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Energieia

Winter 2008



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SOPHIA URUSOVA

Untitled

How could something slow
as melancholy strike?
Likeness of a snake,
it huddles in the bones
and when a motion strange
or unexpected comes
(nothing too grand or frightening
but small enough to eat)
it flies from coil to line.
The venom quick and strong
pulls down the darkening mist
and never really death
but an eternity of this:

BRYAN SMITH

The Refugees

The refugees carry boxes full of systems and tape
 through a matrix of miniature bones;
Wandering in a styrofoam desert, they huddle
 before an esoteric egg, monstrous,
 that speaks to them in a language of glass.
Their temple of chalk is tipping, tipping,
 and laughter's diaspora blooms on ledges of bleary vigil.
Their prayers are a fragile dome of algebra:
 perpetually shifting, rearranging itself.
Their eyes are stalactites, and their sobs are hands
 that prick themselves on the icy braille of stars.
Their tears, the black feet of gypsies,
 blood exiles from the city of symbols.

As Far as She Can See

Christmas cradled all her childhood happiness;
now dying, her memory clings to a Christmas tree,
whose knots of jumbled lights were beautiful chaos,
cluttered like stars—no order she could see.

A body of earth, rough brown and lashed in green,
primed in ritual's trinkets, graced with light,
the tree is her. She's borne its weight unseen
for many years, but now she studies the night,

peering through stars to find that eternal Maybe,
like old men trudging endless snow for the sight
of something pure and vulnerable as a baby,
yet sacred, undying as heaven's glittering white.

She sets the weight down. Nothing but the tree,
shining, and snow as far as she can see.

Fall

I

Stormtorn tree, disheveled by gale and gust,
pale palms all wrung naked upward,
softest green laid bare
like a secret need.

Right as she turns and walks inside
a flake of sunlight breaks greengold
on some leaf

unnoticed
being borne
through the absence;
a molten silkworm
spinning itself into being
and melting in midair.

The dull deserted leaf meets
(with a "Hush")
the ignorant street,

a torn stem evidence of tender spanning.

Meanwhile she's tearing her room apart,
clawing for the seams in life—
something lost in haunted outtakes,
something greengold in the corner of her eye.

II

Getting older,
like dark
red leaves, the color of bricks, hard
and rough, carved into shape and cemented
in place

to shut out the storm.
Red as the clay underground where we came from,
dark as the underground,
swallowing sun and holding it all in,
enduring and strong
when snow buries everything,
curling up but strong in the snow
that sinks them sparkling wet
a little nearer to the dirt,
a little darker like the dirt. But still
the sun fills us and makes us give up
the secrets of innocence:

blushing berries,

delicious planets.

III

Green and red leaves on the same tree,
like rival armies

 mixed in melee,
dripping berries the color of soil—
an intercourse of dirt and light,
 globes of perfect void.

Leaves drawn from green's balance upward
 through yellow to orange,
 through orange to red
 through red to the color of milk and blood;
drawn by the Fall into all of Creation's calico spices
and finally falling, unveiling a tree with no illusions:
a nuclear cloud

 the color of blank paper,
branches like the arms of Shiva angled, gestures
 kaleidoscoped
 in dervish dance,

and a shadow like writhing smoke.



Angel / Katherine Hale

ANNA MIRZAYAN

It Is Not Women I Love

It is not women I love, whose thighs are unexplored plains
that step onto the Midwest I have never visited.
Dancing legs and chariots that have existed forever—
like my mother who held me—peppered with Egyptian cotton
that has grown coarse and uninhibited,
an untouched secret, but upon which men and children lay
despite its rough unkemptness.

I do not love trees, whose bark makes me bleed
when I attempt to pull convexity from the gnarled concavity
of ancient thick bark whose darkness is also viscous and
may also be full. The dark fluid I pull from the back of the bark,
crescent-shaped bruises litter the forest but I am not satisfied.

Hunched hard limbs reminiscent of the shoulders
of men I have tried to love, tried to coax their convex to my
gin-trash concavities, but it has only let out
the gull in me, thrashing and squawking in salty air.
Men and oaks are breakable and not like the water,
they have only small crevices into which my fingers may flee
like ants,
but no savannah to hide the heart of me.

I cannot love a melody, a mingling of sound and breath.
It has coupled and is taken by air.
Music that uses my voice as a vehicle, my ribbed throat
to buttress a thieving vibration.
When it escapes my eyes are blue
and my mouth is slack.

I love the summer light because
it is made somewhere far and cool,
and dark with promises.

There is an ocean in me, diluted by blood.
I have put it into bottles with thoughts,
to fill the space of not loving.

The Cat

His existence is based on
fine white string hanging
about the face like fate,
or snow. My crooked mouth
sleeps closed by his sharp yawn.

I have rolled the fat black glass
of a far star into his skull,
stuck my finger into the bulb
that expands like a flower
with fear and sunlight.

He stamps and waits to leave
a murky moon of an imprint
upon my mewing soul.



Aunt Renee / Dan Rekshan



Drive-by / Justin Lee

Caged Explorers: The Hunger For Control¹

Howard Zeiderman

To achieve happiness and freedom you must desire nothing else but what is entirely in your control—and that is only your own thoughts and opinions.
—Epictetus, *The Manual*

The letter's return address had a name, the letters MHC, and a number next to it. I had no idea what it meant but it was obvious from the carefully lettered envelope and handwritten letter that great effort was spent preparing it. The letter was a strange and bold request. It would lead me to the gates of the Maryland House of Corrections, a high medium/maximum security facility, the flagship of seven prisons surrounding a place in the Maryland landscape called Jessup, only a few miles from Fort Meade, the home of the National Security Agency.

