Energeia
St. John's College
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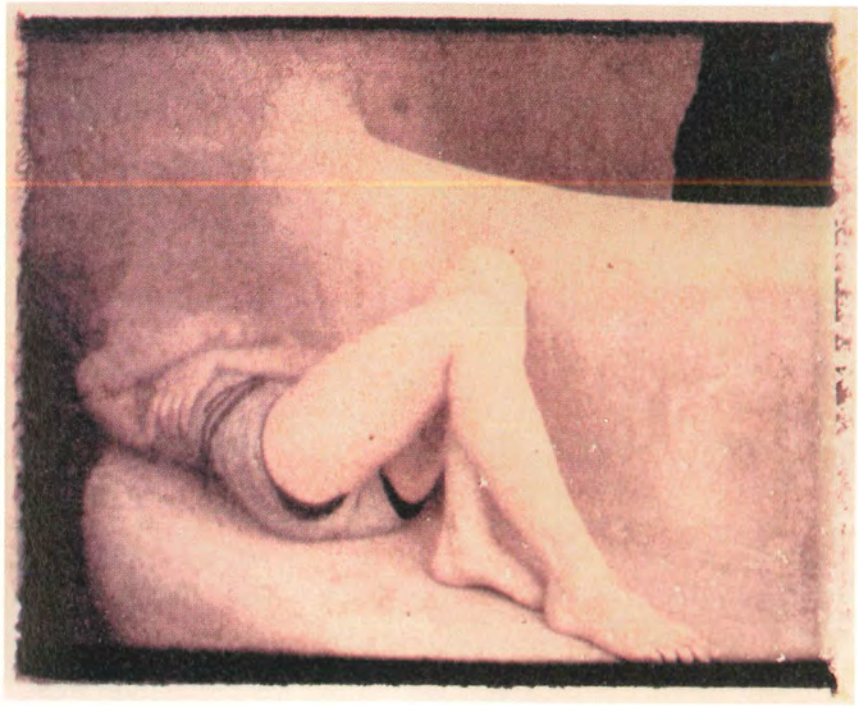

spring 2007

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Man Reading / **Caroline Barry**

Young Will

Tristan William Evans-Wilent

His first memory was this: he sat on his father's lap, dressed warm. Outside the snow fell, but inside with his father, it did not. The room was yellow and his father read to him. He can still remember the words, though he still does not understand them.

> *Andra moi ennepe, mousa, polutropon, hos mala polla*
> *planchthe, epei Troies hieron ptoliethron epersen:*
> *pollon d' anthropon iden astea kai noon egno,*
> *polla d' ho g' en pontoi pathen algea hon kata thumon,*
> *arnumenos hen te psuchen kai noston hetairon.*
> *all' oud' hos hetarous errusato, hiemenos per:*
> *auton gar: sphetrreisin atasthalieisin olonto,*
> *nepioi, hoi kata bous Huperionos Eelioio*
> *esthion: autar ho toisin apheileto nostimon emar.*
> *ton hamothen ge, thea, thugater Dios, eipe kai hemin.*[1]

His father read those words, half singing them, and the sound even then felt old and his father singing them felt old too. In a voice that was hard and loud his father read to him. He remembers marveling at that voice, at those words, at the ancient sounds they made.

Young Will thinks about this without trying on his way to school. He steps on all the cracks and when he passes the oak he knows there are one hundred and thirty-nine more steps, two for each crack in the sidewalk. It is snowing like before,

1. Tell me, O Muse, of the man of many devices, who wandered full many ways after he had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy. Many were the men whose cities he saw and whose minds he learned, aye, and many the woes he suffered in his heart upon the sea, seeking to win his own life and the return of his comrades. Yet even so he saved not his comrades, though he desired it sore, for through their own blind folly they perished—fools, who devoured the kine of Helios Hyperion; but he took from them the day of their returning. [Homer's *Odyssey*, lines 1–10. The translation is the author's.—Ed.]

but not as hard. Snow falls on his nose and he feels it turn to water on his skin.

"One hundred and seven," Will says to himself. The school, his school, stands in front of him. Will knows it well. He knows the front door will be cold and the walls in his classroom are green. He knows that his teacher's name is Miss Francis and that she is beautiful. He knows the names of the other eight children in the class and knows his favorite is named Mikey Worthington. He knows that today Miss Francis will read from a book entitled *Farmer Boy*, by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Young Will read the first half of the book last night and wants to ask Miss Francis what flapjacks are.

Young Will is in his classroom now and sits at a table. He smiles and waves at Mikey Worthington, who sits at the other table. Mikey Worthington waves back. Miss Francis clears her throat and Will turns to look at her. She wears a blue dress and has blue eyes.

"Good morning," says Miss Francis.

"Good morning Miss Francis!" says the class.

"Do you know what the first lesson is today?"

"Math," shouts Will, and some of the other children shout it too.

"That's correct, Will. Let's go and find our math books."

The math lesson goes like this:

7 + 9 =
8 + 8 =
11 + 3 =
15 + 1 =
9 + 7 =
8 + 3 + 5 =

"Sixteen," thinks Will. "All of them." Will writes a big sixteen and circles it and looks to the other lesson that he has been given.

16.7 / 138.21 =

98.1 / 3432.8 =
And so on..

Young Will begins to divide. When he finishes he looks up. He sees Mikey Worthington and Mikey draws a big sixteen in the air. Will nods and writes a sixteen back.

"OK," says Miss Francis. "Jane, can you collect everyone's books and put them on my desk?"

"Yes, Miss Francis," Jane replies.

"While Jane collects our math books, can someone tell me what we're doing tonight?" Children raise their hands. "Yes, Greg?"

"We have our play tonight!"

"That's right, Greg. Now I want you all to make sure to remind your parents when you go home today. Some of them might not have as good a memory as you all do."

Second memory:

Young Will's father stands on a stage. People clap and his father claps back. They are outside. People shout and clap and smile. Young Will has been told this is the Olympics and they are in Greece. Men and Women march around in funny hats and clothes with rings on them. They march around in a circle, some waving big flags. When they stop, his father begins to sing, reading to all of them. His voice is loud and projected into a microphone. His father's voice is the same as before, speaking in that strange and ancient language. Will's mother tells him that the language his father is speaking in is called Ancient Greek. Will's mother is proud as she tells him.

Young Will plays the part of Thor in the play. He holds a sword made out of tinfoil and wears a Viking hat with horns. The play is about Thor, who meets a great giant and the giant shows Thor things that he did not know. Young Will steps on the stage now and people clap. He sees his father and his mother sitting in the audience. His father waves.

"Behold, I am Thor, strongest of men," shouts Will, brandishing his sword. "Behold that house. I am hungry and maybe there is food inside." The play goes quick. The house happens to be the glove of the giant. The giant introduces himself to Thor and shows him things about the world that Thor did not understand before.

When the play ends people clap. Young Will runs to his mother and his mother hugs him. Will turns to his father and takes the pen and pad from his father's outstretched hand.

You were great, it says.

Thanks, Will writes.

Those were a lot of lines to memorize, Will's father writes.

It wasn't that bad. Could you hear me saying them OK?

I could hear you perfectly, writes his father.

Third Memory:

Will stands in the same room as before. His mother is crying and his father is hugging her. Will is trying to grab his father's leg to ask him why his mother is crying. His father turns to look at him and Will asks: "Why is mom crying?" His father smiles at him and does not say anything. "Why is mom crying?" Will asks again. His father still does not answer. His mother begins to cry louder. Young Will keeps asking and his father, with a bandage over his head, does not say anything.

At school the next day, Young Will and his class go to the school library. They will begin a project there.

"Each of you will pick a language and then make a presentation about it. You should also learn a little of that language, like that alphabet, or how to say hello or goodbye," Miss Francis tells them.

"I pick English," shouts a boy named Sean.

"Any language but English, Sean," says Miss Francis, smiling. "Now each of you look in that stack of books and find a language." The children in Will's class jump up and scramble for books. Will joins them. He sees books with

French, Spanish, German, and Italian, but no Greek. He keeps looking. Soon, all of the children have chosen books and sit at tables scattered around the room. Some of them try out their language.

"Wee!" shouts a girl named Nancy. "Wee!" Will cannot find any books with Greek in them. He feels a tap on his shoulder and turns around. An older woman is smiling at him.

"Can I help you find anything, young man?" She looks very old to Will, with wrinkles on her skin that look like rivers. "She would know Ancient Greek," thinks Will.

"I'm looking for a book with Ancient Greek," says Will. The old woman furrows her eyebrows. "That's a very difficult language, young man. It is what people call a lost language, because no one speaks it anymore. You should try a different language."

"That's not true," says Will. "My father speaks Ancient Greek. I've heard him."

"Does he?" asks the old woman. "We better ask Miss Francis about this." The old woman motions to Miss Francis, who comes over.

"This young man tells me that he wants to learn about Attic Greek."

"Ancient Greek," says Will, interrupting her.

"Attic Greek is just a type of Ancient Greek," says the librarian, turning to look at Will again. "I told him it is a very difficult language and we both thought it would be a good idea to ask you first." Miss Francis looks down at Will.

"I think Will can handle it."

"I don't know if you understand, Miss Francis. Among other things, Ancient Greek has a different alphabet, making it very difficult to learn."

"Will's a smart boy. He'll be able to figure it out."

The old woman looks questioningly at Miss Francis. "Very well. What's your name, young man?"

"Will," says Young Will.

"Well, just follow me, Will, and we'll try to find a book or two on this Ancient Greek of yours." The old woman leads

Will through aisles of books. They are all brown or black. Will looks at them, wondering what they say. The old woman walks quickly and Will has to quicken his step as he sees her stop at the end of an aisle, staring for a few seconds, and then pulling out two large books. "Here you are, Will. Watch out; they're heavy." The old woman hands Young Will the books. They are very large. Will pretends they are light, trying not to show their weight in his arms.

"Thank you," Will says. The librarian looks down and nods at him. Will walks back through the aisle of books and sits down next to Mikey Worthington.

"What'd you pick?" asks Mikey as Will sits down.

"Ancient Greek. That's the language my dad speaks."

"Never heard of it. I chose Spanish."

Will looks down at the two books sitting on the table. One is orange and says *An Introduction to Attic Greek*. Under the letters there is a picture of a woman dressed in a white robe with a blindfold over her eyes holding a scale. The other book looks older and is brown. Its title is *The Beginning of Human Thought: The short life of Athens*. "The beginning of history," thinks Will.

Memory:

Will sits on the couch in the yellow room. His parents are standing in front of him. His mother looks stern and his father's face shows no expression at all.

"Will," says his mother. "Your father and I have decided to live in different houses. Your father is going to move out to the country and I'm going to stay here."

"Is this house not big enough, mom?"

"No, Will, that's not it. Sometimes people just decide that they would be happier if they didn't live together, like you and your friend Mikey. I bet if you lived in the same house you might get tired of one another."

"I don't think so," says Will. "Mikey Worthington's great."

"Maybe you think that now, but I'm sure if he lived with us you would get tired of him."

"Are you tired of dad?" Will asks. His mother looks away and writes something on a pad of paper and hands it to Will's father. Will's father smiles at him and writes something on the pad, handing it to Will when he is done.

No, not really, but everyone needs a vacation sometimes.

"A vacation! Can I come? Is there going to be a beach?" Will's father points to the pad of paper and Will writes it down, handing it back to his father.

Nope, no beach Will. But you'll get to visit your father on his vacation every weekend.

"Will you come too mom?"

"No, Will. Just you."

Will now sits at the kitchen table, the two books spread out in front of him along with a piece of paper that is almost filled.

αβγδεζηθικλ, writes Will. He writes the alphabet and then turns to the book mumbling the letters. "Alpha, beta, gamma, delta, epsilon, zeta, eta, theta, iota, kappa, lambda." Young Will says them over and over, louder and louder, trying to say them in his father's voice. He feels his teeth and his mouth and imagines men long gone, ancient men, feeling their tongues hit their teeth in the same way, the same way his father says them, the same way he does. It is as if time has stopped.

The door opens and his mother appears smiling with her tired eyes.

"Hi, Will."

"Hi, mom."

"School all right today?"

"It was fine." His mother reaches her hand over Will's head, jostling his hair.

"Hey mom, don't do that."

"Hey yourself," she says. "I'm entitled."

"How was work?" Will asks. His mother now stands with her back to him, taking things out of her briefcase.

"Oh, it was good. I have a new case." She keeps her back to Will as she talks.

"What's it about?"

"Well, a man thinks a company stole an idea of his and wants the company to pay money for the idea the company stole."

"But I steal ideas all the time and I don't pay any money for them."

