomed!" In the background, behind the crucifix and still standing upon the stage are Mia and Jof, still standing very close together with looks of shock upon their faces.

The fact that Bergman places these words in Raval's mouth illustrates that he thinks it an evil of mankind that a man is prone to torture himself over the prospect of his own impending damnation, worse yet to torture other members of his species with the threat of it. The crucifix behind Raval is symbolic of two things: a wordless God and the spiritual torment and seeking of the knight, being symbolic of the knight because it is associated with the scene where his character is most directly revealed. Both the silence of God in his wounded state and the desperate searching of a man such as the knight are steeped in pain and are linked to the horrible evils of self-flagellation in which these wretched people engage themselves. And yet the crucifixion forms a path, albeit a pain-filled one, to the two people who are closest to any sort of real salvation. As Mia and Jof stand upon the stage, the cross forms a path at their feet. It is a visual image that takes the search for self-knowledge and the eyes of a wordless God and makes itself a link between pointless self-flagellation and unconditional love.

After praying loudly with much crying while lying or kneeling upon the ground, the "Slaves of Sin" rise slowly, turn, and begin to walk away. The camera watches them as they exit the screen from the lower left to the upper right-hand corner. Soon only a few are left, then none. The camera lingers uncomfortably for a moment, focusing on nothing but the dry, sunbaked grass upon which these people so recently stumbled. Bergman wants us to be uncomfortable; he does not want us to forget this scene easily. He therefore gives us a moment to reflect before he continues on with the story, a moment to rest.

There are so many scenes of torment within the film that one is likely to consider the whole world a bleak and desolate place if he forgets the few scenes of hope. Indeed, upon a first viewing, the scenes of the processional and of the deaths of the characters are the most memorable. Upon the third or fourth viewing these scenes are equally memorable, but other scenes begin to take on even greater significance. Although it is a quiet, peaceful, subtle, and even easily forgotten scene, the scene in which Mia, Jof, the knight, the squire, and the young woman share a humble meal of wild strawberries and fresh milk is quite possibly one of the most important scenes in the film.

Mia, Jof, and Skat's wagon sit on a flat spot of a long, sharply-sloping hill. Mia sits alone playing with Mikael. A short distance away the knight sits leaning against a rock, apparently lost in thought until he looks up and sees Mia and the baby. As he watches these two a smile crosses his face for the first time in the entire film. The knight is moved to speak, and asks Mia her son's age. They chat pleasantly, Mia smiling and displaying a modest but obvious pride in her son. It is the presence of the child which begins to draw the knight out of his reverie. The presence of a child reminds him of simplicity, innocence, and familial love. In this boy there is a reminder of the future, the fact that mankind survives, in spite of the plague. If all of Bergman's characters represent fragments of the soul, then Mikael represents the youth, innocence, and hope for the future that are important to the lives of all men. The knight is especially drawn to this, because he has lost touch with his hope, his innocence, his faith in the future. His struggles with God stem largely from his inability to assume a childlike state, and yet it is the power of the presence of children that makes one's own sorrows seem trivial.

Jof returns, and upon his suggestion, Mia goes into the wagon and comes back with two shallow wooden bowls, one filled with wild strawberries, the other with fresh milk. These she places before her husband and the knight who are already seated on the ground; she spreads a light colored sheet in lieu of a table. Jons and the young woman approach on a horse and Mia invites them to join them. The sun is bright but somewhat low in the evening sky.

Mia lays down upon the ground and smiles her warm, enchanted smile. Her hair is pulled back except for one small strand which curls a bit at the end. The camera, close-up, sighs and smiles down upon her. She articulates her beautiful and simple view of life, saying, "One day is like another. There is nothing strange about that. The Summer, of course, is better than the Winter, because in Summer you don't have to be cold. But Spring is best of all." As she says these last words she moves her head from side to side with pleasure.

A short while later Jof retrieves his lyre. He plays the song of Spring and of Christ that he sang earlier to Mia, musically transferring the spiritual beauty of that scene to this scene. Once again music is used to reveal the interconnectedness between the two scenes. Behind Jof, the Death mask hangs from a pole stuck in the ground. And yet, next to Jof's face, the mask does not look so gruesome. There is such a comic look of bliss upon his face as he plays that the death mask looks quite harmless. As he plays, Mia chats with the knight. She asks him if he has a "beloved."

A pensive look and far-off sort of smile come over the knight's face. He begins to tell Mia of his wife, whom he has not seen since he left for the Crusades. In his eyes there is a look of love but also of loneliness, sorrow that this period of his life has past. For once his words are not logical or tormented by lyrical. Although his speech is usually limited and

reveals little about himself, to Mia he tells a story complete with poetic details. Her loving nature brings him back to the love which he had himself forgotten. "We were newly married," he muses. "And we played together. We laughed a great deal. I wrote songs to her eyes, to her nose, to her beautiful little ears. We went hunting together and at night we danced." With love comes joy, laughter, play. This one little paragraph reveals nearly as much about the knight as does the confessional scene. He too is capable of happiness, of laughter, and of image-making in writing poetry. Perhaps it is the pain which he felt after leaving his love which caused him to shut out this aspect of his personality. To love is to risk pain. The act of surrendering to emotion, intuition, or childlike faith requires the ability and willingness to risk pain.