My contact with the Maryland House of Corrections began when I was asked for some Touchstones materials for an information fair at a prison. Twice a year the organizations that assist prisoners maintain some contact with their families, and the many self-help programs that are designed to encourage prisoners present their information in a large activity area. Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, violence prevention programs, parenting advice, various Christian and Muslim ministries, and even the Junior Chamber of Commerce send representatives with brochures. Touchstones is a program originally designed for pre-college students of all backgrounds to overcome their passivity and enable them to collaborate

¹This piece is dedicated to the memory of Brother Robert Smith, who wanted me to share these thoughts and experiences with our St. John's Community.

and explore. It uses short seminal texts to initiate discussions in which students transform their thinking and their behavior toward others and themselves. Since at that time my work with Touchstones was primarily in schools, I sent the first high school volume of texts along with the accompanying guide explaining how leaders should utilize these materials. I thought nothing of this until two months later when I received the letter.

The letter was from Marvin, a prisoner serving, he said, "life plus 30." The language was simple and direct. "Dear Professor," the letter began, "I've been looking at your books. They've been in the Legal Clinic office for a while. Two days ago I started reading them. First I was confused. But now I see how the leader's guide can help you run the meetings. But we need someone to help us get started. Would you come meet with us? I talked to a few of the guys. We all think this would be good here. Nothing they give us here makes any sense. But last night six of us were sitting around. I read out loud the story about the old man asking for his dead son back. And we talked about it. We were thinking about it. How brave the old man was to face his son's killer and what pain he felt." I was startled as I read his account of a text in our Volume I—a text from Homer's *Iliad*, in which the old king Priam begs the young warrior Achilles for the return of the dead body of his son Hector. He went on to say he hoped we could talk about how such a program might work in a prison.

Though I was stretched in my commitments with Touchstones' efforts in public schools, with my normal teaching at St. John's, and in my work with an executive group of investment bankers, CEOs, lawyers, and journalists up in New York, I couldn't think of a sufficient reason to say no. In addition, I knew of a pilot program that had

been tried at the New Mexico State Penitentiary where the ghastly riot had occurred in 1981. I was intrigued by the idea of working with prisoners and I had hoped we could find a location closer to home. Each type of group we work with is unique. Each group brings specific talents to the program as well as specific needs. Each new effort is therefore a collaboration. The program that Marvin reviewed was designed for high school students, both for the gifted and for those who couldn't read. It was therefore a good first step. It seemed wrong not to answer the request.

However, in spite of my desire, I was hesitant. I was influenced by what the media reported about prisoners. I had the images of countless movies and the hostages at Attica in my imagination. I remembered the atrocities, the disembowelments, at the New Mexico prison outside of Santa Fe. I'm afraid I must admit that often in the early days I went into the prison because I couldn't think of a way to avoid going in without embarrassing myself. So in September of 1995, I took the thirty minute drive to Jessup and entered a vast structure that from a distance looked like an ancient nineteenth century Liverpool textile mill, but on closer inspection was revealed to be a fortress designed to keep two worlds entirely separated from one another. It was a Tuesday evening when I crossed the barriers of double steel-and-glass doors and razor wire to meet the nine men who would embark with me on the exploration of a world that none of us knew existed. I was reminded of Plutarch's description of England before the Romans crossed the water from Gaul: a land that existed only in myth and legend. Over the next two years we would take the first steps together into unknown territory.

I would later realize that my entry on that day was remarkably efficient. My name was listed on a count out

document at the first control booth and I was moved quickly through sets of double doors where I saw chains, handcuffs, and shotguns in a glass-enclosed watch area. I walked nervously past interrogation and holding rooms to what was called the Main Control Area: a large cubical steel-barred enclosure filled with guards. Unlike other such enclosures in the prison, this one had the only exit route to the outside world. A corrections officer announced through a loudspeaker that we were exiting the cage—which, ironically, was the Main Control Area—and entering the actual prison. We were on the inside and surrounded by tiers of cells and the sound of the movement of a thousand men. I was escorted by a guard up a flight of stairs past a hundred men descending from their cells. At moments I was lost in the crowd but with great effort moved through the confusing mass of people upstream. After a brief and nervous wait at a landing, a metal door opened into a large space, perhaps thirty by seventy feet, in which another guard sat at a small desk.

The meeting took place in a small room at the edge of this large activity area where we would eventually hold our sessions amidst the 100-decibel noise of the prison and the rival claims for space of the Nation of Islam and the Jessup Jaycees. Around the open area were a number of these rooms, allocated to the use of various prisoner organizations. There was the writer's club, the prisoner newspaper, the colts—a sports club whose allegiance now focused on birds—oriels and ravens—instead of horses. There were the rooms for AA and NA, and the fifteen-by-ten-foot area where men who had expressed themselves by crime now used brushes and paints. We met in the room of the most important prisoner organization—the Legal Clinic. This was where the men came for advice from

other more experienced prisoners on how to represent themselves, since whether guilty or innocent their previous defense rarely warranted the name.

It was significant that we met here since this was where prisoners most felt the distance between themselves and the world outside the walls. This was where they experienced most acutely their helplessness in the subtle labyrinth of our society's legal system. Five of the men I met were the high priests of this order. They were the officers—present and past—of the Legal Clinic. They held the keys to help others at least attempt to control their futures. The four others were equally important. They were presidents of other prisoner organizations. These were all older men, men who had somehow survived the years of indignity and abuse and isolation. The youngest was in his late thirties and all but one were serving at least one life sentence, whereas most were serving multiple such sentences either concurrently or in succession. These were men for whom prison was to be their world and not merely an interlude before reinserting themselves into ours.