"What ideas do you steal, Will?" his mother asks, pouring water into the large iron teakettle.

"Like in math I didn't know how to multiply until I was taught how to. That's stealing an idea."

"This case is a little different. The man is angry because the company made a lot of money from the idea. You didn't make any money from learning how to multiply, did you?"

"One time I did Mikey Worthington's math homework for him and he gave me a brownie his mom made for it." Will's mother laughs.

"Well, I guess you owe someone a piece of that brownie. And you shouldn't do Mikey's homework for him or he won't learn how to do it for himself."

"Do you think the company should pay the man some money?" asks Will.

"Probably, but they won't have to."

"Why not?"

"Because that's my job, kiddo."

Memory:

It is night. Young Will's father sits in the chair reading. Will holds a book. His father looks up and Will gives the book to his father. His father shakes his head at him and takes out a piece of paper. He takes out a pen and writes a note and hands it to Will.

I can't, it says.

"Why not?", asks Will. His father takes the pad of paper and writes.

Want to play a game instead?

Will takes the pad and paper from his father. Of course, writes Will, and hands the pad of paper and the pen back to his father.

When you want to talk to me, you write it on a piece of paper, and when I want to talk to you I'll do the same thing.

"OK!" Young Will says. His father shakes his head and points at the pad of paper.

Hi dad, writes Will.

What are you reading?

A play by Aristophanes, kind of like the play you wanted me to read to you. But this one is in Greek.

Neat. How do you read it?

I'll teach you someday.

The room is silent. The father sits and the son stands across from him. The only sound is the pad of paper that is passed back and forth. It is passed back and forth slowly, as outside, the last of the day's sun goes down.

Will you read to me now? His father reads what Will has written and looks at his son in the eyes before writing.

I've forgotten how to read out loud, writes his father.

"But I'm tired of this game," says Will, forgetting. His father points to the pad and Young Will writes what he said and passes the pad and the pen to his father.

I'm tired of this game too, Will.

"Are you ready for dinner, Will?" asks his mother. Will looks up from the table.

"Just a minute."

"What are you doing there anyway?" His mother moves from the stove to behind Will's chair, holding his shoulders in her hands. "Are those books on Ancient Greek?"

"Yep. I'm going to learn how to talk like dad so we can talk together again." The fingers on Will's shoulders tighten their grip. "Ouch mom, geeze."

"Dinner's going to be ready in five minutes," says his mother, taking her hands off of her son and walking back to the counter.

Walking to school again, Young Will does not count steps. It is snowing again, but Will does not notice. He mumbles, "*Alethia, sophos, nomos, philos, eros, socrates.*" Even in English they sound old," Will thinks, saying them again with their English names. "Truth, wisdom, custom, love, desire, Socrates." He mumbles them to himself, them and others and does not notice the cold door to the school or the classroom. When it is time for math, Will tries to do it quickly, without noticing the mistakes he never made before. When he is done, Will does not look up for Mikey Worthington, but writes the words he knows, mumbling them still.

He spends the whole day like that. He does not raise his hand, does not speak aloud. At lunch he takes the large orange book out from his backpack and sits by himself. He learns how to conjugate the simplest verb, learns the plural and singular, present and past, the first, second, and third person. Young Will goes to his father's house tomorrow. He will speak with him by then. But Young Will must hurry. He still does not know how to say hello.

Outside on the porch, Will sits and watches the snow that has turned to rain. The rain falls heavy, and the snow it touches melts. The snow turns brown on the sidewalk and the street and cars drive by slowly. It is cold and damp and Will feels both through his coat. He sits in a chair brought out from the kitchen and sets his books on a small coffee table taken from the living room. There is a notebook on Young Will's lap that he is translating sentences on:

Homere epaideue anthropous.
Socrates luei anthropon.

He translates a sentence and then reads it carefully out loud. The sentences are about Homer and Socrates helping men. Young Will listens to the sound of the rain hitting the porch and the sound of the Greek words being spoken in his voice, both together. His father would know that sound.

Will looks up and sees his mother pulling up to the house. She is home early and gets out of the car, trying to stay dry as she walks up to the porch.

"What are you doing out here, Will?"

"Just stuff."

"It's cold out here, dummy."

"I know, but it feels good." Will's mother looks down at the Greek book.

"How's the Greek going?" she asks.

"Pretty good. I can read a few things."

"That's great, Will." His mother's eyes have not left the book. "Would you like a cup of hot chocolate?"

"With marshmallows?"

"With marshmallows," his mother says, reaching for Will's hair before walking through the door. Will hears her fill up the kettle and the clank of metal as she closes the spat and sets it on the burner. Young Will knows she turns the stove on next, and then takes two mugs down from the cupboard. After that she will reach for a tea bag, Earl Grey, and put it in her mug. Then she will take down the box of chocolate powder and measure three teaspoons of the chocolate into Will's mug. A fire truck drives by, flashing silently in the rain. Once his mother preps the mugs, she sets a frying pan on another burner and pours cream into it. The milk will begin to move with the skin, and she adds a small piece of butter to the cream, mixing it with a wooden spoon. When the butter has completely melted, she turns the burner off. The fire truck has disappeared but Will now hears the siren a few blocks away. Will knows she will be taking the kettle off of the stove now, filling her mug and a small fraction of his with the boiling water. She takes the frying pan and the wooden spoon and

guides the thick cream into his mug before stirring his hot chocolate, slowly, with a measuring spoon. As she does this, the milk will turn dark like the rain hitting the snow.

"Come inside, Will, your hot chocolate is ready." Will knows his mother is reaching for the marshmallows, selecting three from the bag before setting them beside his mug, which is at his place.

"Coming," Will says, taking his notebook and stepping through the door. He can barely hear the sound of the fire truck's siren now. Will sets his books down on the kitchen counter and goes and sits at his place. The mug sits on the table with the marshmallows around it. He places one in his mug and takes a drink.

"I need to speak to you about something, Will," his mother says, sitting down opposite him, her palms pressed on the table.

"What?"

"I'm very happy that you're learning Greek, Will, and it will make your father very happy too, but Will, he cannot speak to you in Greek."

"Why not, he's done it before."

"Of course he has, Will, but not after the car accident."

"I know that. He told me he forgot how to talk, but I think he just means English."

His mother takes his hand.

"Will, your father got hit in the head, hit in his brain, and that caused him not to know how to form coherent sounds to make words with. It also caused him to go deaf, so he can't hear anyone else, either. It's not that he forgot, but that he just can't." Will takes his hand away from his mother's.

"Do you know how to speak Greek?"

"No, Will."

"Then how do you know he can't hear it! How do you know that he won't be able to speak it, that when I talk to him about things in Greek I won't make him remember?" Will's voice rises steadily. "How do you know?"

"Because I do, Will," his mother says, her voice soft, as his still rings in the kitchen.

"I don't believe you," Young Will says.

"Honey."

"I don't believe you," in a whisper now, grabbing his books from the kitchen counter and going back out to the porch.

Sitting outside again, he says it, over and over again, saying what he believes he too will do, saying it quietly without pause as the rain falls on the snow, saying, "*Socrates luei anthropon*," saying Socrates releases man.

Memory:

Young Will sits in his father's new home, in his new study. The study and house are smaller than the old one and the walls are white and the furniture is new, save for his father's desk. Will sits there and reads *Twelfth Night* slowly. So far it is about a girl who pretends to be a man because she got shipwrecked. The phone rings and Will's father does not look up from his work. The phone rings four more times and Will gets up and answers it.

"Hello?"

"Hi," says a man's voice. "May I speak to Mr. Brightly?"

"Sure," Will says. His father is standing next to him now. Will passes the phone to his father. He stares at it and Will puts the phone in his father's hands. Young Will's father brings the phone to his ear and smiles and nods and then hangs up. Will takes the pad and writes, Who was it?

I don't know, writes his father.

The next morning Young Will wakes up early and goes down to the kitchen table with his books. He opens the history, and reads. The sun has not yet risen. Will reads about Socrates. He reads about how Socrates spent his time posing questions to people. The book tells that Socrates was imprisoned by the city and forced to drink poison, forced to

choose between death and exile. He reads how Socrates had chosen death, chosen to put poison to his lips rather than leave home. As he reads the sun begins to climb, rising slowly. His mother's footsteps sound as they come down the stairs.

The two eat breakfast together without speaking. The table is cleared and Will takes his books and his schoolbag. It is warmer out today. On his way to school, Young Will watches the last of the snow melting into water and dirt. Will walks the one hundred and thirty seven steps, counting them again. At ninety-four he crosses the small bridge made of iron that leads over the creek. At one hundred and ten steps he hears the sound of children's voices.

In class, Will sits at his table and Miss Francis walks over to him.

"I missed you yesterday, Will," she says.

"I was here."

"But you were so quiet. I was afraid you were getting sick."

"I'm not sick at all Miss Francis," Will says. Miss Francis winks at Will and pats him on the shoulder.

"OK, Will, I just wanted to make sure everything was all right." Will nods at her.

The school day goes quickly. Young Will soon finds himself standing outside in the afternoon, waiting for his father. It is even warmer now. Will has shed his coat and holds it in his arms. After a short while, a taxi comes and stops in front of Will. His father gets out and smiles, picking Will up in his arms and hugging him. His father holds him tight and Young Will can feel and hear his breath before he is set down again.

The ride to his father's house is long. The taxi makes its way through the town, moving slowly through the traffic, gradually moving out towards the country. Will sits by the window, watching as towns begin to appear, slowly at first, small streets lined with old homes and older gas stations. The farther the cab drives, the fewer houses there are, until even the towns are replaced by open pastures and fields. The

houses get older. Young Will sees one whose roof is sagged in, tracing a U over the house. Outside the home, a trailer sits in the driveway, a young girl standing outside of it. As they pass the girl kicks the dirt.

Will's father lights a cigarette and Will turns to watch him smoke. He holds the cigarette in his lips, moving it gradually from one side of his mouth to the other. Will's father looks away from the view and sees his son watching him. He takes out his pad of paper and a pen from a jacket pocket and writes on it.

Don't tell mom, it says.

I won't, I promise, writes Will.

Outside now, the road is surrounded by large farms. Will smells the stink of cows and fertilizer that is being laid for spring. The cab pulls into a small dirt road at the edge of one of the farms. At the base of the driveway stands a mailbox with his father's last name painted on the black box with the same yellow paint that was used to paint Will's living room. The cab drives on, past the farm and the forest that borders it. The smell of manure is replaced with pine. After a few more minutes the cab stops and Young Will and his father get out.

Will steps into the house with his father close behind. It is small, with a kitchen, a living room, and two bedrooms. Will walks into his room and sets his school bag down. "The house is old," his father had told him, "built with wood from the trees that surround it." Will looks out the window into the forest, touching the walls that line the home, feeling the forest that engulfs the cabin. His father walks into Will's room and hands his son the pad of paper.

"Want to go get the mail with me?" Will nods and his father takes his son by the hand. Outside the sounds of birds come through the trees. His father writes on the pad again and hands it to Will.

It's the first day of spring.

Will takes the pad and writes, Can you hear the birds?

What do they sound like? his father writes.

Like spring. Father and son walk slow like this, stopping often to write. Will's father turns and looks at him. His face is older now. It has a beard that is turning white.

"*Socrates luei anthropon*," Will says. His father shakes his head and hands his son the pad of paper. "Socrates luei anthropon," Will says again. He says it louder this time, trying to sing the words like his father did. His father shakes his head. "Socrates luei anthropon." He shouts it now. The sound echoes in the forest. His father has stopped and is looking at him. Will takes the pad from his father and writes it now, tracing the letters slow and carefully. His father takes the pad and reads. He does not look up from the writing pad. Will pats his father on the shoulder and says the words one more time. His father raises his head and watches his son speak those old words, watches his son's mouth move. "Socrates luei anthropon," Will says, quietly now. The smell of pine is thick. Young Will's father opens his mouth to speak and the sound that comes out is hollow and thin. His father makes the sound again and Young Will does not understand. His father opens his mouth again. The sound that comes from his father's mouth is harsh and quiet. That is not his father's voice. Those are not his father's words.

I

From domes of sand on the beach where men made
a bridge between earth and the sky,
to spaces coiled like fishing line
laced in the belly of the soil;
through ghost-towns, through a stone-forest, through archways
carved in Sequoias, the Winnebago
I found myself in
every childhood summer
had already ranged. On the road to Bird Park
in the blue hills of Georgia with Grandpa,
the coils of the road like a rattlesnake
piled up, the motor groaned
and our big rolling house
around every curve leaned, a wall of rock
on one side of us, on the other an edge,
a blue fall,
and miles of gorge green, on the road to Bird Park, to waterfalls
lost in the forest, to the peak of Blood Mountain
(you can make it
spying trees with scarlet paint marks).