"Faith is a torment," he tells Mia. "It is like loving someone who is out there in the darkness but never appears, no matter how loudly you call." Mia does not understand but looks honestly concerned. The knight looks down at her, the first person in the film who really seems to be listening to him, and he shakes his head as if shaking away a mirage, then smiles. "Everything I've said seems meaningless and unreal while I sit here with you and your husband. How unimportant it all becomes suddenly," he says. He takes the strawberries from Mia's extended hand and eats them, as if he were finally accepting the gift of love which she is offering. It is not unlike the Christian symbol of Communion.

Perhaps this moment is the closest we see the knight come to achieving salvation. He does not believe that he could ever achieve the childlike faith and unconditional love which Mia and Jof display, but he is willing to try and content himself with the knowledge that this kind of faith does exist. Mia and Jof are a sign that there is divinity among men, an image of the love of God. The knight cannot make himself become like Mia and Jof, but he can enjoy and protect what they are. As a knight in the Crusades, as a nobleman and as an intellectual, he found no real nobility or fulfillment. Finally, in the presence of a family, he discovers a purpose for his chivalry, a reason for being a knight.

He picks up the bowl of milk carefully in both hands so as not to spill a drop. His voice is soft and calm as he speaks. The camera focuses on him quietly, as the sun sets behind him with a soft burst of color against the horizon. His words are soothing. "I shall remember this moment. The silence, the twilight, the bowl of strawberries and milk, your faces in the evening light. Mikael sleeping, Jof with his lyre. I'll try to remember what we have talked about. I'll carry this memory between my hands as carefully as if it were a bowl of fresh milk. And it will be an adequate sign - it will be enough for me." He rises, turns, and goes to keep his chess appointment with Death.

"Why do you look so satisfied?" asks Death, as they sit over the chess board.

"That's my secret," replies the knight.

"Of course," replies Death, and then bows his head down to look at the board, his chin resting against his hand. A few moments later he looks up and then back down at the board again as he makes his move. "I take your knight," he tells his opponent.

"As you were meant to," comes the reply.

"Have you tricked me?"

"Of course."

The knight, with his new sense of purpose, has perhaps begun to win the chess game. He has tricked Death, proving that even Death is far from omniscient. This knowledge will be important very soon.

"Are you going to escort the juggler and his wife through the forest?" asks Death. "Those whose names are Jof and Mia and who have a small son."

The knight's smile disappears. "Why do you ask?" he says suspiciously, accusingly.

"Oh no reason at all," replies Death, once more looking down at the chess board. There is a burst of foreboding music and the scene fades away into the next.

The little band of characters forms a procession through the forest. The knight rides first, then the squire with the young woman sitting behind him on his horse. Mia and Jof follow behind in the wagon with their baby. Plog, the husband of the woman who ran off with Jonas Skat, also comes along, having told Jons that he is lonely and doesn't want to go home because everyone will make fun of him. He is quite drunk and carries a sledgehammer. A smith by trade, he is neither particularly handsome nor intelligent, but he is as well-meaning as possible. He represents the well-intentioned but foolish part of the soul, easily deceived and easily appeased.

In the eerie night there is a sense of foreboding. Jof and Mia lean up against a tree somewhat away from the others, Mia with Mikael in her arms. Nearby the knight sits, staring down at his chessboard. Death approaches him to finish their game. Jof looks up and sees them playing. He awakens his wife and tells her what he has seen.

Despite the fact that her own eyes show her only the knight, Mia believes that Jof sees something more, and that what he sees is real. She believes in her husband even though she sees nothing at all. She has faith in this faith even after the incident with the painted wagon wheels. Her good trusting nature and love for her husband allow her to have faith in him. Furthermore, her long association with Jof has taught her that despite his eccentricities, he is well-meaning and always acts for what he believes to be her own good. Faith must come through love and through the trust which develops over time as the object of faith proves to be constant and worthy of trust. In this sense, faith in God is no different from faith in one's spouse. This is another way in which Mia and Jof, as a couple, are an image of God's love for man.

Jof tells Mia that they must attempt an escape, and she agrees to try. He rises and tiptoes toward the wagon. Mia

stands staring at the knight for a moment, then turns and hurries over to Jof, cradling the sleeping child in her arms.

At just that moment the knight looks up from the chessboard and sees Mia and Jof sneaking away. He turns and knocks over several pieces with his cloak, pretending that he wants Death to think it was an accident. He looks down at the board and then up at Death again. "I've forgotten how the pieces stood," he tells Death.

"But I have not," replies Death with a little laugh. "You can't get off that easily." As Death sets the pieces back up on the board, the knight continues to watch Mia and Jof over Death's shoulder. Their wagon begins to pull away, slowly and quietly. Death, absorbed in fixing the pieces, takes no notice whatsoever. He sets the last figure upright, glances at the board for a moment, and then looks up at the knight. "Now I see something interesting," he says.

"What do you see?" stammers the knight quickly, obviously worried that Death has seen Mia and Jof attempting their escape.

"You are mated on the next move," replies Death.

"That's true," says the knight softly, his voice filled with relief that the juggler and his wife and son have not been caught and hindered in their escape. He may die, but Mia and Jof will get away.

The earlier chess scene when the knight sacrificed his knight in order to put Death's king in check has proven to be prophetic. The knight has sacrificed himself in order to trick Death and aid Mia and Jof in their escape; he has finally accomplished a deed which is worthy of the title "knight." In those who are of faith he has found a purpose, which allows him to defeat Death, although in a different way than he may have originally intended.