I was clearly nervous as I entered and they had me sit in a part of the small room where I was no longer seen by the guard in the main area. The meeting began awkwardly. I thought they knew what they wanted from my visit, but in fact some were only vaguely aware of why they were meeting. Marvin began by having us go around the room and state who we were. I said I was a teacher, and others spoke briefly about themselves. They never said it explicitly, but each said enough for me to infer that I was sitting with nine men convicted of murder, concealed from a guard in a small room. When we finished Marvin, took the lead again. "Why don't you tell us about the program," he

said in a voice filled with suspicion. I had thought that he would be my ally in this alien world but his tone was distant, as if he now wished to appear that he had played no part in my coming into the prison. From the introductions, it became clear that half were invited to this meeting to hear about the program for the first time. I could see a couple of the men whispering to one another and even heard one ask to no one or to all why I was there. Rather quickly the roles had become reversed. Instead of being asked to come to respond to their request, it seemed that I had to convince them that they should become involved.

I could feel control slipping away from me. Perhaps it was implicitly a test to see if one more white volunteer could offer something they really wanted, or perhaps it was an exploration they were undertaking to find out what they needed. When they asked me to describe the program, I did a very poor job. I kept speaking in ways that were either too abstract or too rudimentary. I hoped to interest them in probing the conceptual presuppositions and biases of our culture though I didn't describe it in quite those words. However, such an exercise hardly moved them since, for many, their incarceration incorporated the presuppositions and biases of our culture. Of all the men I met in prison, very few asserted their innocence. However, most felt that they were political prisoners, prisoners because of the politics of our country stretching back into the very origins of the European conquest of the New World. They didn't offer this as an excuse but merely reported it as a fact. They saw their crimes much along the lines of an infraction against their master on the plantation. Nor were they particularly engaged by the prospect of increased skills. The skills they needed were quite specific, and it wasn't clear how Touch-

stones could help them overturn a conviction.

As I was speaking and becoming more uneasy as I felt their eyes glued to me, a short heavily tattooed prisoner interrupted. "These guys," he said, referring to the collection of texts he had, "are all white." I was taken aback by his claim. In regard to the specific volume I had sent in, he was correct. I again started trying to explain that this program was very different from classes they had in school and that the Eurocentrism of this particular collection of texts wouldn't affect what we discussed. But they looked skeptical. The meeting seemed to be going nowhere until Marvin looked up from fingering the book of readings. "It could help us think for ourselves," he said calmly. "That's something they can't control."

Immediately, I could see their faces change as if they finally heard something that might be useful or even important. "You think that? Say more," said Lee, the president of the Legal Clinic whose great knowledge earned him the respect of everyone in spite of a terrible stutter. "Yeah, it's like when we talked about that dead guy. That Trojan. And you asked us how we would mourn a friend. There was no one to tell us who was right and what to say. We were all thinking." A few of the most senior nodded agreement and the others, even the tattooed critic, seemed to concur. That remark finally penetrated to the core of their concerns. Perhaps Marvin had sensed this in the description of the discussion format. Perhaps these experts in the omnipresence of arbitrary control sensed an opportunity for the first time to undertake the pure act of thinking. Perhaps my own inability to supply an answer allowed them the leisure to determine what they needed. In their eyes, I was no longer a professor or a teacher of the kind they had previously experienced. I was merely a technician

who could help them create the structure through which their own thought would take shape.

"Thinking for oneself" was no simple expression for them. Within that phrase was lodged the full dimension of their suffering. In prison, all control and initiative was stripped from them. After one session in which we discussed Martin Luther King's *Letter from Birmingham City Jail* and why we need the stability of laws, Eddie, a lifer who had served 25 years, took me aside out of the hearing of the others. "Here you've got to be careful. Yeah, even you. They change the rules every day. And they never tell you. That way they control all of you." To supply the desperate need they felt to establish a realm in which they were not entirely passive, they had two options. He took me further aside as if to confide a great truth about his life. "We try to fight it. We work out with weights in the yard or in the gym. That way we at least control how we look. Or we control the fags and the slaves."

An entire hierarchy of keeper and kept appears in the prison. The keepers tell the kept what to do, how to act, and what to think. Their thoughts are as imprisoned as their bodies, since the constant pressure of others establishes a tyranny which overrides the distinctions of guard and prisoner. Control in its rawest form flows through the prison, and it was this horror that these men felt our programs might transform. The task was now clear: to go about establishing the conditions for prisoners to reassert their freedom, their ability to become human again, by bestowing significance on their lives through the mere act of thought.

By the end of the meeting certain things were clear. I had committed to coming in every Friday evening for two hours, though we never had that much time. Security

always dictated how long it took to enter. Sometimes I would be held in a control area for an hour only to be told the paperwork couldn't be found. This was always exasperating; however, when I once complained to the group about it, they just laughed. Roderick, one of the older prisoners, explained, "We were hopin' it would happen. It's good for you. It'll help you understand something about here." From then on I sometimes even savored the delays as it revealed in a trivial and temporary way what the prisoners experienced continually. I began to grasp what it meant no longer to be a person but a mere thing. These men had no control over their lives. I too felt that every time I entered the facility. It was as if I had entered another world where I had no standing and no say in what might happen to me. It was a separate world, barely lit and chaotic. Anything could happen in those dim passageways as I walked past the correctional officers and groups of prisoners. My only security was the hope that it wasn't worth their effort to interfere with me.