II

Dripping
and glimmering in our fingers,
flat gray stones from pebbles and slippery clay
in the creek
were torn to raise towers in the water. We discovered
flakes of gold sometimes,
while those long-legged bugs that walk on water
glided past like seraphim or UFOs

walking on air, barely skimming
the invisible skin.
Come sundown, laying the river-rocks
on dry land in a circle, we made fire,
and Grandpa told me the one
where the children lost in the forest were snared
by daddy-long-leg spiders
big as you and me
    that tied them up
        to a tree and danced around them
and how did he end it?
I saw them dancing in the flame.
Then he recounted how an excavation crew
    burrowed so deep
they caught the screams (true story) of Hell.
I saw their faces in the flame. Come sunup,
we hiked
around a helical ramp
to the top of a tower the shape of a satellite, rising
through swaddles of nimbus to where
the horizon held five states.

III

Staring past, with hair straight up,
his final birthday's garish frosting . . .
Suddenly he was younger than me,
and I was older.
Closed in on by darkness, he spoke to his Lord
on a broken phone (its cord
    reaching
        through tangles
            only space,
copper hairs jaggedly gesturing for a pulse).
He said, "I'd like to go now."

They made me help clean out his backyard, a garden of junk
he thought would be useful: carburetors,
toilet-seats, gramophones, bicycle-wheels,
deconstructed air-conditioners, two-by-fours, lawn-mower blades,
rolls of insulation, shards of sheet metal, not to mention
things rusted and dissected past recognition.
Crude little fences
    with peeling paint
crisscrossed it all into a knot of corridors,
and whatever order they followed
fled with him who understood alone.
When we found our way to his workshop, onyx bees
were droning in and out through a fractured pane.
I opened the door and witnessed, at a loss, endless rows
of boxes, each one full of nails: a universe
of things that were never built.

—Bryan Smith

The Crutch near the Moldy Pond / **Zack Hay**

Monumental Insignificance: Poetic Language, Immortality, and the Beloved

Rob Irons

There has been much ado involving the identification of Shakespeare's beloved, yet he remains an exceedingly problematic figure. The reader is perpetually denied significant particulars of him, and never senses any reciprocity whatsoever in the relationship of the poet and the beloved. Thus, many of the sonnets achieve a connecting, emotional mimesis of the poet's lack: the elusive beloved is the outline without the image, the key without the note, the syllable without the sound. Who is this "sweet boy" (108.5)?[1] What accounts for his "present-absent" (45.4) nature? Is he one of those who "have power to hurt and will do none" (94.1)? Perhaps a better question is this: does the beloved really matter? Perhaps the sonnets themselves constitute the real beloved, born from continuous consideration of mortality; furthermore, if the sonnets really are the beloved, then the reader is presented with an extended (though not continuous) meditation on the nature, powers, and possibilities of poetic language, and on the "becomings" of meaning within the first 126 sonnets.

The Beloved as Verse

As has been woefully yet needlessly lamented, concrete details of the beloved perpetually escape the reader, and we are left with a mere apparition comprised of generalities—and this

1. William Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New York: Penguin Group [USA] Inc., 2001). All quotations *and* punctuation are taken from this edition. Text references are to sonnet number and line number. Considerations of editorial versus authorial arrangements of both sonnet sequences and punctuation lie well outside the scope of this investigation.

from the sonnets in which he is actually treated. Furthermore, approximately 28 of the sonnets are addressed to or involve the "Dark Lady," and 26 more are addressed to no one at all. In addition, 6 more sonnets appear as apostrophes to Time or Love. But what if we *did* know all: his complete character, habits, disposition, every contour of his countenance, the location of each hair on his head with scientific exactitude? What if we had his very *words*, faithfully relayed by our poet, complete with context? Would not he matter then? Perhaps not, for what a work is potentially *about* and its subject are not necessarily the same. Dante tells us of Paolo and Francesca, yet their characters serve only as a vehicle to investigate the nature of lust. While Socrates is the chief subject of the *Republic*, who would argue that the dialogue is primarily *about* Socrates and not justice? And even all of the autobiographical particulars that the Wife of Bath provides for the reader are readily transcended by a larger narrative scope and its focus on equality between the sexes. As for the beloved, what we *do* have is a protracted sequence teeming with ambiguity, packed with paradox, and dripping with irony, leading to an overwhelming conclusion: the persona of the beloved, and perhaps the nature of the text itself, is one of indeterminacy and undecidability.

In numerous instances the poet overtly equates himself with the beloved. Consider the following:

> O, how thy worth with manners may I sing
> When thou art all the better part of me?
> What can mine own praise to mine own self bring,
> And what is't but mine own when I praise thee?
> (39.1–4)

Here the final sentiment is clear: the poet praises himself when he praises the beloved, for they are two parts of the selfsame whole, though perhaps qualitatively distinct, as the poet asserts in line 2 as well as in 74.8: "My spirit is thine, the better part of me." If the subject and the poet are one, and the poet is identified by his poetry, then how far removed is

the subject from the poetry itself? The first quatrain of sonnet 55 argues thus:.

> Not marble nor the gilded monuments
> Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
> But you shall shine more bright in these contents
> Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.

The first two rhymes assert that the "powerful rhyme" is itself a monument capable of outlasting the most durable of materials, and it is in these same "contents" that the beloved "shall shine more bright." The sonnet is perhaps a powerfully perdurable monument and, thus far, the poet has in fact held time in check. But what of the second claim, that the beloved "shall shine more bright"? Where is he? He is reduced to nothing but two instances of "you" and a "yourself" within the entire sonnet. Here the shining beloved is to the monumental poem as the superficial surface is to the "gilded monuments": there is no substance to the sheen. However, when we read sonnet 54, the beloved's importance is given greater weight, though he is not treated until the couplet:

> . . . Sweet roses do not do so [die unto themselves]:
> Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odors made.
> And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
> When that shall vade, by verse distills your truth.
> (54.11–14)

Extending the metaphor above validates the argument that the beloved has now become the material subject for the poem, but functions only as generic fodder for distilling truth. Here are the terms of the metaphor:

Odor	Truth
Rose	Beloved

Thus, odor is to a rose as truth is to the beloved. However, the distillation of the rose's odor is only achieved through death. Therefore, in accordance with the implicit terms of the

metaphor, the poetic process is likened to death. The beloved has here been promoted from mere "gilding" to the material necessary for poetic distillation of truth.

But as we look further into the sonnets, we see a more explicit and substantive equation of the beloved with the verse itself: "The worth of that [the body] is that [the soul] which it contains, / And that [the soul] is this [the poem], and this with thee remains" (74.13–14). The very soul of the beloved is now equated with and embodied in poetry, with the semantic thrust of the claim amplified and reinforced by the mimetic structure of the argument in the form of a chiasmus:

> that (body) . . . that (soul) . . . that (soul) . . . this
> (*beloved* embodied by poetry).

Just as the body contains the soul, so is the soul embodied in the couplet. Let us now turn to sonnet 96:

> Some say thy fault is youth, some wantonness;
> Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport;
> Both grace and faults are loved of more and less:
> Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort.
> As on the finger of a thronèd queen
> The basest jewel will be well esteemed,
> So are those errors that in thee are seen
> To truths translated and for true things deemed.
> How many lambs might the stern wolf betray
> If like a lamb he could his looks translate!
> How many gazers mightst thou lead away
> If thou wouldst use the strength of all thy state!
> But do not so; I love thee in such sort
> As, thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

The couplet in 96 echoes the argument in 74 while mimicking the form: thou . . . mine . . . mine . . . thy. This chiasmus better *visually* asserts the connection between the poet and the beloved/poem, with "mine" stated and repeated, neatly framing the caesura. The device facilitates the resolution that the couplet by convention strives for, leaving the reader with

a sense of completion. Furthermore, line 14 is salient for its metrical irregularity, which is amplified by its contrast with the firm regularity established by the preceding 13 lines. None of these 13 lines contains a feminine ending: therefore, it makes sense to assign the word "being" in 14 only one syllable. While prosody is to some degree conjectural, no reader is capable of rendering "thou being mine, mine" as anything but a double spondee. The resonating effect of the spondees makes the message of the line exceedingly emphatic: the poet is one with the beloved. Further, the beloved is again equated with the poetry itself in the word "report." While the primary meaning of "report" is "reputation," it can also signify the poem—that is, the poem is the report. An alternative reading of the entire sonnet strengthens the argument for this secondary meaning. The sonnet's ostensible argument is this: the fair youth, though excoriated for his alleged faults, is of such a nature that error turns to truth through him; but, were it his wish, he could lead admirers astray as a wolf (in the guise of a lamb) could betray lambs. Why are a person's faults referred to as "errors" (7)? And in what kind of person are "truths translated" (8)? And why is deception described by the verb "translate" (10)? Taking into consideration the evidence above that the beloved is either equated with the poem or is verse itself, we can easily explain the language of language used in the sonnet: the poem is the deceptive, controlled, and sheepish response of a poetic wolf to a contrary critic. Furthermore, the phrase "truths translated" (8) hearkens back to the couplet of 54: verse is the very means by which truth is translated, or distilled. Additionally, the only other occurrence of metrical variation in sonnet 96 lies in line 4: "Thou mak'st faults graces . . ." If 96 is indeed an example in the sonnet sequence of an implicit, almost surreptitious commentary on the poet's own craft, the meter of line 4 can then be construed not as an artistic blemish but as mimetic metrical irony: the spondee in the first half of the line creates the "fault" in meter, yet the line then gracefully recovers regularity.

Monuments, Time, and the Problem of Mortality

We have thus far seen the following transferences, equations, and transformations of the beloved: first, to the poet; second, to mere ornamentation; next, to poetic material; and lastly, to the very soul of poetry. Therefore, viewing the "real" beloved as the poetry itself, we can read some of the remaining sonnets as reflections on the nature of poetic language. But before doing so, it is necessary first to examine that which perpetually provides angst and anxiety for the poet: Mortality.

The opening quatrain of sonnet 65 asks the essential question of the poet's "fearful meditation" (65.9):

> Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
> But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
> How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
> Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

The poet's answer is tenuously posited in the couplet: "O, none, unless this miracle have might, / That in black ink my love may still shine bright." The lasting effects of the poet's work are wholly contingent on a supernatural phenomenon, a miracle, and his hope is reduced to a weak, tenuous, subjunctive "may" (65.14). What could account for this fearful uncertainty? Why is there such a change in the poet's supreme confidence exhibited in the opening quatrain of sonnet 55?

> Not marble nor the gilded monuments
> Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
> But you shall shine more bright in these contents
> Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.

Perhaps there is an increasing awareness by the poet of what he bases his confident claim on in sonnet 55: nothing. The argument is circular, self-referential, and ultimately empty. Why shouldn't these poems be susceptible to "Devouring Time" (19.1)? Has the poet remembered here in 65 his

"papers, yellowed with their age" (17.9)? What monument can withstand the ceaseless ravaging of time?

In order to answer this, we must look at how the poet's language previously functions by examining sonnet 18:

> Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
> Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
> Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
> And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
> Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
> And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
> And every fair from fair sometime declines,
> By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed:
> But thy eternal summer shall not fade
> Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
> Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade
> When in eternal lines to come thou grow'st.
> So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
> So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Sonnet 18 is salient within the sequence for numerous reasons: first, it officially departs from the arguments of procreation seen previously; second, we get the first instance of the poet's explicit contemplation of his craft and, more specifically, a meditation on the transformative power (and potential failure) of metaphor itself. Within the author's mind, the first eight lines function as a point-counterpoint argument, framed by a question put forth *by* the poet *to* the poet of whether or not to utilize the very essence of figurative speech, whether or not he is to "compare" (18.1) at all. If metaphor (comparison) is indeed the *sine qua non* of the figurative, then the reader is thus presented with the poet's own analysis of the tropological nature of language. "Metaphor" comes from the Greek *meta* (over; across) and *pherein* (to carry), yielding the idea of "carrying across," or transference. Thus, any one particular attribute within a given genus is "transferred" and applied to the characteristics of another genus. For example, consider the Ghost's words

(referring to Claudius) to Hamlet: "The Serpent that did sting thy father's life / Now wears his crown" (1.5.38–39).[1] In order for the metaphor to function, at least one of the qualities of the serpent is transferred and applied to the characteristics of Claudius:

moves on its stomach	King of Denmark
detaches jaw scaly	rational creature kills with poison
ectotherm kills with poison	featherless biped sneaky
etc.	etc.