The decision to help Mia, Jof, and Mikael escape is not a logical one but an emotional and intuitive one; however, the escape is aided by logic. In knocking over the pieces, the knight has broken the logical rules of the game, but in so doing he has made the best use of his intellect and has really won the game. His life will soon end, but his goal has been accomplished; he has found some fulfillment in a decision made through love and executed through the intellect. He has finally utilized the capacity of his whole soul.

"Did you enjoy your reprieve?" asks Death.

"Yes, I did" replies the knight in a resolute tone. Although he is still tormented by the question of God's existence and the awareness of his own wretchedness, he is satisfied in having achieved his one important goal. With the escape of Mia and Jof, and especially Mikael, comes the guarantee of the survival of the best sort of humanity. Despite spiritual turbulence and plague, the personification of love, fidelity, childlike faith, youth, and hope for the future will always survive, for they are beautiful, enchanted, and will always be protected by those who truly seek to do good.

Yet the significance of the knight's noble deed does not lie in the deed itself. Rather it lies in the motivation behind it. The knight's association with the unconditional love and simple domestic faith of Mia, Jof, and their son, has filled him with love and remembrance that beauty does exist in people, in God's creatures on Earth. The light of Mia and her family has seeped into his life and has given him the proper motivation for completing his "one meaningful deed." However, helping Mia and Jof escape is a truly great act not because it was done and done successfully, but because it was done from selfless love.

Soon it is morning. The knight, the squire, the young woman, the smith, and the smith's wife all walk slowly up a rocky incline toward the knight's castle in single file. The sun shines in the sky, and the waves of the sea ebb and flow far below at their backs. The film has come full circle. Despite all the changes and developments which have occurred, the viewer finds himself once more upon a rocky, somewhat desolate seashore. Of course, there are several differences. The film began with ruins of a castle in the sea and the knight and Jons riding through the ruins of a castle. The castle here is nearly as empty, nearly as dreary, but it is not nearly so inhospitable; the walls still stand firmly and it looks well-kept. This is meant to be the opposite shore, but one cannot really tell that from the looks of the terrain. The sea is constant and looks the same no matter where one goes. In time the water will wash away this castle as well. It is a symbol of the constancy of nature and how fleeting the life of man is in comparison.

All the characters go inside and are greeted by the knight's wife. Only she has stayed behind to welcome the knight home; everyone else has fled from the plague. She prepares a small meal and reads from the book of Revelation as they eat. "And when the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven for about the space of half an hour. And I saw seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets." All are completely silent as she reads, eating or gazing down at the table; all reflect this silence. Only the silent young woman looks up and out the window, where a ray shines into the darkness. She alone sees the light that is symbolic of God's presence, Jesus often being referred to as the "light of the world" in the New Testament. Again there is a sense of coming full circle, because the words that the knight's wife reads are the same words read by the voice at the beginning. It is reminiscent of, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust." What began with a quote from Revelation and the mesmerizing waves of the sea goes back to the sea, quoting exactly the same passage.

Three booming knocks sound downstairs at the door. Jons lights a torch and goes out into the corridor and downstairs to see who it is. Meanwhile the knight's wife continues to read. Jons returns alone and throws his torch into the fire before sitting down again, a very severe look upon his face.

A melancholy music is added to the silence. The young woman turns in her chair to face a figure who approaches from out of the corridor. It is Death.

All the characters rise to face him. The knight stands behind the others, praying feverishly, his hands covering his face in sorrow. Even now, despite the sense of purpose and achievement he found with Mia and Jof and his noble deed, he is tormented, lacks a sense of completeness, and feels his own wretchedness.

Yet, in his final prayer, he uses the words "us" and "we", showing that Mia and Jof have taught him something of love. Perhaps the experience of unconditional love combined with the sense of his own confused wretchedness has placed him, at the moment of his death, closer to God than at any other moment in his life. As a young married man he experienced love; as a world-weary knight he felt his own wretchedness, but only at the end of life does he experience both simultaneously. This places him at last in a position to begin to comprehend the unique marriage of unconditional love and intense suffering that is found in Christ on the cross. It is this which allows him, finally, to pray in utter humility. Does he achieve salvation? Whether he does or not, he is certainly closer to God at the moment of his death than he was the day before.

The squire stares straight ahead and tells the knight not to worry about eternity, in denial even to the end. Plog and his wife stand together; she curtsies. The knight's wife looks determined and keeps a brave face. The young woman kneels, a look of thankful bliss upon her face. The camera lingers on her face. "It is the end," she says, quoting the crucifixion scene from Matthew. Of all the characters left after Mia and Jof's escape, she is the one who is most in tune with the instinct to help others, and she is the one who most welcomes Death.

In the morning, the sun is shining brightly, glistening off the sea. On the beach there is a wagon from which Jof and Mia, with Mikael in her arms, have emerged. Jof gazes into the distance and sees the knight, Skat, Plog, Jons, and the others dancing off in the distance, led away by Death as they shed bitter tears. The viewer sees them as well, upon a hilltop, following Death in a line. Are they really dancing or only being led away like a prison gang? We cannot see their faces in order to look for tears. It is a beautiful but uncertain image.

Mia chides Jof gently and they both gaze at their son briefly, before turning and leading the wagon away, walking toward the sunlight - Mia and Jof, like Mary and Joseph escaping to Egypt with the Light of the World. With this image the film ends.