Control as it is implemented and experienced in our prisons is a uniquely modern construct. In contrast to ancient prisons, our prisons reduce men to beasts through controlling and dehumanizing measures. Although ancient prisons were dark and oppressive places where vermin, neglect, and disease dominated, prisoners were not dehumanized. Those vast ancient structures held people of various sorts, often in accommodations that suited their relative rank. Prisoners still retained respect, and in some cases the accoutrements of their position in society. The ranks the prisoners held were part of them and could not be stripped from them whatever their crime or infraction. However, this began to change as religion and science struggled for our souls. Prisons in a temporary compromise

became penitentiaries, places where fallen human beings would do penance and assert their humanity again. These people were still not fundamentally different from those who would confess their sins in prayers during church services. The distinction was only that they required a more intense regimen of prayer in places where there were fewer distractions from the work of their salvation. However, as religion lost its primacy to scientific technology, the penitentiary became the house of correction.

Some of the group, a few who had served over forty years in prisons in many different states, could actually remember this change. Once we were considering a drawing as a text and suddenly we heard the story first hand. The text was a drawing by Kathe Kolwitz, *Prisoners Listening to Music*. The three prisoners depicted are skeletal, with hollow eyes—and all seemingly gripped by something. The session was not going very well and I regretted trying to use a text that connected too vividly with their situation. A number of the younger members were clearly repulsed by the drawing. When I asked why a few who spoke often were silent, Larry answered, “It’s scary looking at them. I don’t want that to be me.” As he finished, another prisoner, Craig, a man almost seventy years old who first served time more than fifty years before, laughed. “You don’t understand nothing. They’re not dying. They’re gettin’ past their hungers. It’s the music that makes them pure—like angels. Listen—when I was young down south we had a chaplain. Every day he would play music for us. Old music, beautiful. At first we couldn’t listen to it. We never heard nothing like it. Sometimes a song would last a long time, no words. But then we started to love it. We would listen like in the picture, and we’d remember things. And we’d cry. Sometimes you could hear ten men cry. And sometimes

the priest would cry too. We were all together in it. But then he retired and a new chaplain came. He was different. He wanted us to see the doctors and counselors—the case workers. They would ask us questions about ourselves and make us go to classes, programs. They were working on us and the music ended. It was different. It was them against us.” Correction, as Craig sensed, is entirely different from penance.

This is one reason why the allegory of the cave from Plato’s *Republic*, one of the most powerful Touchstones readings for any group, is especially fertile in a prison. The status of the modern prison as its own self-enclosed world became explicit in a session in which the prisoners discussed this text. It is a story of people who are themselves prisoners in a barely illuminated cave and who believe the shadows they see cast by objects that move behind them are reality. Eight weeks into the program I decided use this text to encourage the prisoners for the first time to speak explicitly in the group about their own situations as prisoners. For a while they argued about details of the allegory but finally Thomas, a serious and highly intelligent prisoner, moved the discussion to their own reality. He started to consider how a freed prisoner from Plato’s cave who saw the reality outside would communicate with those who were still underground if he returned. To make his point about the difficulty of communication, he began to describe his own return to prison. “When I came back in,” he said, “I thought I’d find my old friends, and I’d talk to them. But I couldn’t. Nothing I said made any sense. I had to learn a new language.” Ken, who had been silent, agreed. “Nothing here makes sense out there. Nothing you would do out there works in here. It’s like going from earth to Pluto. They make us into aliens, animals, and then they

wonder why we end up coming back to the barn."

It was into this highly controlled and dehumanizing space that I had entered in response to an appeal from nine lifers attempting to reestablish themselves as men who had committed crimes rather than as members of a separate species, a criminal class. Like the priest who played the music and cried with his prisoners, perhaps like Dostoevsky's Father Zossima crying for himself as much as for them, I was joining them on a journey we would have to undertake together.

Soon, the nine men decided to involve another ten so we would have a group of about twenty. They had to explain our goal to the others as best they could. The goal was a rare one in the prison. I would undertake to turn over control of the program to them so they could spread the program throughout the facility. In short, I wasn't—like other teachers or volunteers—coming to do something for them. Rather, I would try to make it possible for them no longer to need me. That is what all teachers want, but here it was essential that they not feel indebted to me. The program would only work if they felt it was also theirs—that they had collaborated in its creation. However, I knew that it would be as difficult for me to surrender control to them as it would be for them to accept it. I created the program they would learn. I felt I knew better than they what would work and what structure was best. Yet to succeed I would have to enable them actively to collaborate with me in shaping the program for prisons. I was worried that I might not be able to achieve this act of surrender. And would they be able to forget who I was and allow me to be involved without feeling I was judging them, that I was the expert and therefore in control of the situation? Here we were touching on some of the deepest issues of our cul-

ture, ones that pervaded both the prison and also our own lives—issues of the need for control, the fear of surrender, and the very ownership of one's words.

Every discussion group confronts the same set of barriers to a genuine collaborative activity. There are always initially the issues of control, power, and expertise. This initial stage is followed by competition among groups—in other words, factions—who struggle with each other to assert dominance. This happens by groups and individuals. The next barrier is the problem of listening without imposing our own thoughts on another. After overcoming these impediments, there is the effort one must make to evolve a type of leadership and responsibility that is shared among all the participants. These issues raise the most complex human problems and questions irrespective of culture. The culture determines how the group approaches these problems but not what the barriers are.

In addition to these problems, there are others that characterize a group or the individuals in it as a unique collection of people immersed in a specific institutional or social environment. These problems concern all of us in some measure, but specific groups face certain problems continually as a fact of their lives and their circumstances. They have an expertise in that area, as a problem they must continually face, which the rest of us share to a lesser and more occasional extent. They can therefore become a resource for us all as they struggle in the discussion environment to overcome that barrier that uniquely affects them and shapes their lives. The prisoners had their own specific complex needs, needs that centered on the issue of control and their attempt to overcome the passivity imposed by their violent and arbitrary environment. They had a hunger for control. However, in order to create a genuine

group, they would have to transmute this desire into a form that enabled them to surrender control in its customary forms. It was with regard to such issues that they could most clearly be a resource for others.