The metaphor is valid only if it remains relatively static: if the pig's attribute of either "kills with poison" or "sneaky" is carried over to Claudius, and the metaphor here freezes, the comparison works; however, multiple transferences are problematic to the metaphor's legitimacy, and ultimately it collapses upon itself into risible absurdity: Is Claudius' tongue forked? Does he slither on his stomach? Does he eat mice? Absurd indeed.

A similar type of analysis is performed by the poet in sonnet 18: individual qualities of the summer are scrutinized against those characteristics of the youth, and lines 2–8 argue for the non-validity of the metaphor proposed. Then, remarkably, the poet makes the comparison anyway in line 9: "But thy eternal summer . . ." How is this possibly valid, especially in light of the poet's own rhetorical analysis and negation of the proposed metaphor? The couplet attempts resolution, yet we are left with the same tautological bombast characteristic of the claim in 55: art justifies itself by itself, and alone can build a pre-eminently perdurable monument of immortality. But does the poet really believe this, or must he struggle to build anew, using language in an unprecedented way?

1. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Cyrus Hoy (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1963).

The problem of monuments in achieving immortality is that, like the metaphor of sonnet 18, they are wholly static. The word "monument" comes from the Latin *monere*, "to remind." In order to be reminded of something, one must have a static, fixed image of the thing itself. But there's the rub: once the object memorialized is set, still, and frozen, it begins to yield to the decay of time. Yet how is one to build a monument of flux? The recognition that "a modern quill doth come too short" (83.7) enlists the poet to invent what is potentially an ultra-modern use of language. The poet must stretch language to "engraft . . . new" (15.14) perspectives. Language must be stretched, re-molded, and reshaped; it must be newly stamped in a way that rival poets cannot emulate; the poet is, as a result, "enforced to seek anew / Some fresher stamp of the time-bettering days" (82.7–8). The subject alone is insufficient to erect a "time-bettering" monument; the subject is static, susceptible to decay.

The concept of subject as stasis is juxtaposed with the increasing realization of the poet of how to build this new type of monument:

> "Fair, kind, and true" is all my argument,
> "Fair, kind, and true," varying to other words;
> And in this change is my invention spent.
>
> (105.9–11)

The key lies in linguistic variation, change, and invention. "Invent" comes from the Latin *invenire*, literally, "to come upon." This discovery and "finding out" of poetic invention is inextricably fused with semantic variation, and further refers to the perpetual "coming upon" of how words work and what meaning means. Only through a conscious and concentrated invention of a poetics of flux can the stasis of the subject defeat decay. Further, this "invention," this discovery, is certainly not exclusive to the poet: "So, till the judgment that yourself arise, / You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes" (55.13–14). The judgment here has, of course, strong

theological connotations, as does the word "miracle" in the couplet of 65: "O, none, unless this miracle have might, / That in black ink my love may still shine bright." Miracle is connected thematically with the theological implications of the "judgment" in 55, but the "miracle" refers specifically to the poem's potential for perdurability. Keeping in mind the equation of the beloved with poetics itself, one can conclude the following: the "miracle" that yields immortality is achieved through the perpetual, critical artistic flux of "invention" and "judgment" of poetic value and meaning by the reader. Additionally, the "might" of the "miracle" in 65.13 exemplifies semantic flux: is the "might" of the "miracle" one of power, or does this "might" signify the "perhaps" or "maybe" of semantic determination of signifiers set "in black ink" (65.14)? His confidence restored, the poet goes so far as to usurp the office of the muse: "Then do thy office, muse; I teach thee how, / To make him seem long hence as he shows now" (101.13–14). Next, we will examine how the poet proceeds in his new office.

Metalanguage, Transference, and Silence

The poet begins to question his former method in the opening of sonnet 115:

> Those lines that I before have writ do lie,
> Even those that said I could not love you dearer;
> Yet then my judgment knew no reason why
> My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer.
> But reckoning time, whose millioned accidents
> Creep in 'twixt vows and change decrees of kings,
> Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,
> Divert strong minds to th' course of alt'ring things—
> Alas, why, fearing of time's tyranny,
> Might I not then say, "Now I love you best"
> When I was certain o'er incertainty,
> Crowning the present, doubting of the rest?
> Love is a babe; then might I not say so,
> To give full growth to that which still doth grow.

"Time's tyranny" (9) is nothing new to the poet, but here it is constricted and applied to the *immediate* workings of language and meaning within the poem itself. But, instead of fighting with time, the poet solves his dilemma by allowing metaphor to work *with* and *through* time: "Love is a babe; then might I not say so, / To give full growth to that which still doth grow." "Crowning the present" meaning of language stabilizes meaning, but positing growth of metaphor and meanings in 115.13–14 indicates an overt departure from the fixity of language seen in sonnet 18. Time is now not simply an inimical destroyer, but is transformed into the ultimate vehicle of semantic sublation: time simultaneously preserves that which it destroys.

Let us now turn to sonnet 107:

> Not mine own fears nor the prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming on things to come
> Can yet the lease of my true love control,
> Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.
> The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,
> And the sad augurs mock their own presage;
> Incertainties now crown themselves assured,
> And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
> Now with the drops of this most balmy time
> My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,
> Since, spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,
> While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes:
> And thou in this shalt find thy monument
> When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

In line 7 above, the poet "crowns" the "incertainties" **of** "present" time that he refused to in 115.12. But the crowning of incertainties is reflexive in line 7; the fact that incertainties are able to act as well as be acted upon is indicative of the growing organic fluidity of the poem. Here we have the explicit voicing of the poet's solution to the problem of

monumental fixity: flowing linguistic indeterminacy. The poet can now work with time, for time only "insults . . . dull and speechless tribes." The poet's "drops" of ink and "balmy time" (9) heal in a wholly new transformative process that forces "Death" (10), not time, to "subscribe" to the poet. Here is the pedestal to the poet's monument of *différance*, its beloved semantic flow of "present-absence" that distinguishes it from all other monuments of man: "And thou in this shalt find thy monument / When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent" (107.13–14).

This wholly inventive and innovative poetics reaches its climax in the exceedingly distinct sonnet 126:

> O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
> Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle hour;
> Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st
> Thy lovers withering as thy sweet self grow'st;
> If Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
> As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,
> She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill
> May Time disgrace and wretched minutes kill.
> Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!
> She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure;
> Her audit, though delayed, answered must be,
> And her quietus is to render thee.
> [ ]
> [ ]

While many sonnets are conspicuous because of metrical variations, no sonnet is as irregular as 126, with two truncated lines and its structure composed exclusively of couplets. In the sonnet, we see a farewell to the fair youth as well as to conventional form itself. That the poet in the sonnets following 126 (if editorial arrangement be historically accurate) again embraces formal convention only reinforces the idea of the beloved as verse, for the farewell is simultaneous. Sonnet 126 is not simply a poem of precariousness or an agglomeration of couplets; rather, it is the culmination of the author's new

poetics. We have seen how the "power" of the "lovely boy," i.e. the verse itself, can now "hold Time's fickle glass" by allowing language to work with time. Meaning, through time's sublation, "hast by waning grown." It continues to grow, like "a babe" (115.13), through the critical "judgments" (55.13) of the poem's lovers (4), i.e. its readers. In the next 6 lines (5–10) of sonnet 126, "Nature" is introduced as a new foe. Again, viewing the "sweet boy" or "babe" as language itself, nature now presents a new danger: meaning, nature's "treasure," can become too slippery and protean within the constant flux of time; thus, even nature "[can]not still keep"(10), or cannot keep still, the meanings left unchecked by form. The connection between meaning and form is clearly a consideration for both poet and reader in 126: the linearity of the argument, pushing the reader forward, is here fused with the cyclic, resonating rhymes of the couplets, resulting in the combination of a "calling back" of meaning with the onward thrust of the argument. The form of 126 renders the reader and the poem at once fixed and fluid: as meaning "goest onwards," form can "pluck . . . back" (6) and ground the reader. "Meaning" is etymologically connected with "moaning," and thus the monumental, moaning resonances fill the "missing" lines (13-14) with poetic and readerly invention.

Furthermore, these tensions gather, explode, and echo on the semantic level in a single word, the final metaphor: "quietus." The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives three definitions for this word, the first of which is "a discharge or acquittance given on payment of sums due; a receipt." To stop at this meaning of "quietus" is to render the metaphor as fixed and feckless as the one examined in sonnet 18. A second definition: "A discharge from office or duty." Keeping in mind the poet's usurpation of the "office" of the muse (101.13–14), we see here in the second definition the reinforcement of the idea of the poet's farewell: he quits his office of muse, embracing the silent and the quiet. A third entry in the *OED* is simply "death, or that which brings

death." Before discussing this third definition, let us more closely examine the etymology of "quietus" and, additionally, revisit our primary definition in light of our etymological inquiry. "Quietus" hearkens back ultimately to the Indo-European root *kuei*, signifying "restfulness; space of time." From this same root we get the following English words: "quiet," "acquit," and "requite." The poet's magnificent, monumental metaphor of quietus resonates with all three ideas: the poem and the poet both achieve "restfulness" and "quiet"; "quietus" introduces the "space of time" in 13–14; and here, finally, is his beloved, verse itself, reconciled and "requited."

But what of "death," the *OED*'s third meaning? To answer this, let us review the primary meaning of "quietus": "a discharge or acquittance given on payment of sums due; a receipt." The metaphor of quietus hearkens back to sonnet 107, which initiates the idea of the beloved being under lease: "the lease of my true love " (107.3). To whom is "payment of sums" rendered at the end of the lease? It is neither time, nor nature, but Death. Yet no payment will be rendered, for "death to me [the poet] subscribes" (107.10). To "subscribe" literally means "to write under"; the poet, in sonnet 126, hereby achieves a stunning and supernatural reversal of the natural order of things: it is Death that now surrenders to the poet, who forces Death to sign the document and receipt of the quietus, forged with the poet's own fluid "drops" of ink and resonating, "balmy time" of sonnet 126. Here lives the poet's monument of "present-absent" static-flux; here lives well-versed invention; here lives his beloved immortality.

Translations from Paul Verlaine's *Chansons pour Elle*

John C. B. Dodge

Seated Woman / **Thea Chimento**

II

Compagne savoureuse et bonne
A qui j'ai confié le soin
Définitif de ma personne,
Toi mon dernier, mon seul témoin,
Viens ça, chère, que je te baise,
Que je t'embrasse long et fort !
Mon coeur près de ton coeur bat d'aise
Et d'amour pour jusqu'à la mort :
    Aime-moi,
    Car, sans toi,
    Rien ne puis,
    Rien ne suis.

Je vais gueux comme un rat d'église,
Et toi tu n'as que tes dix doigts ;
La table n'est pas souvent mise
Dans nos sous-sols et sous nos toits ;
Mais jamais notre lit ne chôme,
Toujours joyeux, toujours fêté,
Et j'y suis le roi du royaume
De ta gaîté, de ta santé !
    Aime-moi,
    Car, sans toi,
    Rien ne puis,
    Rien ne suis.

II

Companion, delectable and kind,
To whom I have committed
All my care and attention,
To you my last, my only witness,
I come now, my dear, to kiss you,
To embrace you long and hard.
My heart next to yours beats with
A free and lasting love until death:
    Love me,
    For, without you,
    I am finished,
    I am nothing.

I go as poor as a church mouse
And you have only your empty hands;
In our basements and under our roofs
The table rarely sees a setting;
But our bed never lies fallow,
We are always joyful, always satisfied,
And there I am the lord of the land,
Of your youthful delight, of your health!
    Love me,
    For, without you,
    I am finished,
    I am nothing.

Après nos nuits d'amour robuste,
Je sors de tes bras mieux trempé,
Ta riche caresse est la juste
Sans rien de ma chair de trompé,
Ton amour répand la vaillance
Dans tout mon être, comme un vin,
Et, seule, tu sais la science
De me gonfler un coeur divin.
    Aime-moi,
    Car, sans toi,
    Rien ne puis,
    Rien ne suis.

Qu'importe ton passé, ma belle,
Et qu'importe, parbleu ! le mien :
Je t'aime d'un amour fidèle
Et tu ne m'as fait que du bien.
Unissons dans nos deux misères
Le pardon qu'on nous refusait,
Et je t'étreins et tu me serres
Et zut au monde qui jasait !
    Aime-moi
    Car, sans toi,
    Rien ne puis,
    Rien ne suis.

After our nights full of vigorous love,
I emerge from your arms drenched and revived,
Your precious caress is a righteous one,
Without ever deceiving any of my flesh,
Your love spreads strength and courage
Throughout all my being, like wine,
And you alone are trained in the art
Of raising my heart to heaven.
    Love me,
    For, without you,
    I am finished,
    I am nothing.