Our humanity, and its most important aspects, are revealed in the images we create. Furthermore, there is something of God's nature that comes across in the images we make. Just as people can be seen as images of God, so can the images people create mirror God's image. Reflecting upon the images, we gain much insight into our own natures and a tiny

glimpse into God's. We add our perceptions to those of others and are encouraged to ponder the topics that most concern us, to consider the nature of God and our relationship to him, to wonder how we might best come to achieve salvation.

The consideration of Bergman's film involves all aspects of our nature. The emotional and intuitive react to the images of the film and are then analyzed by the rational. The tormented seeker, the mocking doubter, the loving, childlike faith, hope for the future, instinct to help others and do good, the materialist and the sensualist, the evil hypocrite, and dumb well-meaningness - all parts of the soul are confronted and engaged by the film.

"In our fear we make an image," says the knight, and this is what Bergman himself has done. Bergman, involved in the search for his own sense of purpose, has created an image which makes its viewer ask the same questions and seek answers to them. In bringing my own perceptions and experiences to the understanding and interpretation of Bergman's, I have found answers to many questions and more questions to the answers which I already had.

The question of God's existence is never answered by the film; the knight dies filled with spiritual uncertainty. Even his one meaningful deed does not absolve him from his sense of wretchedness, or allow him to subdue God within himself. The glimpses of God which are seen in the film are veiled with doubt.

Mia and Jof are a pale image of God's love, but they are an image nonetheless and one in which the knight finds some fulfillment. Perhaps he never achieves real salvation; yet he finds purpose in the love and protection of them, of their faith, and their future. Bergman offers no insight into how one achieves such faith; in fact he seems to believe that it may be impossible, but his portrayal of Mia and Jof reveals and exalts their spirituality and the spiritual aspect of their love.

In the church as an organization there is no salvation. In self-persecution and man's inhumanity to man are found the greatest, basest and most macabre evils. In the bawdy and comic there is joy but not a lasting salvation. To help another human being in a selfless act of love is the greatest act of which man is capable. In this there lies a pale image of God's selfless sacrifice for the sake of mankind.

Ingmar Bergman, in making "The Seventh Seal" has created a series of images which encourage questioning, which leads to the self-examination, and possibly to a new understanding of God and man. By encouraging this questioning, Bergman is benefitting mankind in a very different way from the knight, but in an equally important and powerful one.

With each viewing of the film, the questioning is renewed, more answers are found, and more questions are discovered. With "The Seventh Seal" Bergman has created a legacy of timeless questions embedded in a legacy of timeless imagery. He has created a film to be adored and meditated upon by the entire soul, and to be watched again and again.

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“Cross” No.3 — Nathan James Humphrey

The Beauty of Francesca da Rimini—Dante’s *Divine Comedy*

Carrie L. Sager

Dante’s *Inferno* is the home of eternal sin. Inside its walls the “people who have lost the good of the intellect,” and all hope, endure forever. Their unrepentant lives on earth have earned them eternal damnation. Dante takes great care in making their punishment fitting for their sin — the punishment is the sin. Sometimes the appearance of these sinners is enough to portray the essence of their sin. At other times, the corruption of these souls lies deeper than the mere distortion of their flesh. For Dante to experience the true nature of their sin, he must speak with these damned souls.

Dante gives special recognition to every sin: each sinner has a specific place in the *Inferno*. He divides sin into three categories: Incontinence, Violence, and Fraud. Furthermore, there is a hierarchy of sin. While all sin dooms the soul, in the *Divine Comedy* there is a gradation. The *Inferno* is structured by this ranking of sin. Fraud — the deliberate misuse of the intellect — is the worst sin for Dante. Consequently, the Fraudulent are sunk into the nethermost depths of Hell. Violence finds its place in a region above Fraud, and Incontinence, the least damnable of these three sins, is punished in the uppermost regions of Hell.

In *Inferno* V, Dante begins his descent into Hell proper. He is immediately thrown into a confrontation with Minos, the maitre d’ of Hell. As if through the eyes of an unrepentant sinner, Dante sees Minos as the malicious, bestial, relentless judgment of Hell itself. But Dante is a repentant sinner, and by the grace of God he passes unscathed beyond Minos to the second circle. Once inside, he receives his first impression of Hell: the circle of the Lustful.

Before Dante beholds this spectacle, however, he is at first overwhelmed by “the notes of pain.” This music gives rise to a scene in his mind’s eye:

The hellish storm, never resting, seizes and drives the spirits before it; smiting and whirling them about, it torments them. When they come before its fury there are shrieks, weeping and lamentation ... (31-35)

Dante compares these carnal sinners “who subject reason to desire” to birds receiving eternal punishment from the wind. In a violent whirlwind of fury, the storm feeds upon the spirits in the circle of the Lustful. But there are two birds who are presented as floating above this furious whirlwind: Paolo and Francesca da Rimini, two lovers who are bound together for all eternity. While the other sinners are driven by the whirlwind of restlessness, this pair appears to float peacefully on the wind.

When Dante meets the lovers, he focuses almost exclusively on Francesca. Not only is her punishment unexpectedly

peaceful, but Dante’s meeting with Francesca is particularly perplexing. Before Dante sees Francesca, he sees a band of illustrious shades. He describes them as the “knights and ladies of old times,” and is disturbed to find them here in Hell. Upon seeing them, he stands bewildered and overcome with pity. Instead of choosing to speak to one of those great shades, of whom there are more than a thousand, Dante is instead drawn to Francesca. None of the most renowned lovers of antiquity can wrest Dante’s attention for more than a brief moment — not Dido, Semiramis, Achilles, Helen, Paris, Tristan, nor Cleopatra. Yet Francesca, whose name is buried in anonymity by the collage of illustrious sinners, captures Dante’s attention and freezes the pilgrim in his tracks. While Dante compares all of the famous shades to a flock of cranes, Francesca alone is described as a dove. In the midst of the darkness that consumes the other sinners, Francesca strangely emerges as the sole ray of light.