Prisoners also certainly need the intellectual skills and the skills of cooperation to better equip them to enter society as employable people. However, the needs expressed by these prisoners had a different urgency. These nine men were to spend their lives in prison, and their needs dealt not with the future but with the environment in which they all lived. Their needs were three-fold.

The first involved the fact that MHC, like all prisons, was overcrowded. There was a certain freedom of contact and movement simply because there was not enough space to keep prisoners separated. This mobility of course increased the possibility of collisions among prisoners or gangs of prisoners. Through spreading Touchstones in the prison, the men aimed gradually to change the environment where they all lived. A modest success was recounted one evening after one of the discussions. We had just discussed the opening scene of Ellison's *Invisible Man* where the "invisible" narrator collides with a white man and comes close to killing him. During the session they had mostly considered their prejudices, their assumptions about one another. However, near the end of our time, Alan, a white man, spoke up more personally. "This happened yesterday. I was on line at lunch, carrying my tray. James [a black man who sometimes attended sessions] was in front of me. Don't know how, but I bumped into him. His lunch fell. Three months ago he would have hit me hard, maybe killed me. But he didn't, and we cleaned up the mess. And other people gave him some of their food. That's never happened here before." Lee, one of the lead-

ers, seemed to speak for all of them, when he commented on this incident. "They try to make us savages. And before we started talking to one another, we used to believe them." In short, their startling goal was to humanize their world—a world in which they were viewed and viewed themselves as barely human.

Their second goal involved a peculiar paternal attitude toward the younger men. These men were old timers, men who had survived years of abuse and indignity from guards, and other prisoners. They knew how to remain alive. They were the wisest of the wise. Each of them was unique, and the only image that captured their stature for me was a comparison with the Greeks and Trojans of the *Iliad*: Ajax, Sarpedon, Patrocles, Achilles, and Hector. These men hoped to influence the young ones, seventeen to twenty-five years old, who came for two or three years and then graduated, as if they had attended a college course in how to commit crimes. These young felons never grasped that they too might spend their lives behind these walls. The group of lifers felt that speaking directly wouldn't work. They hoped that their words would carry more weight after having worked together in these more neutral, though important, discussions.

The third dimension was the one that affected each of them most intimately. It wasn't just a matter of their environment or a concern for those who would follow the paths these men regretted having themselves pursued. Rather, it was the sense that they too, even in these hostile and precarious and dehumanizing conditions, were capable of thinking on the deepest issues that confront all of us. This became vivid to me and to them one Friday evening. The text was a short passage by Kant on morality. He claims that we are moral only when we act from duty

and not because we want to. Most of the group considered him crazy. They gave example after example of helping others, family, friends, even enemies, because of pity or affection. Finally Sam interrupted. "You guys really don't get it. He's saying that what you're talking about is only like eatin' when you're hungry. That's no big deal. It's only when it's hard, when it hurts, and you do it anyway that you can respect yourself. Then you know you're a man." As he spoke I and others nodded in agreement. The intensity of Sam's thought, exploring an idea that no one had been able to consider, enabled me and others to take Kant's claims more seriously. In these sessions they felt they could finally exercise control over their own thoughts—they could, as Sam did and helped us do, think for themselves. This they sensed would once again make them fully human in their own minds and capable of respecting themselves as well as others.

The task we set ourselves was to create a group of about ten discussion leaders who then would each be able to conduct groups for other prisoners. The ultimate aim for the men was to involve as many prisoners as possible in the programs and to make these discussions part of the ongoing life of the institution. In addition, a collection of texts was to be selected and tried out for use in this prison as well as possibly in others. In this program and the other programs I have designed, the texts are understood as tools, as touchstones. Though they are sometimes specific to particular groups—like the Kolwitz drawing—most texts selected, like Ellison's or Kant's, touch so deeply on our habits and expectations and our past cultural and historical inheritance that they are useful for a wide variety of groups. In the case of the prison population we needed to determine what texts would enable the participants to con-

sider the issues of real concern to them. At the same time, the process should not force them into areas they would only approach in their own time. So it became necessary both to explore the problems these leaders would face as well as why certain kinds of texts were used. In other words, for the men to learn to lead a group meant for them to grasp to a certain extent the underlying structure of the program.

The men in the group were therefore a core of nine men who had committed to this project as well as a varying group of others who would join up merely to participate. These were sometimes men known to the other participants. However, prisoners sometimes joined up for one or two meetings and were not known to the men. In certain cases we knew that prisoners were asked to attend to inform prison officials and monitor what was happening. I never knew who these other occasional participants were. I never knew whether they were sent to disrupt the session either by another prisoner organization that objected to what was happening, or by the prison administration, or simply by a prisoner who might be angry at one of the other prisoners or at the idea of changing the status quo of the institution. However, uncertainty is built into the nature of the discussion process and these visitors exacerbated that aspect. It also made clear to me that in a discussion, one is never in control. In order to participate or lead one must realize that one is dependent on the other participants. This also made it obvious that a genuine discussion is not an event that is isolated from the environment or culture or organization in which it occurs.

The first stage of our work was to give the men the experience of a discussion. I used texts from the Touchstones series of volumes. These are contained in nine vol-

umes ranging from works for third and fourth graders through high schoolers and adults. These volumes, especially those for the middle and high school series, are also perfectly suitable for adults. The volume a group uses is rarely a function of reading level, since the program can be done orally, but rather a matter of experience with discussion. Our goal in high school in the first year of participation is for the participants to understand each stage of the process itself and, after twenty- to twenty-five sessions, to begin conducting the classes themselves. This became the model for what we wished to achieve in prison. In addition, each session was filmed. The video was copied and one of the copies was returned to the men. A typical session would involve my passing out a text which was read aloud, and having individual and small group work precede the discussion. The group would then reunite and I would lead the discussion. This would last about fifty to sixty minutes. Then I would break the discussion and for the last thirty minutes we would analyze what had occurred.