What does your past matter, my sweet,
And who gives a damn about mine:
I love you with a love true and faithful
And you have only done me good.
Let's join with our shared poverty
The forgiveness they withhold from us
And I'll embrace you and you'll hold me
And to hell with all those people who talk!
    Love me,
    For, without you,
    I am finished,
    I am nothing.

IV

Or, malgré ta cruauté
Affectée, et l'air très faux
De sale méchanceté
Dont, bête, tu te prévaux

J'aime ta lascivité !

Et quoiqu'en dépit de tout
Le trop factice dégoût
Que me dicte ton souris
Qui m'est, à mes dams et coût,

Rouge aux crocs blancs de souris,

Je t'aime comme l'on croit,
Et mon désir fou qui croît,
Tel un champignon des prés,
S'érige ainsi que le Doigt

D'un Terme là tout exprès.

Donc, malgré ma cruauté
Affectée, et l'air très faux
De pire méchanceté,
Dont, bête, je me prévaux,

Aime ma simplicité.

IV

Now, in spite of your put-on cruelty,
And your insincere air
Of coarse hatred, which,
You fool, you pride yourself on,

I love your lewd and lustful indecency!

And in spite of the fact that
Your smile inspires in me
An all too unnatural and forced aversion,
It is to my detriment and injury.

It is my blood on the white teeth of your smile!

I love you as one has faith,
And my mad desire that grows
As wild as a mushroom,
Stands erect as a Finger

Deliberately indicating our end.

So then, in spite of my put-on cruelty,
And my insincere air
Of the deepest hatred, which,
Fool that I am, I pride myself on,

Love my simplicity.

XIV

Je ne t'aime pas en toilette
Et je déteste la voilette
Qui t'obscurcit tes yeux, mes cieux,
Et j'abomine la « tournure »
Parodie et caricature,
De tels tiens appas somptueux.

Je suis hostile à toute robe
Qui plus ou moins cache ou dérobe
Ces charmes, au fond les meilleurs :
Ta gorge, mon plus cher délice,
Tes épaules et la malice
De tes mollets ensorceleurs.

Fi d'une femme trop bien mise !
Je te veux, ma belle, en chemise,
—Voile aimable, obstacle badin,
Nappe d'autel pour l'alme messe,
Drapeau mignard vaincu sans cesse,
Matin et soir, soir et matin.

XIV

I can't stand you all dressed-up
And I despise that make-up
That hides from me your eyes, my skies,
And I abhor your skirts, long or short,
Parodies and caricatures,
Of such feminine charms as yours.

I have nothing but hate for every dress
That more or less hides and detracts from
Those charms, thoroughly the best:
Your breasts, my dearest pleasure,
Your shoulders and the mischievousness
Of your soft enchanters.

Damn a woman too much contrived!
I want you, my beauty, in something simple,
—Obliging veil, playful obstacle,
Cloth on the altar of our reverent mass,
Delicate flag surrendered again and again
Morning and night, night and morning.

XXV

Je fus mystique et je ne le suis plus
(La femme m'aura repris tout entier),
Non sans garder des respects absolus
Pour l'idéal qu'il fallut renier.

Mais la femme m'a repris tout entier !

J'allais priant le Dieu de mon enfance
(Aujourd'hui c'est toi qui m'as à genoux),
J'étais plein de foi, de blanche espérance
De charité sainte aux purs feux si doux.

Mais aujourd'hui tu m'as à tes genoux !

La femme, par toi, redevient LE maître,
Un maître tout-puissant et tyrannique,
Mais qu'insidieux! feignant de tout permettre
Pour en arriver à tel but satanique . . .

O le temps béni quand j'étais ce mystique !

XXV

I used to be a mystic and I am no longer,
For soon Woman will have captured me completely,
But I still keep an absolute respect
For the ideal it was necessary to deny.

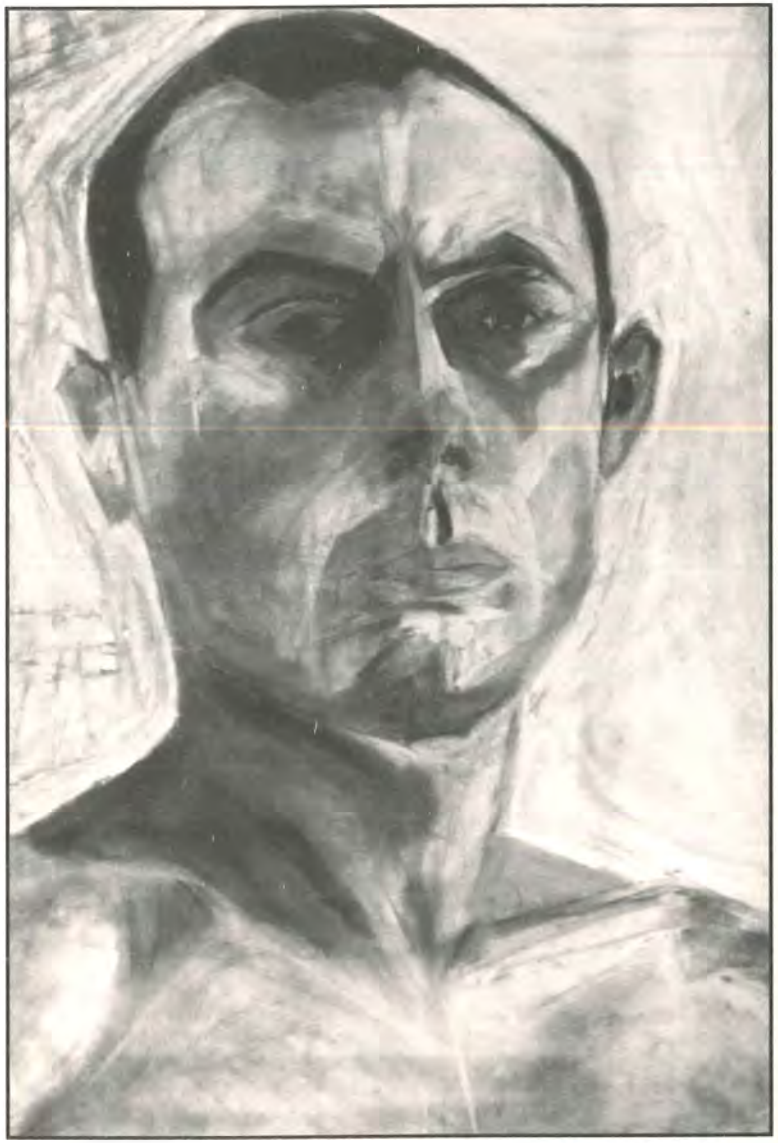
But Woman has captured me completely!

I used to pray to the God of my childhood,
Now, it is you whom I kneel before.
I was full of faith, the purest hope, and pious charity,
All springing from an innocent flame so sweet.

But now, you have me brought low, clasping at your legs!

Once more, through you, Woman becomes the master,
A master omnipotent and tyrannical,
But how insidious! feigning to permit everything
In order to pursue such a satanic design . . .

Oh! Those blessed times when I was a mystic!



Man / **Aschely Cone**

Push-Pull

N. Younes

Leona Marshall, the only female senior scientist selected by the Manhattan Project, was present at the final assembly of the machine. Sunday, July 16, 1945 saw it too, in the center of a wide valley called Alamogordo in the Oscura Mountains of New Mexico. The people sat with the pieces of the machine beneath a tent; this was in turn beneath a steel tower, and at the top of that, a shack. All of this in a kind of man-made conjunction with the noon sun overhead.

At this gathering of men, pieces and the sun, the size of the group that had designed the machine had contracted to a dozen or so of the most important members. Those who, by virtue of their seniority, had no technical capacity to fill paced like nervous husbands in the heat.

Inside the white tent an exquisite kind of reverse-surgery went on. Six men and one woman, dressed like doctors, put it together. The outermost layer of the machine was a soccer ball of metal hexagons and pentagons, screwed into one another to make a sphere. Attached to the inside of the metal plates were tapering hexagonal and pentagonal cones of tan and brown material that fit together to fill the volume of the sphere. As the cones approached the center of the incomplete sphere being made, they stopped, leaving a spherical cavity the size of a basketball. The cones were two different colors, tan towards the metal plates and, in sharp distinction, brown towards the cavity.

The strangely shaped cones were high explosives, made rigid by virtue of a plastic that was itself an explosive. They were beautiful. To the touch they were smoother than eyeglasses, and to the shockwaves that would pass through their disintegration, they were lenses, focusing nearly all the pressure on the cavity at which they pointed.

When the ball was half assembled, the cavity was filled with the core of the machine, but the layers of incomplete spheres continued. The first layer of the machine's center was two halves of a uranium egg, each covered in a jacket of aluminum. The halves themselves enclosed a void, this time the size of an orange, the focus of the inward explosion.

Leona Marshall recalls holding in her hands the plutonium that filled this void. She was reminded of her grandfather's rabbit hutch in the moonlight. She remembered slipping out of her bed as a child and sneaking outside, carefully avoiding the erupting nails in the kitchen floorboards. Under icy spring constellations she would hold the kits, marveling at their impossible warmth. In the diffuse summer light of the tent, her hands remembered, and were amazed.

The two plutonium hemispheres were the most beautiful of all the pieces in the tent. They had been nickel-plated to save the exquisite machining of the metal from being eaten by oxygen. But when the pieces had been plated, the nickel-bearing liquid used had become trapped beneath the skin already laid down. When the pieces were exposed to normal pressure, ugly welts appeared. These were carefully ground off and the gaps in the skin bandaged with layers of gold leaf. When they placed the plutonium inside the machine, their reflections in its mirrored surface were broken by islands of warm gold.

The two pieces of plutonium were kept apart by a corrugated disc of gold. In the center of this disc, and in the center of the great sphere of pentagons and hexagons, nestled another sphere, again hollow. Within this innermost sphere was nothing but vacuum. The outside of this sphere was beryllium, the red in rubies. The next layer was gold leaf, and the innermost layer, polonium. Though it is a metal, and one of the densest, polonium rebels against what it ought to be. At room temperature it vaporizes. Clouds of its vapor will move against a current of air blown over it, and, with a tenacity bordering on will, it deposits outposts of crystals

closer and closer to the source of the air. Left to its own devices long enough, the entire sample will translocate to the nozzle itself, bearding it with a rime of gray needles.

The innermost sphere imprisoning the restless polonium was the initiator. When the entire machine was crushed, the beryllium would tear through the gold leaf separating it from the polonium and three metals would mix.

After the core, with its layers of aluminum, uranium, nickel, gold, plutonium, beryllium, gold and polonium, was placed in the center of the ball of explosives, the outermost sphere was completed and the machine assembled. It was dusk, with storm clouds, when the whole thing was raised with a tackle and chain into the shack at the top of the tower. The six-foot wide ball was a mottled steel gray, broken by tan strips of masking tape.

Luis Alvarez was the last man to be with the machine. He had climbed up the tower and into the shack to arm it. The surface of the machine was studded with plugs for the detonators, three to a panel. Alvarez mated cables to the plugs and the cables to the fuse box. As Alvarez tested the connections in the fuse box, lightning outside illuminated the insides of clouds. At 9 o'clock in the evening he climbed down, caught the last jeep ferry to the control bunker, and everything waited for the storm.

By 4 o'clock the next morning, the meteorologist predicted a 50% chance that the 5:30 window would be clear. At 5:15 the storm was passing, though still present, and permission was given to take the 5:30 window.

At 5:29:40 Alan Bledsoe turned a pair of keys in a control panel and the machine behind the panel began a five-second countdown. At 5:29:45 a signal was sent from the command bunker down the five and a half mile cable connecting it to the fuse box.

A relay switch in the box closed when it received the signal. The closed switch emptied capacitors into the thirty-two cables connecting the fuse box with the panels on the machine. Each cable was exactly three meters long, forcing

the electrons to arrive at their detonators in the same moment.

After the electrons flooded down the wide cables, they were divided into ninety-six groups: three to a panel, one to a detonator. The detonators were no more than hair-thin wires. When the electrons reached the detonators, there were far too many of them to pass through the wires at once. The ninety-six detonator wires exploded. The shocks decomposed the molecules in the tan explosives surrounding the detonators.

Turned into a gas, the exploded molecules raced away from each other, pressing on any surface that would resist their force. At the moment, however, the gas moved slowly compared to the wave of detonation spreading through the thirty-two cones of explosive.

When the wave reached the brown section of the cones they set off a different explosive, whose shockwave moved slightly slower than the first. This, combined with the careful machining of the explosive cones, changed the shape of the shockwave from flat to spherical. It focused the wave into a different shape and brought enormous, uniform pressure on the center of the gas-filled machine.