Dante has not stopped merely to admire the dove-like image of Francesca. He “would gladly speak to the two that go together and seem so light upon the wind.” And when he wants to speak to Francesca, he must call her “by the love that leads” her. Although Francesca is a carnal sinner in the circle of the Lustful, she has an air of nobility about her. She will not answer to a beastly mating call; she will only respond to the “loving” call of Dante. Finally, when she is called, the wind does not restrain her: she comes “with wings poised and motionless” to the nest of Dante. This description of Francesca as seeming “so light upon the wind” adds to her unexpected magnetism. While the malignant air “scourges” the illustrious shades, Francesca is neither beaten nor driven by the wind, but floats peacefully. Yet this hardly appears to be the “eternal pain” promised at the gate of Hell. Why is it that Francesca appears to avoid the punishment meted to her fellow sinners? This discrepancy becomes increasingly visible when the punishment afforded to the Lustful is considered. This requires an examination of the metaphor that Dante employs to describe the condition of the Lustful: birds and the wind.

At first, the comparison between the birds and the Lustful seems oddly inappropriate. After all, what other animal seems as innocent and carefree in its natural habitat as does the bird that gracefully floats upon the winds and expresses its freedom with each beat of its wings? How is it possible that these lofty creatures are the analogues of the Lustful who languish in eternal punishment?

Dante provides an answer. The wind, nominally the bird’s ally in lifting it above all earthly constraints, is the source of eternal punishment for the Lustful. Consider how Dante describes these birds as thrown into eternal submission:

Hither, thither, downward, upward, it drives them; no hope ever comforts them, not to say of rest, but of less pain (40-45).

Thus, in Dante's analogy, these birds are forever beaten by the unending, merciless winds. The "notes of pain" that Dante first heard are sung by these birds as they are continually brutalized by the fury of the wind. And while the wind is their punishment, its fury never rests. In the circle of the Lustful, Dante presents the carnal sinners as these birds who are eternal slaves to the wind. Now the analogy is less cryptic: for Dante, the birds represent the Lustful, and lust is the wind that torments them. In Dante's Hell, Lust is a violent, bestial desire that provides an eternity of relentless agony. The submission to lust imprisons the carnal sinner as does the relentless wind that tortures the birds.

Dante describes this submission with a single word: Incontinence. The Incontinents that Dante finds in the second circle of Hell, moreover, have committed the particular sin of lasciviousness. However, the Lustful are not "seized" by the fury of their desires like defenseless birds. On the contrary, theirs is a willing submission as they "subject reason to desire." The eternal punishment of the Lustful is self-imposed damnation. They willingly abandon their humanity and surrender themselves as eternal slaves to their desires.

Hence in the *Inferno* these sinners are punished with their sin — an eternity of submission. The names of Dante's lustful sinners speak for themselves: incestuous Semiramis, unfaithful Dido, and wanton Cleopatra. For their unjust actions, spurred by their lustfulness, they receive their just punishment. Francesca, however, presents an unexpected irony: a beautiful sinner. How can an eternity of floating peacefully with her lover be an eternal nightmare for Francesca? Why does Dante depict this wanton soul with such tender language, and more to the point, what role does Francesca's beauty play in Dante's pilgrimage?

Despite the confusion engendered by her seeming beauty, Francesca is undeniably a sinner. She fits Dante's description perfectly, for Francesca submitted herself wholly to her desires. But while Francesca is guilty of a willful submission, as are her illustrious companions, her sinfulness is not readily discernible. For instance, Semiramis was "so corrupted by licentious vice that she made lust lawful" to restore her virtue. In contrast, Francesca's actions do not appear to have been driven by such sexual wantonness. This is evident in her two speeches. Francesca's first speech is an exposition of her views on the nature of love:

Love, which is quickly kindled in the gentle heart, seized this man for the fair form that was taken from me, and the manner that afflicts me still. Love, which absolves no one beloved from loving, seized me so strongly with his charm that, as thou seest, it does not leave me yet. Love brought us to one death (100-106).

Enshrouded in this mesmerizing speech is Francesca's testimony to her submission. Yet her speech remarkably does not betray even the slightest hint of resentment. Although the wind in the circle of the Lustful personifies lust as a formidable, malicious force that seemingly drives the spirits into eternal submission, there is a great discrepancy in Francesca's account: she is most *unlike* the defenseless bird whose only words are the agonizing "notes of pain." Rather than ignore her submission, Francesca recalls it fondly. Francesca presents love as a great, unconquerable passion that nestled itself in her "fair form" with "his charm" gripped both the lovers in a forceful embrace. While she claims that both she and her lover were indeed "seized" by love, they were not stricken with fear. In this embrace, theirs was one life and "one death." Although they languish in Hell, this unconquerable love continues to bind the two lovers together for all eternity.