This was the procedure we pursued week by week. Often the analysis of the discussion process would drift back into the topic of discussion itself or the text. Once after a discussion using the short essay by Francis Bacon, *About Revenge*, James, one of the prisoners, interrupted an argument between two very assertive men about whether there had been dominance in the session. "Hey," asked James, addressing one of the men arguing in an innocent tone, "did anyone take revenge during the meeting?" For a few moments no one responded though a number of eyes turned to Michael, the man James seemed to address. Then Lee actually acknowledged that he had been tempted to respond to what he took as a slight but

didn't. Finally, Michael spoke up. "I did. What Vaughn said rubbed me wrong and I thought he knew that—so I went at him. It was stupid." The group then returned to the text on revenge and Michael and Lee described how they had reacted in different ways, why one tried to get even and the other didn't and how they felt about their actions. This moment was common in the sessions as reflection on the discussion dynamics often led us back to the subject itself. The process of discussion and the text echoed one another. In order for this to happen texts must be selected which exemplify the structures and attitudes of our society and institutions. The discussion then becomes a unique kind of cultural exploration, in which the presuppositions of the culture can be made visible and new forms of thinking and behavior can be explored.

The entire history of slavery was continually present in the prison. Jessup, like most American prisons, is filled primarily with black men—the descendants of slaves once again in something very like slave quarters. Not only are their cramped cells and chains reminiscent of slavery but as the state increasingly involves itself in various commercial enterprises in prisons we are once again witnessing the use of what is essentially slave labor. The entire drama and stage setting of incarceration duplicates the four hundred year history of slavery on this continent. Slavery, and the complete absence of control over one's decisions, one's future, and one's life were clearly the issues that should be probed by these men. They, more than others, had an expertise which we lack in surviving while facing the paralysis, the passivity, imposed on them.

It is part of the aim of these discussions to ultimately enable the participants to discuss the most vital and volatile issues. However, no one is prepared to undertake this

without the skills which the program develops. It is only quite late in the process that texts are dispensed with and topics themselves confronted. When that occurs prematurely the result is mere conflict or a series of monologues. It requires great discipline to undertake a genuine discussion of what one cares deeply about. Thus, though slavery was at least one of the main concerns of this group, its discussion as a topic would not occur until much later. We would approach it through the mediation of specific texts until the group became more skilled. Every group has certain issues like this and these will come up in the process itself, in the experiences the group has in their lives, and in the institutional structure within which they live.

I therefore selected texts at various stages which would push aspects of the issue of slavery to the surface. The choice of a passage from Epictetus' *Manual* was a first attempt. The passage is a terse statement of stoicism, a very abstract claim about slavery and freedom which holds that we are all enslaved, and that only by desiring what is completely and entirely in one's control could anyone be free. Epictetus goes on to claim that only our thoughts and opinions are entirely in our control. This, he argues, is because all people for whom we might feel love or affection and all property we possess or desire could be lost through some unpredictable event. The discussion of this text occurred about two months into the program.

It was a large group of about thirty that Friday night and the shape of the arrangement of chairs had departed far from a circle, which is preferred, and had become a very elongated ellipse. The configuration of the chairs often plays a key role in a discussion, since everything in a format like this has significance. I wanted to modify the shape of the ellipse and make it more uniform but I hesi-

tated. I always felt I should accept the circumstances that presented themselves in the prison as much as possible. Whether one manipulates the seating arrangement depends on the setting, the group, and the leadership role. Leading a discussion is not a uniform task. There is not one model that all must adhere to in every situation. The goals remain the same across groups of the same kind but how one achieves them can vary considerably.

I was at pains to make few demands on the situation and on the men in it. I didn't wish to be perceived as part of the organizational structure that moves them from place to place. When a prisoner would run the group, he would exercise much more control and direction than I did. It makes sense for that approach since he needs to demarcate himself as an expert in the initial phases whereas I wanted to minimize that status. This is the great issue confronting this effort to create a genuinely collaborative activity. People want an expert who will take control and yet wish to be free of that very desire. So the question is how one should share leadership and authority. That of course is a problem that will face all of us in every aspect of life. These discussions therefore are a laboratory in which the new directions to be pursued in our society can be explored and worked out.

I sat on the long side of the ellipse where I could best see all the men. Many men were new. There were three foci to the discussion. One group was led by a large man named Karem, who sat at one of the endpoints of the major axis—a dominant place in such a configuration. Karem agreed with Epictetus. He contended that the prison had enslaved his body but his mind was free. He argued that they couldn't enslave that. "No one can chain my mind," he boasted. "Though my body is locked in this sewer, my

mind can roam everywhere.” He spoke in such a forceful way that many men, in spite of themselves, agreed. Kevin, on the other hand, violently disagreed. The officers didn’t just control his body. By controlling that, they controlled him. They determined when he could move and where he could be. And these decisions controlled his life, his desire, his thoughts, and his dignity. While Karem held that he still felt free, Kevin vividly described what had happened to all of them—a need to urinate while waiting somewhere in the prison. “And,” said Kevin, “they take their damn time. They know what’s happening. They can read our faces, and we’re forced to humiliate ourselves. They turn us into children or animals.” Such an indignity can happen at any moment and to deny one’s feeling about that is not to be free but rather to be less than human, Kevin went on to claim.