When the corrected shockwave reached the uranium hemispheres, the pressure imposed upon the metal instantly liquefied it, and a fluid twice as dense as lead carried the force of the explosives to the already-warm pieces of plutonium.

500 pounds of liquid uranium moving at nine and a half miles a second struck the two hemispheres of plutonium. In their last moment of integrity, before they, too, were liquefied, the hemispheres transmitted the force of the uranium to the corrugated gold disc, flattening it. In doing so, the hollow egg at the center of it all was broken open. Its contents mingled.

What had once been a sphere of metal the size of an orange steadily decreased in size. When the plutonium became the size of a walnut, the mixing of the formerly hazelnut-sized initiator—now the size of a pea—began to have its effect. The alpha particles emitted by the polonium

were swallowed by the nuclei of the beryllium. The two protons in the alpha particles transmuted the beryllium into carbon. The carbon made was unstable, and as soon as it formed, it ejected neutrons. Ninety-five million per second. In the one ten-millionth of a second the initiator had to provide neutrons, it released perhaps nine or ten. These were, however, enough.

«»

One neutron strikes a plutonium nucleus, and is admitted. The over-heavy nucleus gyrates wildly. It elongates into a dumbbell and snaps in two like a cell dividing. In the infinitesimally small instant when the nucleus divides, a full neutron's mass and charge is converted into light. This streams away from the cloud of chaotic electrons, frantic to rearrange themselves around the two, new nuclei. In the confusion, a pair of unwanted neutrons is ejected into the space between atoms.

The two neutrons streak through space at a third the speed of light. It does not take long for the neutrons to find another nucleus to destroy: the force of the liquid uranium has decreased the distance between nuclei to an eighth of what it was, and it continues to do so. The pair of acceptances and destructions breaks apart two more plutonium atoms. The neutrons produced from these streak out to initiate the destructions of four more; then eight, sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four, a hundred and twenty-eight; and, in a billionth of a second, the number of neutrons has increased to 200,000,000,000,000,000,000.

By the time the eightieth generation of neutrons has been created, enough energy has been released and enough time has passed for effects to begin outside the machine.

The light released by this strange process affects the core. The electrons belonging to the shattered plutonium atoms race after the daughter nuclei. If they manage to shroud the nuclei, their tenure there is short. The light drives away the

nuclei's companions and leaves the core. The race of matter to achieve the being of a point falls short and is rebuffed. The collapse of the plutonium into itself slows, stops and is reversed by the torrential pressure of the light released.

The newborn light winds its way through the soup of uranium and aluminum, boiling electrons from their nuclei.

The explosives were, an eternity ago, beautifully crafted molecules cast into beautiful polygonal cones. The energy so deliberately poured into them has been spent in the compression. In the moments after the separation, their atoms find each other and, trying again, enter into simpler relationships. These are very brief.

The light finds the simple gasses an atmosphere for the planet it has just destroyed. The pairs and triplets fly out of being as the light strikes their electrons. The loving order that had gathered the splintered explosives is driven from them by strife. Electrons are chased from their nuclei and the nuclei from their electrons. Chaos reigns in the layers of man's outermost sophistication. The light is at the cusp of worlds.

»«

The panels of the machine's shell absorb a minute quantity of the light racing through them. As a kind of last testament, they rebroadcast it as a purple-green fluorescence. A similar cry is seen throughout the shack. The detonator wires shout green, the chain screams red. The light leaves the bomb, and enters the world.

The air in the shack glows purple. Everything disintegrates. A sphere of white grows from the bomb, embracing the tower until it is suspended where the shack used to be. It has delicate white legs where the heat has boiled the tower's guy wires more quickly than the air. Two hundred feet of space are momentarily replaced by a second sun and the valley bathes in its premature dawn.

The fireball touches the ground, making green glass of the sand. Its light leaves the earth.

The enormous speed with which the fireball expands drives the air away from it. A shell of compressed air twenty feet thick races away from the center of spheres, a clot of polonium and beryllium and gold. The floor of the desert becomes a fluid of dust and scrub and jackrabbits. The shell is forced into a circular wave as the sphere intersects the plain. The surface of the sphere of air ripples the passing light, making itself visible. It reaches up and catches birds. It crushes them in atmospheric fists, even as they join its extension.

The light reaches the new moon, touches its black surface and returns to New Mexico. Had anyone been looking, they would have seen it made full.

««

The city of Hiroshima unfurls itself to Thomas Ferebee inside the bombsight's eyepiece.

He centers the sight's crosshair on a T-shaped bridge spanning two distributaries of the Ota River. The Aioi Bridge was chosen over the war factories because of its proximity to the Second Army headquarters. The two minute radio warning was already being broadcast in the form of a long beep. Ferebee signals to Paul Tibbets who tells the radio operator to send the continuous fifteen-second tone.

The 26 year old bombardier with aspirations of major league baseball resigns control to the analog computer in his bombsight. The tone ends and the bomb is released.

The arming plugs are pulled out by wires secured to the bomb bay scaffolding, and the bomb now controls itself.

When the bomb is 1,900 feet from the ground, it is directly above the courtyard of the Shima Hospital. The fusing devices agree that the bomb is 1,900 feet from the ground, and the bomb sets itself off.

Capacitors discharge. Detonators explode. The molten brass from the .45 shells that contained the detonator chemicals seethe into the high explosive. The explosives flash

into gas. This glowing, acrid cloud feels an escape. A sixty-pound slug of enriched uranium stands between it and its expansion. The uranium begins to move. Faster and faster, down the converted anti-aircraft barrel, the slug moves. A mile in three seconds. Three feet away lies a dead end. A fragile initiator egg waits at the other end of the cannon, in a cup of enriched uranium.

There is an instant, a vanishingly brief instant, when the slug meets the initiator. Beryllium is a brittle metal. The slug, spitting radiation and kinetic heat, feels the thin crack. The initiator loses integrity. A mesh of fine lines is woven over its surface. These lines become bolder, become the edges of sharp fragments that break off and separate. Everything is flattened by the blunt slug.

From this violence fly nine or ten neutrons.

The new krypton and barium nuclei speed apart. The electron cloud of the dead uranium atom is cleaved, like an invisible hand swatting a cloud of gnats.

Light and a pair of neutrons fly from the scene.

The thick steel case glows. A cloud of purple air surrounds it.

A white flash fills the skies above the city.

»»

For a span of time un-glimpsed even by the mind, a mathematical form receives incarnation. Acres of equations braided into a thing, the concentration of a million dry desert hours. A perfection and a supreme beauty inhabit the steel shell. But the beauty is like a statue—cold, austere.

The instant passes. No God intervenes with pity on the sculptor to make the statue real. The thought of a nation was more and more unfolding its white wings over a Japanese city.

Everything falls to earth.

««

"Just as I looked up at the sky, there was a flash of white light and the green in the plants looked in that light like the color of dry leaves."

"Father Kopp was standing in front of the nunnery ready to go home. All of a sudden he became aware of the light, felt that wave of heat, and a large blister formed on his hand."

"Ah, that instant! I felt as though I had been struck on the back with something like a big hammer, and thrown into boiling oil."

"The vicinity was in pitch darkness; from the depths of the glow, bright red flames rise crackling, and spread moment by moment. The faces of my friends who just before were working energetically are now burned and blistered, their clothes torn to rags; to what shall I liken their trembling appearance as they stagger about? Our teacher is holding her students close like a mother hen protecting her chicks, and like baby chicks paralyzed with terror, the students were thrusting their heads under her arms."

"That boy had been in a room at the edge of the river, looking out at the river when it came, and in that instant as the house fell apart he was blown from the end of the room across the road on the river embankment and landed on the street below it. In that distance he passed through a couple of windows inside the house and his body was stuck full of all the glass it could hold. That is why he was completely covered with blood like that."

"I just could not understand why our surroundings had changed so greatly in one instant . . . I thought it might have been something that had nothing to do with the war, the collapse of the earth that it is said would take place at the end of the world."

"When I opened my eyes after being blown at least eight yards, it was dark as though I had come up against a black-painted fence. After that, as if thin paper was being peeled off one piece at a time, it gradually began to grow brighter. The first thing that my eyes lighted upon then was the flat stretch of land with only dust clouds rising from it. Everything had

crumbled away in that one moment, and changed into streets of rubble, street after street of ruins."

"Through the house we went—running, stumbling, falling, and then running again until in headlong flight we tripped over something and fell sprawling into the street. Getting to my feet, I discovered that I had tripped over a man's head.

'Excuse me! Excuse me, please!' I cried hysterically."

"They all had skin blackened by burns. . . . They had no hair because their hair was burned, and at a glance you couldn't tell whether you were looking at them from the front or back."

"The rescue party brought my mother home. Her face was larger than usual. The skin of both her hands was hanging loose as if it were rubber gloves."

"Making their way among them are three high school girls who looked as though they were from our school; their faces and everything were completely burned and they held their arms out in front of their chests like kangaroos with only their hands pointed downward; from their whole bodies something like thin paper is dangling—it is trailing behind them like the unburned remnants of their puttees, they stagger exactly like sleepwalkers."

"There were lots of naked people who were so badly burned that the skin of their whole bodies was hanging from their bodies like wet rags."

"The skin of their arms is peeled off and dangling from their fingertips, and they go walking silently, hanging their arms before them."

"Men whose whole bodies were covered with blood, and women whose skin hung from them like a kimono, plunged shrieking into the river. All these become corpses and their bodies are carried by the current towards the sea."

"People came fleeing from the nearby streets. One after another they were almost unrecognizable. The skin was burned off some of them and was hanging from their hands

and from their chins; their faces were red and so swollen that you could hardly tell where their eyes and mouths were."

"The child making a suffering, groaning sound, his burned face swollen up balloon-like and jerking as he wanders among the fires. The old man, the skin of his face and body peeling off like a potato skin, mumbling prayers while he flees with faltering steps."

"Those dreadful streets. The fires were burning. There was a strange smell all over. I had a terrible lonely feeling that everybody else in the world was dead and only I was still alive."

"We saw a soldier floating in the river with his stomach all swollen. In desperation, he must have jumped into the river to escape from the sea of fire."

"I was determined not to escape without my mother. But the flames were steadily spreading and my clothes were already on fire and I couldn't stand it any longer. So, screaming 'Mommy, Mommy!' I ran wildly into the middle of the flames. No matter how far I went it was a sea of fire all around and there was no way to escape."

"The sky was like twilight. Pieces of paper and cloth were caught on the electric wires. While we were going along the embankment, a muddy rain that was dark and chilly began to fall. Around the houses I noticed automobiles and soccer balls, and all sorts of household stuff that had been tossed out, but there was no one who stopped to pick up a thing."

"A woman with her jaw missing and her tongue hanging out of her mouth was wandering around in the heavy, black rain. She was heading toward the northern area crying for help."

"There were a lot of people who were burned to death, and among them were some who were burned to a cinder while they were standing up."

"I walked past Hiroshima station . . . and saw people with their bowels and brains coming out. . . . I saw an old lady carrying a suckling infant in her arms."

"Bloated corpses were drifting in the seven rivers, smashing cruelly into bits the little girl, the peculiar odor of burning human flesh rose everywhere."

"I had to cross the river to reach the station. As I came to the river and went out down the bank to the water, I found that the stream was filled with dead bodies. I started to cross by, crawling over the corpses on my hands and knees. I got about a third of the way across, a dead body began to sink under my weight and I went into the water, wetting my burned skin. It pained severely. I could go no farther, there was a break in the bridge of corpses, so I turned back to the shore."

"I was walking among dead people.
It was like hell.
The sight of a running horse burning was very striking."

Cain, Late Summer

Then we had knelt together, when winter came
And water froze, but moved below the ice.
Below our eyes, the water plants had swung,
Like mute paintbrushes stirring invisible paint,
While sand-grains had slid down, one by one,
Like loosened leaves falling from the weight
Of a small, stopping rain. Then we had lain,
In the low eye of the sun.
Now I have come
To this window. The National Mall, its rows of trees
Unfurl here in the heavy air of summer. Tourists
Stroll below, pigeons swirl, buildings loom
Like crowded portraits hung beneath the sky.
I waver in the heat, I see a land of wandering,
I see the loosened dust that rises high
Until it mixes with the clouds, uncurls like buds
In April, and settles on each path and tree.
And beyond the paths and trees extends
The restless empty surface of the sea.

In September, I'll gather the seedpods
Of the ash flowers that bloomed this summer.
Today, I'm waiting, with rustling stems that wait,
Reaching their roots into the dust and mud,
For rain to come and turn the dust to living blood.