The root of this union is made clear in Francesca's second speech:

We read one day for pastime of Lancelot, how love constrained him. We were alone and had no misgiving. Many times that reading drew our eyes together and changed the color in our faces, but one point alone it was that mastered us; when we read that the longed-for smile was kissed by so great a lover, he who shall never be parted from me, all trembling, kissed my mouth. A Galeotto was the book and he that wrote it; that day we read in it no farther. (127-138)

This speech is not the story of two lovers driven by sexual wantonness into mad, furious love. In declaring that "we read one day for pastime," Francesca brings a casual air to her ill-fated meeting with her lover. While theirs was an adulterous affair, the meeting was not the result of elaborate schemes designed to satisfy their sexual desires. Francesca is more concerned with their reading — for pastime — the story of Lancelot and Guinevere and their fated kiss than her own story. In fact, the love story of Paolo and Francesca bears a striking resemblance to the story they read that afternoon. Their union was supposedly inspired by the union of Lancelot and Guinevere. What Francesca saw in these two lovers was their greatness. As great lovers, they received poetic immortality; through their story, they would not only live forever, but also be revered for their greatness.

Francesca envied them for their greatness. As she read their story, she was impassioned by it: "that reading drew our eyes together and changed the color in our faces." In other words, Francesca was spurred by this magnificence, as Lancelot was "constrained" by love. This constraint reached its culmination "when the longed-for smile was kissed by so great a lover." This moment captured, for Francesca, the greatness of Lancelot and Guinevere. She was inspired to emulate this "great" kiss: she wanted to capture this greatness for herself.

In her first speech, Francesca defines this greatness. She

presents love as a grand, undeniable passion that conquers both her and Paolo. Francesca's interpretation is this: great lovers become great through being conquered by love, the most magnificent of passions. For Francesca, Lancelot and Guinevere embodied this greatness. She believes that the mark of their greatness was captured in their kiss. Here then is the root of Francesca's submission: she emulated that "great" kiss in order to be immortalized as a great lover.

As an unrepentant sinner, what Francesca desired in her earthly life — immortal greatness — she continues to lust after, though she is in Hell. Francesca assumes that Dante, the pilgrim, has "pity for her evil plight (93)." She therefore designs her speeches to glorify herself in the pilgrim's pitying eyes. She models her story from the story of Lancelot and Guinevere: she enshrouds her submission in the poetic depiction of a love story. At the same time, Francesca's carefully contrived rhetoric unmasks her sinful character: Francesca's selfish pride is betrayed by her own words.

For instance, when Francesca shamelessly claims "love . . . absolves no one beloved from loving (104)," she is clearly wrapped in vanity. Not only does she honestly envision herself as a glorious victim of love, she even names her own lover, Paolo, as love's accomplice. When Paolo was "seized" by love, she was forced into the role of the beloved, in which she was committed to reciprocating his love. Thus she pridefully, albeit naively, denies all responsibility for her actions. In fact, Francesca's conclusion that "Caina waits for him who quenched our life (107)" is her final exclamation of pride. She assumes that their death for the most noble cause, namely love, will receive its due vengeance.

While her pride pervades her words, it is also at the heart of her actions. In her lust for greatness, Francesca claims she submitted herself wholly to love: not as an erotic, carnal desire, but the most magnificent of passions. Dante, moreover, must call her by this love "that leads her," for Francesca only hears the call of love. Yet Dante is not the only person who must bow to Francesca's pride: her own lover Paolo must bow also. While both Francesca and Dante allude to his presence, not once in the entire canto is Paolo actually named. Without formal acknowledgment, Paolo is simply the eternal lover of Francesca. More to the point, as Francesca attempts to glorify herself, Paolo can only stand by her side pitifully and weep.

While Francesca assumes that she has earned both greatness of soul and justification for her actions, all that she has truly earned is a place in Dante's *Inferno*. For her selfish pride and naive submission, Francesca is eternally punished in the circle of the Lustful. As the Lustful submitted themselves to sexual wantonness, they are eternally punished by lust's furious whirlwind. Similarly, Francesca's punishment fits her submission and is equally as severe.

Francesca is enslaved, like the other shades, by the wind. For instance, Dante could only call Francesca and Paolo after "the wind bent their course" toward him. Although Fran-

cesca was willing to speak, she was not free to linger. She tells Dante that as "the wind is quiet, as here it is" may she speak with him. As a bird, she is a prisoner to the wind.

Her floating itself is eternal punishment for Francesca. Since the wind never rests, Francesca, a prisoner to this unending wind, has no respite from floating. Unlike the river Po, which "descends to rest" at the shores of her city Ravenna, Francesca can never rest.

Moreover, as Dante's sinners determine their own punishment, consider one last time Francesca's submission. While some of the Lustful are characterized by their furious sexual desires, like Semiramis, Francesca's motivation did not arise from an uncontrollable desire for sex. Francesca believed that love was the vessel that would carry her to greatness. For this reason, and not for carnal indulgence, she submitted herself to love.

Francesca also believed that she could accomplish this by emulating the kiss of Lancelot and Guinevere. As the culmination of their greatness, she envisioned the kiss as the ultimate joining of their two souls: two great lovers made into one great soul by love. As Francesca believed this to be love's final victory, she imagined love lifting them from mere mortality to greatness, as the wind lifts a bird from all earthly restraints.

Yet what Francesca saw as a great consummation — the kiss — is, for Dante, a grotesque injustice against God. Again, recall Dante's analogy of the birds in the circle of the Lustful:

When they come before its fury there are shrieks, weeping, and lamentation, and there they blaspheme the power of God (34-36).