Karem tensed at this point as if someone had said the very words he felt characterized both his and all their positions and which they were striving to change by their own efforts. Sometimes it is difficult to lead a discussion because what is said grips everyone with the reality of the lives of some of the participants. Even with experienced leaders, when a discussion becomes deeply real to the participants it is difficult for the leader to focus on the long-range goals of the project. Here I was listening to a discussion of Stoicism by people who didn’t merely speculate and imagine what it would be like. These were people whose very survival and sanity often depended on their living that way. Some people in that room were in fact stoics and could speak to Epictetus as if they were colleagues on the same path. Others knew the temptation to stoicism and perhaps had tried it and abandoned it.

It is this facet which gives such power to discussions



Angel Wings / Katherine Hale

that are designed to use text and experience to echo one another. This fertile tension between the experience of the group and the text reveals how such discussions differ so radically from both education in the traditional sense, in which an idea or text is explored and elaborated, and also from therapy, in which what is at issue is the experience of the particular participant. Here the personal is mediated by a text which is often the seminal source of a concept or institutional structure and yet through its difference from the personal allows one to view oneself from a distance. In fact, this very issue itself came up in the discussion on Epictetus and soon became the main focus. One of the men—Eddie, a former Black Panther who was a lifer but always proclaimed his innocence—brought this home to all of us. “None of us are free. We’re all enslaved,” he said, breaking a brief moment of silence between Kevin and Kareem. “And not just those like us in prison. Yeah, we’re held in place by bars and wire, but that’s not all. Our minds themselves are enslaved. And not just ours, Howard’s too and everyone out there. Our thoughts aren’t our own. They’re just the ones we grew up with. How can we be free when how we think is our prison?”

This took everyone aback. Everyone realized this was an important thought that we would have to continually consider and struggle with. Eddie’s remark defused the tension between Kareem and Kevin by revealing how this issue of our slavery was the struggle we all had to face. The men bounced all these ideas around as if they were in a three sided tennis match. No one changed an opinion but each gave the others the chance to speak. And this session was decisive for the group because they finally recognized, as Eddie implied, that I had nothing more to offer on this subject than they had, and in fact less. After an hour I

broke off the discussion so we might evaluate what had just happened.

In order to encourage people to emerge briefly from the prisons in which Eddie claimed we were all captive, I wanted the men to spend time with prisoners they didn’t know. I asked the men to count to four and get into small groups according to number. That would effectively separate friends from one another, and I instructed them to consider what they felt were the strong and weak points of the discussion. When these groups reported their analyses, most of the groups agreed. They felt there had been a presentation of views but no discussion. As Vaughn said, “no one changed an opinion, and no one looked at what they themselves were saying. We were just stating our minds.” But Thomas responded: “That isn’t so terrible. At least we could finally say what we really thought. And the rest of us listened even if we didn’t react. That was important. Others listening—we get some dignity that way,” he claimed. A number of men agreed.

But then Kareem, who had been listening with a clear expression of discomfort, interrupted. “But that means you need others to be free. And how could this Epictetus be right about being free in your thoughts when we need one another for our own self-respect? And don’t you need self-respect for freedom?” It was there in the meta-discussion that the real discussion finally occurred. It was when they had made the claims of stoicism visible to themselves in their very activity that they could seriously consider the implications. The discussion did in fact act as an experiment for discerning new forms of activity.

There was no official status in my position, and the men received nothing for their participation. There was nothing concrete they would gain. I therefore had no

power to bestow anything obviously useful or valued in that environment. The men came because they were allowed to think. The excitement of thinking and knowing that they too were capable of this activity drew them into the group. They weren't here to learn from a book but to explore, together with me, both themselves and this new terrain we were bringing into being. Discussion is possible only when there is no agenda. I had no agenda in terms of the conclusions we would reach or the paths we would take though I clearly had a goal. I wanted to tailor the program to this institution. This meant I would try out texts, and explore the means by which I could turn over the responsibility for the program to these men. Often they would ask me about our other programs and I would tell them about the possibilities and the difficulties we faced in the program with Palestinians in Gaza in Arabic, or indentured children in Haiti, or CEO's at the Harvard Club, or middle school students, or senior citizens, or with plebes at the Naval Academy, or with my students at St. John's. I think it was very important to these men to realize that what they were doing was identical in some of its fundamental principles with attempts throughout the world by people who were willing to risk high levels of uncertainty to undertake the effort to change themselves.

It was the start of a sort of community where we—there in the bleak activity area of a nineteenth century prison, in the third floor private meeting room at the Harvard Club in Manhattan, in senior citizen centers, and in Haitian churches—were taking steps to explore a world which, though continuous with strands of all of these disparate worlds, nonetheless revealed glimpses of other forms of life and new ways of being and thinking. It happened briefly but often enough to present the outlines of

possibility. The men knew they were explorers into a region no one knew about. The trips to space were not the successors of the trips of Columbus and Magellan. Those early explorers needed to change their fundamental conception of their world in order to make room for what they saw. The astronauts merely solved the typical problem of how to get from one visible and relatively known place to another though on a more immense scale. The problem we faced was not one of going from here to there but from now to then. It was exploration into a future which would no longer be a corollary of our pasts.

These men serving life sentences for serious crimes felt part of the small bands of people making these journeys and they sensed they were bringing a perspective that was uniquely theirs but necessary to all the others. This sense, I think, translated into their respect for me in spite of the fact that I was merely one more among them, a person who knew a bit about sketching a rough map of our explorations and who had an acute sense of apparent harbors that were merely the temptations of sirens. However, neither I nor they could give a detailed account of this new terrain. Sometimes I thought we were on solid ground and in a familiar region when suddenly the ground would open up and I found myself, as in the conventional dream, falling endlessly with no place to grab. And then just as suddenly the scene transformed and I could see that I was in a pacific valley and the fall was merely a misperception. I constantly had to seek my bearings along with the men, and that made vivid the reality of our mutual dependence.