—Willis K. McCumber

The flute darkens my eyes, my hair extends its reach / **Zack Hay**

How you are fallen from heaven, O Shining One, son of Dawn! —Isaiah 14:12

Emily Tordo

The picture La Rochefoucauld presents to us of self-love, which he defines in part as "the love of oneself, and of all things with regards to oneself" (Maxim 563),[1] is so vivid as to have a being all its own. Throughout his maxims on self-love there are myriad connections to be drawn between the character of self-love and the character of Satan in Milton's epic poem, *Paradise Lost*.[2] Satan's character, as described by Milton, is presented in such a way as to make him terribly compelling and persuasive, even more so than the Son of God. His character and his position as one of the higher angels make his transformation into the leader of the rebel angels and his subsequent fall all the more interesting. One is confronted with the questions of how one of God's angels could fall and why, once fallen, he would choose to remain fallen, making a "Heaven of Hell" (1.255). This trait—the flaw of self-love—which dooms him to eventual destruction, is a ruin of his own devising; a fitting end for one who claims to be "self-begot" (5.860).

Though many of the satanic elements of the poem display aspects of self-love as La Rochefoucauld describes it, the foremost of these is Satan himself, their progenitor, who of all the characters present at the birth of the world is the one most endowed with self-love. Satan's self-love is typified by the fact that he has turned away from God, the "almighty Father"

1. François de La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes et Réflexions Diverses* (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2005). All passages from La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims* are my own translations. Their numbering coincides with that of the original French.

2. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Gordon Teskey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005). Text references are to book and line number.

(3.56), and instead indulges himself with his own inward musings, putting the love of himself above the love of his creator. Here it is apparent that one who has self-love has no interest in the things outside of the self, except as they can serve it—nothing is to be loved for its own merit, only for the advantage it provides to the one who is possessed of self-love. La Rochefoucauld describes this by analogy to a bee: "It is never still outside of the self, and only settles on subjects which are foreign to it, as a bee does on a flower, in order to glean from it what is its own" (Maxim 563). In turning his regard away from God and instead turning it inward toward himself, Satan is opposing the created order, which consists of obedience to God's will.

The origins of self-love in Satan, however, are still a mystery: what is the cause of his fatal shift? To answer this question, one must look to the circumstances that provoke his fall from grace. In Book Five we learn from Raphael that Satan "could not bear / Through pride that sight [of the Son proclaimed Messiah] and thought himself impaired" (5.664–5.665). At the onset of the poem, the epic voice gives us another account of this pride, saying that "[Satan's] pride / Had cast him out from Heav'n with all his host / Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring / To set himself in glory 'bove his peers" (1.36–39). In Satan's own words, it was his "sense of injured merit" (1.98) and his "pride and worse ambition" (4.40) that caused him to oppose God and ultimately fall. Self-love appears to have been ever present—to believe oneself to be "impaired" or "injured," one must first have a sense of one's own position and esteem, and one who esteems himself must surely be in possession of self-love.

Yet these egotistical thoughts do not seem to be a problem for Satan until God elevates the Son; it is only after God has named the Son "Messiah, King Anointed" (5.665), and set him above all the angels, that Satan realizes how much this rankles. With the ascension of the Son, Satan's budding self-love blinds him to the true state of affairs: "in jealousy there is more self-love than love" (Maxim 324). Owing to his

jealousy he is unable to realize that the acknowledgement of the worth of another, namely that of the Son, does not in any way diminish his own—the Son's merit offends his sense of self worth. His eyes are now, as La Rochefoucauld puts it, "blind for only themselves" (Maxim 563). This proves to be the first step towards his fall: he is unable to see self-love encroaching upon him. However, we have not yet answered the question of what the origin of this all-encompassing self-love is, or how it could possibly rear its ugly head in one of God's creations.

If we are to say that self-love is ever present (in as much as this seems to be necessary for it to exist at all), how then are we to understand the nature of Satan's fall? From what state could he fall so terribly if not one of innocence? Given that Satan must have been without self-love before the elevation of the Son, the only way in which we can understand how Satan engendered these feelings within himself is if the ability to turn inwards, toward oneself, already existed within him. Given that God endowed both men and angels equally with the ability either to withstand or fall into sin, it would appear that the potential for self-love's existence is encompassed within the notion of free will—the capacity to choose the love of God over the love of self. God explains this to the Son in Book Three:

> He [Man] had of Me
> All he could have. I made him just and right,
> Sufficient to have stood though free to fall.
> Such I created all th' ethereal pow'rs
> And spirits, both them who stood and them who
> failed:
> Freely they stood who stood and fell who fell.
> (3.97–102)

Thus, free will allows for the possibility that an angel could, as if out of nothing, conjure up these detrimental passions of pride, envy and jealousy, spurred on by self-love. Milton has God reiterate this crucial point to Raphael, as He imparts to

him his task of conversing with Adam in order to "advise him on his happy state." God says: "Happiness in his pow'r left free to will, / Left to his own free will, his will though free / Yet mutable" (5.234, 235–237).

As we have just seen, the free will of both Man and Angel is clearly a crucial part of the created order to God, despite the dangers inherent in such freedom (such as the shift from devotion to God to self-love). And yet why is this? It seems that for God the devotions of subjects endowed with free will carry more weight and have a greater worth than the devotions of subjects devoid of will, as indicated by God's words to the Son in Book Three:

> Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere
> Of true allegiance, constant faith or love
> . . . . . .
> What praise could they receive?
> What pleasure I from such obedience paid
> . . . . . .
> I else must change
> Their nature and revoke the high decree,
> Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
> Their freedom: they themselves ordained their Fall.
> (3.103–104, 106–107, 125–128)

Here it can clearly be seen that, without free will, the "allegiance," "constant faith," "love" and "obedience" offered up to God by his subjects are empty and devoid of meaning. Yet this very free will lays one open to the influences of self-love and the onslaught of numerous passions. Very early on we see Satan overcome by his passions and self-love, in a state of overwhelming contention with God. In his first speech after being "[h]urled headlong" from the "ethereal sky" (1.45) of Heaven, Milton has Satan use obscure and befuddling speech to show that, in a state of self-love, passion dominates over reason.

We see this same effect of self-love later upon Adam and Eve's eating of the fruit. Their "high passions—anger, hate, / Mistrust, suspicion, discord" (9.1123–1124) begin to rise, they lose control of reason, and the passions dominate, driven by self-love:

> For Understanding ruled not and the Will
> Heard not her lore, both in subjection now
> To sensual Appetite who from beneath
> Usurping over sov'reign Reason claimed
> Superior sway. . . .
> (9.1127–1131)

To further this link between self-love and the passions, we turn to La Rochefoucauld's Maxim 531: "The passions are merely the various whims of self-love." Without self-love there would be no passions, no sin, and no turning away from God; and yet, we are right back at the question of how self-love comes to be in the first place.

It is apparent that in the same way self-love brings about the passions, so free will brings about self-love. As we have seen, this very faculty of free will, which allows one to fully devote oneself to God, goes hand in hand with an equal capacity to fall freely into sin. Furthermore, it is in this very function of one's free will—namely, that of the free offering of devotion to God—that Satan perceives an unwanted subjugation: if out of gratitude for one's creation one must glorify one's creator, then it is as if one were trapped, "still paying! still to owe!" (4.53), for an eternity. In his poignant soliloquy to the Sun where he contemplates his "servitude" (4.32–113), Satan does not seem to realize that the main alternative is equally, if not more so, a slavery. God says: "I formed them free and free they must remain / Till they enthrall themselves" (3.124–125). The "enthralling" referred to in this passage can be taken to be that of self-love, the servitude to oneself. In shifting from devotion to one's creator to devotion to oneself, Satan is merely exchanging one yoke for another—the dubious yoke of God for that of self-love. As we have seen, God created the natures of both Man and Angel such that He "ordained / Their freedom" and

"they themselves ordained their Fall" (3.127–128), each able, in thought or in deed, to turn from God and oppose him.

The very instant in which Satan conceives of his opposition to God is also the instant in which he engenders his self-love. It is in this moment that his thoughts give rise to sin: he does not even have to take up arms and fight the Heavenly Father—just *thinking* of it is enough. In a dramatic parallel to the coming into being of the concept of sin with the occurrence of a sinful thought, we see the coming into being of a bodily Sin. She is sin incarnate, and springs, fully grown, from Satan's head:

> In Heav'n when at th' assembly and in sight
> Of all the seraphim with thee combined
> In bold conspiracy 'gainst Heaven's King?
> All on a sudden miserable pain
> Surprised thee: dim thine eyes and dizzy swum
> In darkness while thy head flames think and fast
> Threw forth till on the left side op'ning wide,
> Likest to thee in shape and count'nance bright
> (Then shining Heav'nly fair) a goddess armed
> Out of thy head I sprung! Amazement seized
> All th' host of Heav'n. Back they recoiled afraid
> At first and called me "Sin" . . .
>
> (2.749–760)

With the advent of sin we are confronted with numerous representations of unnatural events, underlining the depraved and immoral nature of Satan's actions. The first of these events occur when Sin is engendered by a thought and is "born," fully grown, from Satan's head. Though in the course of this narrative we have as yet no examples of what a natural birth might be (given that God is the only creator), this event seems to the reader bizarre, a gross, twisted counterpart to the Greek myth in which Athena, goddess of wisdom, springs from the head of Zeus. This perverted "birth" has a derisive note as well, when one takes into account Milton's early recital of the infernal hosts in Book One. It is there we learn

that, for Milton, the Greek gods (or any of the pagan gods for that matter) are simply the fallen angels renamed, "devils . . . adore[d] for deities!" (1.373). While for the "author" of the Greek myths the peculiar birth of Athena is not viewed with any dismay, Milton fully anticipates his readers to be utterly repulsed by the correspondent birth of Sin.

To multiply the horrors already attendant on such an unnatural birth, Satan is possessed with a concupiscent desire for his daughter. The resultant rape horrifies and repulses the reader; the sexual concourse between father and daughter follows the aberrant pattern of Sin's birth in that it is wholly unnatural. If we were to follow the trend of our earlier analogy between the natural and unnatural in *Paradise Lost* and the Greeks myths, we would note that while incest is rampant within the myths of the Greek canon, it clearly has no part in Milton's religious mythology.

The unnaturalness of the relations between Sin and Satan stems from the fact that not only is this a depiction of an incestuous affair, but it is furthermore one composed of self-love. We see how the attraction Satan feels for his daughter is no more than the fascination he feels for himself as a result of self-love:

> But familiar grown
> I pleased and with attractive graces won
> The most averse (thee chiefly) who full oft
> Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing.
>
> (2.761–764)

After the first moment where the hosts recoil in fear, they are won over by Sin's "attractive graces," Satan in particular because he sees within her the image of himself—as if he were looking in a mirror. Similarly, La Rochefoucauld says of self-love: "One could most likely conclude that it is by itself that its desires are kindled, rather than by the beauty and merit of its objects" (Maxim 563). It is of interest to note that the Sin in the tale recounted above does not, as yet, have a personality; in contrast to the fully realized character of the Sin who

is telling the tale, she is more an extension of Satan than she is her own character. She is of him, his sinful thought incarnate; therefore, the act of her rape by Satan is the same as his looking inwards; self-love and love of one who is as oneself, are equivalent.

Here we see Satan in the first unconscious act of "re-creating" himself. He is patently not satisfied with the existence God granted him (as evidenced by his jealousy of the Son), and so he reaches higher. He is attempting to bring into being something wholly his own for which he will not be beholden to God in any way. As he does not have the same powers of creation with which God has endowed the Son, this process of remaking himself by way of his thought and deeds is the only act of personal creation he is allowed. Though he is not able to be his own creator as he would like others to believe (recall his claim of being "self-begot, self-raised" [5.861]), he can be his own re-creator. Self-love and resultant Sin, two acts of his own creation, are the embodiment of Satan's newly realized feelings toward God; these feelings are the first acts of his new "self."