As a carnal sinner, Francesca willingly submitted herself to love's power rather than humbling herself before God. When she abandoned the power of God's grace, she abandoned any hope she might have had of greatness. As Dante knows, without God's grace, Francesca will never achieve the ultimate greatness of Divine Love.

Hence, as Francesca condemned herself to eternal damnation, she also determined her own punishment. Though she assumed that falling in love meant being conquered by love, she is now an eternal prisoner to love. As love is personified by the wind, she is imprisoned like a bird. In fact, as she imagined love lifting her as a bird, she has received just that: as the wind carries her, she will float, helplessly, forever. As she envisioned the kiss as joining their two souls, Francesca is physically bound to Paolo — for eternity. This is clearly an eternal nightmare for Francesca: she will never be at rest from her "affliction," whether it be her desire for greatness, Paolo, or love.

While Francesca's lust for greatness explains her sinfulness, much is still left unanswered. For instance, why is Francesca, a sinner, compared to a dove? Why is her sinful submission enshrouded in the poetic depiction of a love

story? Why is her eternal punishment described with such gentle language? In sum, why does Dante take such care to preserve the beauty of Francesca, and what role does her beauty play in his pilgrimage?

The pilgrimage is, above all else, Dante's quest for salvation. As Dante "came to himself in a dark wood," he began his journey. Although he stood at the foot of "the delectable mountain which is the beginning and cause of all happiness," Dante could not make the ascent. Three fearful beasts blocked his path. Unable to conquer his fear, Dante was forced to take "another road" — the descent into Hell.

Dante's inspiration for his pilgrimage is Beatrice, "the Sun of his eyes (Paradiso, XXX)." She is also the cause of Dante's salvation: she descended into Hell to summon Virgil to be his guide and deliver him from his fears. The thought of her love restored, in Dante, his courage and freed him from all his doubts and fears (Inferno II, 131-137). Without Beatrice, there would be no pilgrimage.

Beatrice is the embodiment of God's grace. As the light of Divine Love shines through her, she is beauty in its purest form. Through her eyes, "which shine brighter than the stars," and her smile, "the second beauty," Beatrice reflects the grace of God. Moreover, her beautiful features serve to captivate Dante as he is raised through all of the heavenly spheres to the Empyrean. In this way, Beatrice uplifts Dante from "servitude to liberty," and makes his soul whole (Paradiso, XXXI). At the same time, she prepares Dante for his final vision, the vision of God, through which his desire and will are united in perfect harmony. In short, Beatrice is Dante's way to salvation.

The beauty of Francesca da Rimini mirrors the beauty of Beatrice. As Francesca is compared to a dove, she is both an image of purity and a messenger of peace. Her courteous words to Dante,

O living creature gracious and friendly ... if the King of the universe were our friend we would pray to him for thy peace... (880-92)

are spoken with the sweetness of Beatrice's angelic voice. And the dove image of Francesca, lightly "floating upon the wind," intrigues Dante and draws him away from all of the illustrious souls.

The source of Francesca's beauty, however, is not the Divine Light. As a sinner, she is the product of her sinful desires. In other words, she is the incarnation of sin. More to the point, Francesca is the temptress of Hell. Her beauty does not at all reflect the fearful spirit of the leopard. On the contrary, as a temptress she appeals to Dante's greatest desire, love. She presents an everlasting love that uplifts the soul and allows it to fly like a bird. By submitting himself wholly to her desire, Dante can achieve what Francesca considers to be the highest good — immortal greatness.

Hence Francesca makes submission look beautiful. And Beatrice is witness to this deception. At the top of mount