The unholy union of Sin and Satan later results in the birth of Death, "Hell-born" (2.687), who in turn follows in the footsteps of his father and rapes his mother. Here we see that the description of self-love, as portrayed by La Rochefoucauld, is similar in many respects to the description Milton provides us with of Death himself:

> The other shape
> (If shape it might be called that shape had none
> Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
> Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,
> For each seemed either): black it stood as night,
> Fierce as ten furies, terrible as Hell
> And shook that dreadful dart. . . .
>
> (2.666–671)

The Death presented here is simply another expression of Satan's new self. Of self-love, we learn that "one cannot

sound the depths nor pierce the shadows of its abysses" (Maxim 563). The character of Death is described as dark and amorphous, like the abyss of self-love, where "it is concealed from even the most perceptive eyes," and where "it is often invisible even unto itself" (Maxim 563). This parallel between Death and the self-love that possesses Satan is another way of underlining the bizarre nature of Satan's personal recreation. As we see, it is by no means a creation of the same sort as the original creation of the angels, or even the creation of Man and Paradise. From what we now know of self-love, it seems that it is everywhere, constantly being reinforced by every action to the point where it becomes all encompassing: "It exists in all states of life and in all conditions—it lives everywhere, and it lives on everything, it lives on nothing" (Maxim 563). Along with his conceiving of Sin and Death, two of Man's worst scourges, Satan has engendered self-love, which will "torment him in every act of his life" (Maxim 509).

Similar to Satan's fathering of Sin and Death, La Rochefoucauld says of self-love:

> This is where [in the shadows of its abysses] it conceives, nourishes, and breeds—without knowing—a great number of affections and hates; it forms some so monstrous that when it brings them to light it either fails to recognize them or cannot admit of them as its own. (Maxim 563)

As he attempts to leave through the gates of Hell on the way to Eden, Satan does not recognize his children, these "affections and hates . . . so monstrous," as his own. He says: "I know thee not nor ever saw till now / Sight more detestable than him and thee" (2.744–745). As illustrated earlier, both Sin and Death represent in body the worst of Satan's inner thoughts and feelings. We see Satan at first repulsed by the appearance of this unholy duo, this bodily reflection of his self; however, he does not even recognize them as such, in contrast to the moment of Sin's birth, when he sees that in her he is his "perfect image viewing" (2.764). And yet, as

soon as he realizes who they are and the power they hold to allow him through the gates of Hell into the chaos separating Hell from Eden, God's newly created paradise, his revulsion quickly changes to interest. He refers to them as "[d]ear Daughter" (2.817) and "my fair son" (2.818) and promises them free reign on earth if they will open the gates of Hell—which they do. With Sin and Death loose in the world, the descendants of Adam and Eve are first absorbed by self-love and sin and then devoured by death. Later, in a dramatic reversal, we learn that the first two beings engendered by Satan will recoil back on him and their "stings" will be fixed in his head, at which point the Son will banish them all to Hell for eternity (Book Ten).

Now there are beings of a perverted nature, which are not directly created by God, and are made possible through Satan's exercising of his free will. Michael says:

> Author of evil unknown till thy revolt,
> Unnamed in Heav'n, now plenteous, as thou seest:
> These acts of hateful strife, hateful to all
> Though heaviest by just measure on thyself
> And thy adherents. How hast thou disturbed
> Heav'n's blessèd peace and into nature brought
> Misery uncreated till the crime
> Of thy rebellion! . . .
>
> (6.262–269)

Through the darkness of his thoughts and deeds, Satan brings into being both Sin and Death. As each is born there is an outcry of "Sin" and "Death" from those who are witness. This spontaneous reaction to name their inner nature is a terrible parody of the account we are given by Adam, in Book Eight, of his more ordered and thoughtful naming of God's creations. Throughout the narrative we see, in the events that contain the actions of his self-love, Satan's deeds foreshadow events that occur later in the proper manner. Everything he does is a perversion of all that is right and good; his actions display a distorted version of the way God intended things to

be. We as readers are privileged in our ability to note that what Satan does first and perversely, Adam, God's lesser creation, does second and better, or perhaps more accurately, properly.

The moment of self-love in which his thoughts turn "[i]n bold conspiracy 'gainst Heaven's King" (2.751) is, as we have seen, the moment of Satan's falls from Grace. Satan's fall, therefore, is foremost an internal one and not a physical fall from Heaven; this latter event is an external playing out of the internal step already taken. We now understand the fall of Satan as having two parts—the first a fall in thought and the second a fall in body. This is a parallel construction to that of the fall of man, which also can be seen as having two parts: Man falls first with the eating of the fruit, and secondly when cast out of Eden. In addition to the two main parts of Satan's fall we see another distinction demarcated by his physical changes. First we see Satan fallen in mind, then fallen in body, and finally his last change is a physical shift into the form of "[t]h' infernal Serpent" (1.34), by which Milton first names him in Book One. It is this last and final stage of his fall from which there can be no return.

Before his physical fall Satan still maintains the outward appearance of an angelic nature, as Abdiel notices: "O Heav'n! That such resemblance of the Highest / Should yet remain where faith and fealty / Remain not!" (6.114–116). Here we see the angels stunned and outraged because they realize that his angelic exterior but thinly covers his inward corruption. The angelic reaction illustrates the fact that there is something inherently wrong with such a disparity between one's seeming and one's being. We then see Satan after he is cast out of Heaven, in a state where his glory and that of his cohorts are dimmed, tarnished with disobedience: "Yet faithful how they stood, / Their glory withered" (1.611–612). For Satan, this diminution of his angelic nature seems to be the hardest for him to bear. We see a Satan who, "darkened so, yet shone" (1.398), stands magnificent in all his fallen glory, weeping at the sight of the fallen hosts:

"Thrice he assayed and thrice, in spite of scorn, / Tears such as angels weep burst forth" (1.619–20).

In Book One, which begins chronologically after Satan's expulsion from Heaven, when we first see Satan, he is waking on the burning lake. He laments to Beëlzebub:

> ([B]ut O how fall'n! how changed
> From him who in the happy realms of light
> Clothed with transcendent brightness didst outshine
> Myriads, though bright!) . . .
>
> (1.84–87)

Later, as he wakes his followers, they are "[u]nder amazement of their hideous change" (1.313). Perhaps a more telling recital of Satan's change from "archangel" to "archangel ruined" (1.593) is when he is discovered by Zephon and Ithuriel in the Garden of Eden, and they do not recognize him:

> Know ye not then, said Satan, filled with scorn,
> Know ye not me? Ye knew me once no mate
> For you, there sitting where ye durst not soar.
> Not to know me argues yourselves unknown.
>
> (4.827–830)

His pure nature and appearance have been perverted; though he is still recognizable insofar as he is known as one of the rebel angels escaped, he is not recognizable as himself. The fact that he retains the outward appearance of his angelic nature makes it all the more difficult to understand his actions.

Satan's last and final change occurs when he takes the form of a serpent to tempt Eve. At this point in the narrative, he has already decided to forgo repentance and contrition and instead to turn evil into his good. Here he goes through many changes, at last turning into "[a] monstrous serpent on his belly prone" (10.514). This form gives name to the title by which we first hear of him in Book One, when Milton in the epic voice asks the question: "Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?" to which he answers: "Th' infernal Serpent" (1.33–34). When at last Satan returns to Hell expecting to give a victory speech to his minions, he instead finds himself caught by his own cunning: his troops greet his return with a cacophony of hisses and, along with Satan himself, make their final descent into darkness by transforming into serpents. Like the transformations of self-love, Satan's transformations "surpass [those] of metamorphosis" (Maxim 563).

Overall, the physical changes that Satan undergoes are consonant with the movement in the analogies in La Rochefoucauld's Maxim 563. At the onset of this maxim on self-love, we are presented with the image of self-love as a bee—a light, natural portrayal of self-love at work outside the self. In the second paragraph of the maxim, we leave the beautiful image of the bee flitting from flower to flower and descend to the internal and dark imagery of an abyss. Here there is a parallel shift between the Satan we see in Heaven and the Satan who descends to the abyss of Hell. In each of these paragraphs, there is a parallel juxtaposition of the images and concepts of night and darkness with a coming to light and an arising. At the end of each of these paragraphs, we have a rejection of this illumination; once things have come to the surface, they are either rejected as out of hand or are denied or misunderstood, just as Satan chooses to reject God and all things good. It is this rejection of all that is good, followed by his embracing, by way of self-love, all that is evil, that spurs his resolve to make a "Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven" (1.255), the decision that ultimately causes him to fall and stay fallen.

The Satan we are first presented with appears to be brash with pride on thinking of how he has opposed God; his self-love has so enthralled him that the possibility of repentance does not even enter into his thoughts. Despite being banished to Hell, he acts as if there is yet hope of a successful opposition. He claims:

A mind not to be changed by place or time!
The mind is its own place and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.
What matter where, if I be still the same
And what I should be: all but less than He
Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free. . . .

(1.253–259)

Here again we see Satan disputing the freedom he had in Heaven and claiming it to be a subjugation, stating that only in Hell shall all be free. And yet, after the resolution has been made to confound God's plan, we see a different picture of Satan—one in which he is contemplating repentance. He muses, "Is there no place / Left for repentance, none for pardon left?" (4.79–80).

Similarly to the scene in Book One where we see Satan "[v]aunting aloud but racked with deep despair" (1.126), it seems that he is once again full of misgivings, doubting himself. He then goes on to reject these feelings of doubt and realizes, or perhaps fools himself into thinking, that if he were to repent it would be "feigned" (4.96), and therefore:

Ease would recant
Vows made in pain as violent and void
(For never can true reconcilement grow
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep)
Which would but lead me to worse relapse
And heavier fall. . . .
. . . . . .
So farewell hope and with hope farewell fear!
Farewell remorse! All good to me is lost.
Evil, be thou my good. . . .

(4.96–101, 108–110)

Satan's claim that if he were to repent, the falsity of that repentance would cause him to fall again (this time worse, because instead of simply falling from God's Grace as before,

he would betray God's forgiveness as well) seems peculiar, given that he was willing and even eager to oppose God in the first place. Despite his curious concern with a second fall from grace, Satan resolves to make evil his good and to pursue his infernal path to damnation and beyond. Once the fallen angels, upon making the resolution not to fight by force of arms, decide what they will do, they proclaim:

To do aught good will ever be our task
But ever to do ill our sole delight
As being cóntrary to His high will
Whom we resist. If then His providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good
Our labor must be to pervert that end
And out of good still to find means of evil,
Which ofttimes may succeed so as perhaps
Shall grieve Him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from their destined aim.

(1.159–168)

With the fallen angels firmly set on this course of action, we learn of Satan's desires to fight God by confounding the prophecy concerning Paradise and destroying the happiness of Man. Satan seems to realize that by destroying Adam and Eve's innocence he will harm God even more than he could in a direct offense that he could not win.

In Paradise, Satan is immediately distrusting of the fact that Adam and Eve are not allowed to eat of the tree. He says, "Knowledge forbidden? / Suspicious, reasonless" (4.515–516), as if he were seeking out any hint of slavery or imposition to utilize in his temptation. Satan targets Eve, as she is susceptible to passions and therefore most likely to be overruled by his faulty logic. Confusing her in the guise of a serpent, he makes her think that if a serpent may be given speech by eating the fruit, then she, who already has speech, would gain even greater intelligence, placing her above Adam. This we clearly see to be wrong, yet still she eats the fruit and

then convinces Adam to do the same, dooming their chances at immortal happiness.

However, unlike Satan, they are both able to repent and receive forgiveness for their transgressions. The reason for this is that for each of them the impetus to trespass comes from without: for Adam, from Eve, and for Eve, from the serpent. For Satan, the pride and self-love that leads to his fall comes from within, engendered by him, as he was not. This relation of the serpent to Eve and Eve to Adam is a perversion of God's order, of "[h]e for God only, she for God in him" (4.299); instead we have: she for serpent, he for serpent in her. In speaking to the Son, God states: "The first sort by their own suggestion fell / Self-tempted, self-depraved. Man falls deceived / By th' other first: Man therefore shall find grace, / The other none" (3.129–132). For this reason there is forgiveness for Man but not for Satan. While fallen Man will retain a paradise within, which is ultimately more important than the physical paradise lost, Satan is left with nothing but a hell, inside and out.

Returning to the question of why Satan fell, it seems that we may clearly lay blame on self-love, the terrible perversion that caused him to fall from his intended place in Heaven. In much the same way, Man's fall is also a perversion of the true state for which he was intended—that is, to live in Eden and eventually to ascend and take the places of the fallen angels. Given our position as beings born of original sin, one may then ask if we see in man's own fallen glory a reflection not only of Adam and Eve, but of Satan as well. Though it is not explicitly stated, La Rochefoucauld hints at a belief that all men have self-love all the time, in varying degrees. The abyss of self-love is the darkest corner of our hearts, where we dread to look for fear of what we might find; in this we see the legacy of the first fall: Man's self-love. In Maxim 509, La Rochefoucauld writes, "To punish man for original sin, God has let him turn his self-love into a god to torment him in every act of his life." Though we will forever be "tormented" by self-love, our salvation seems to stand on the fact that we

can recognize the self-love within us, whereas Satan cannot.