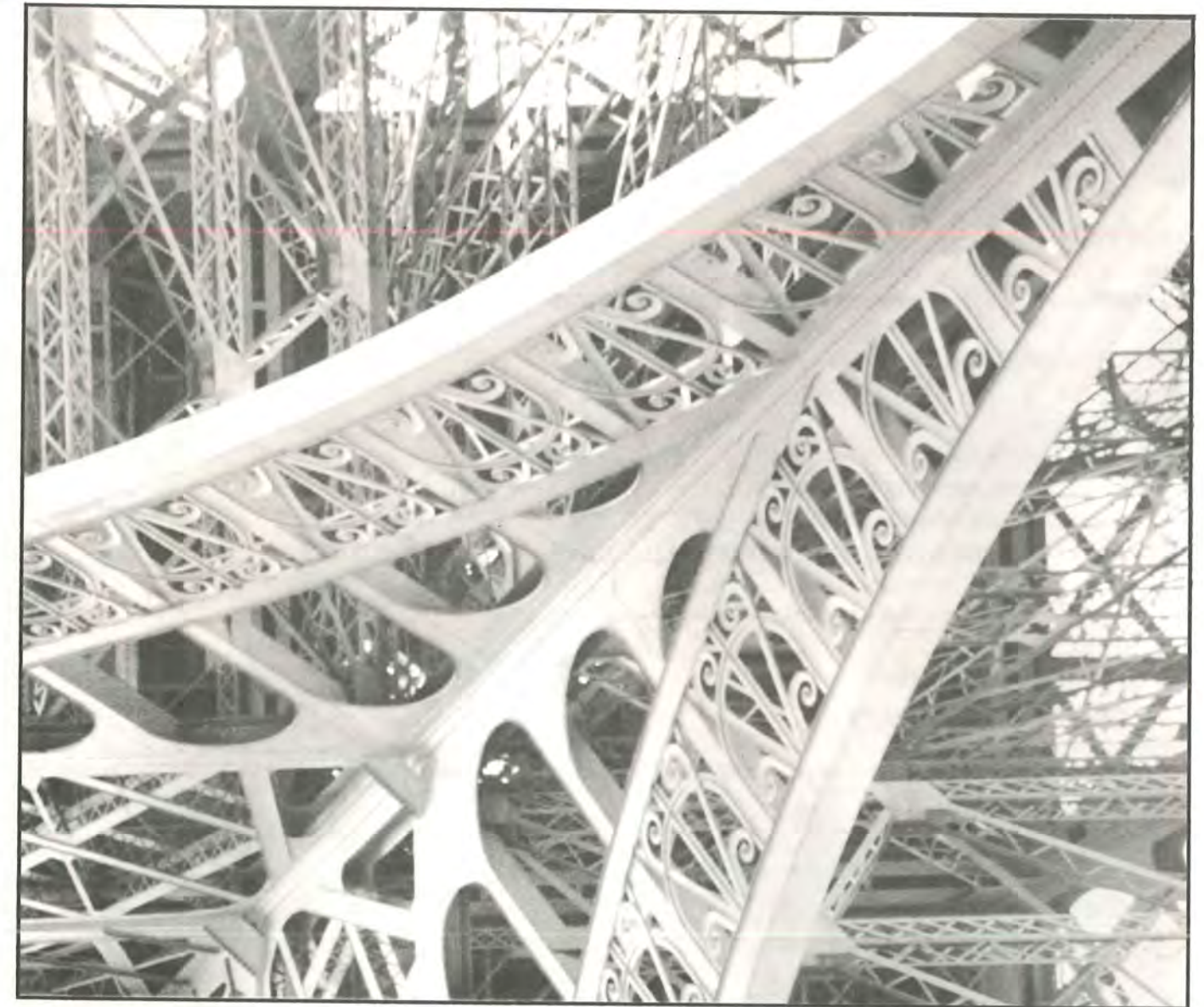
Purgatory, she chides Dante for his weakness:

So soon as I was on the threshold of my second age, and had changed life, he took himself from me, and gave himself to others. When I had risen from flesh to spirit, and beauty and virtue were increased in me, I was less dear and less pleasing to him, and he turned his steps along a way not true, following false images of good which pay no promise in full (Purgatory XXX, 124-132)

This rebuke makes clear the difference between Francesca and Beatrice. Francesca is a false image of Beatrice, just as she offers a false image of paradise. Whereas Beatrice is Dante's way to salvation, Francesca is his way to eternal damnation. Francesca will lead Dante from liberty to servitude: as the carnal sinner "subjects reason to desire," he abandons his will and his freedom. Hence Dante will only be free when his will is preserved and united with his desire.

Dante overcomes the temptation of Francesca; he is not deceived by the beauty that enshrouds her sinfulness. In so doing, Dante is able to complete his journey and thus reunite himself with Beatrice. With her, he finds the greatness of Divine Love and the ultimate fulfillment of his desire.

Meanwhile, although Francesca's desire only earns her a place in Hell, ironically, she receives the greatness for which she longed. Before Dante journeyed into Hell, Francesca's name was buried in anonymity. However, her meeting with Dante is her initiation into poetic immortality. By telling her story to Dante, she is no longer an anonymous shade: she is Francesca da Rimini, one of the most unforgettable sinners in Dante's *Inferno*.



Untitled — David F. Simpson

Insomniac

Stacie Slotnick '94

Not being awake
is different
from being
asleep.

Mind glowing emptily,
Numb but wide awake,
Wide awake.

There is a twelve-tone symphony
of night
that no one hears.
It has a recurring theme
of car doors, creaking floorboards,
and his breath whistling shrilly.
The bass note of night: a continuo of engines and
airplanes.
The intermittent ripieno choir of drunk, cackling
women.
The flapping awnings applaud:
Congratulations, congratulations.

*In London they're waking,
In California they're going
to sleep right now but not you,
not you.
You've done it again,
gotten yourself stuck in the
place with no time, with no place,
where there's no one, nothing, but the
disembodied numbers of the bloodshot red clockface—
Bloody streetsign leading nowhere.*

Congratulations, congratulations.

Earlier,
I'd had five minutes of being tired
but didn't catch them.
They flashed by like an idea I couldn't grasp:
What is sleep?

I don't have the time for this time for myself.
I'm not interested in the quiet,
In the damned solitude of silence,
In this perfect atmosphere for rumination.
I'm not looking for enlightenment—
All that I want
Is the map
that will lead me out
of these interstices
between night and day.



Untitled — Dominic Crapuchettes

Clytemnestra, A Sonnet

Nathan James Humphrey

“ΚΛΥΤΑΙΜΗΣΤΡΑ:

οι γω τεκουσα τονδ οφιν εθρεψαμην.

ΟΡΕΣΤΗΣ:

η καρτα μαντις ουξ ονειρατων φοβος.”

—928-9, Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers*

Suckle the serpent, give him rest—
Let him exchange venom for milk.
O what a fire lies near thy breast
What pang of tooth on fleshly silk.
Suffer the serpent to slowly slither
Over thy sacred, supple feature;
His bite dothy cause thy breast to whither
For evil is ever in that creature.
Like Clytemnestra live and do—
Who drempt a death wrought by her son,
And not allowing the dream to woo,
The serpent with her letting slyly won.

The fangs by moonlight now are glistening;
When then dost thou despise, not listening?



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