Up to this point I had led the discussions, selected the texts from the Touchstones series, and designed the meeting format. But since our goal was for the core group to develop the skills necessary to lead discussions with other

prisoners, I knew at some stage I would have to turn over the responsibility to them. I must say I kept postponing the step. I kept worrying that I hadn't communicated enough to them, as if one could prepare for every eventuality in any complex activity, much less a discussion which, if properly engaged in, changes from moment to moment with a life of its own. However, I also recognized that these were merely excuses to avoid surrendering control. I was finally able to overcome my resistance because of what the prisoners were able to do. We were moving to a stage in the program in which the group must begin to observe and judge itself.

In all the programs I have developed, the text, the experience of the participants, and the dynamical issues arising in the process all interpenetrate and echo one another. To prepare the way for self-judgment and self-criticism of the group we first discussed a worksheet which drew out the opinions of the men on how one judges others at first meeting. The men were asked if they considered peoples' clothes, how people sit or hold themselves, or their eyes when meeting someone for the first time. In a prison judging correctly at first meeting is a very important event as it can determine whether one is threatened or safe.

Two men sharply disagreed on the best way to accomplish this. Idrus asserted it was by the person's posture, whereas Eddie focused on the eyes as the most revealing. This exchange went on for a few minutes, and we could see Eddie becoming increasingly impatient. Idrus was wearing dark glasses and Eddie, annoyed, finally said what he had been thinking: "What's behind those glasses?" In response Idrus tensed, started to rise, but then remained seated and replied. "You've known me here for twenty years and you've never seen that." The moment was ex-

plosive and I quickly moved it on to the text for that day to re-establish control. They reconsidered this issue of self-observation and self-judgment by discussing two self-portraits of Rembrandt, one in which he concentrates on his eyes, and another in which he elaborates his clothing with the eyes almost invisible in darkness. The discussion got past that moment of tension to consider how Rembrandt had changed in how he depicted himself.

The next week, Idrus—the prisoner who had worn the dark glasses for twenty years—came to the session without them. We were all stunned. All of us spoke haltingly as the session began, hardly able to absorb the momentousness of his action. This appeared such a monumental step that I felt I should follow suit. I felt in awe of what had just occurred and the others all appreciated the extraordinary gesture they were witnessing. I immediately changed what I had planned for the session. I resolved that I would surrender control to the group the following week, and to begin that process in this session I decided to explore with them what we would consider. I began encouraging the group to think through the issues involved in leading a group.

A discussion leader always comes to a session with a goal. The goal can be a topic that it is deemed essential the group discuss, or a problem the group must overcome, such as dominance by a few, or an opportunity in the group's development, or a part of the text that seems important. The leader might have to surrender this goal immediately if it becomes clear that the group will not go along with this approach, or that they are ready for a different goal. In this case it was I, the group's leader, who was finally ready for something more significant.

After almost a year of hesitation, I was finally ready

to collaborate with them, to surrender control. I therefore asked them to consider what topic we as a group should discuss. For an hour they suggested various subjects but the main one was "What is God?" Some claimed that this was far too personal and sensitive to discuss, others claimed that the group was capable of attempting it. Some then claimed it wouldn't be a discussion where one might change one's mind. Instead they would simply state their opinions, indifferent to what the others might say. However, in spite of their reservations, they were willing to attempt it. At the end of the session we chose a text that we could use to focus our exploration. The text chosen was a selection in a Touchstones volume—the sacrifice of Isaac from Genesis. The session had been so penetrating in examining what constituted a discussion, what role texts can play in channeling the exploration, and how to avoid having it turn into an empty ping-pong match of quotes and scattered opinions, that I also decided that for the first time it would be lead by one of the prisoners.

I could have chosen any of the group but Michael Evans-el volunteered. A thirty-five year old prisoner, he had been serving a life sentence since the age of fourteen when he was sentenced as an incorrigible offender. Michael began quietly. He asked: "What sort of God would make such a request?" There was silence for a few moments and then first Eddie and then Thomas and then Lee all plunged into the discussion to shed light on the mystery of God's purposes. For ninety minutes, Michael led a discussion on the difference between sacrifice and murder and the role of God in our lives with a group of men all of whom had either committed murder or were at least convicted of it. And they identified even more closely with Abraham. As Vaughn pointed out, "We here must con-

stantly ask ourselves just what Abraham must have asked himself during that three day trip to Mt. Moriah: why me, God, why me?" Though there was a text one could not determine whether this was a textual or non-textual discussion. They had finally achieved that intermediate point in which the distinction breaks down. The following week we spent a good part of the session discussing what had occurred and whether their expectations were satisfied. Had it been possible to discuss these subjects or were they simply presenting monologues? Everyone agreed that their worst fears had not materialized. In fact, the discussion was a great surprise even to those who expected that we were able to pursue it. As one of the men said, "It was like a wheel, it just moved round and round."

These men were discussing the issue most personal to them—the murder of another human being. Yet they had the discipline to depersonalize their own experience and allow others to participate in a discussion. They could surrender control of what was most intimate, and yet at the same time they never made it an abstract discussion. They were able to fuse a textual exploration with one in which their own experience lent credibility to their comments.

The session on the sacrifice of Isaac was a decisive moment for the group. It was a great success, far greater than I or they or anyone could have imagined. They felt that with some advance preparation one of them had been able to conduct a session. It was in fact a session on a topic—what is God?—that most felt they wouldn't be able to handle. However, it went much further. It was a discussion of the very crime for which they were serving life sentences. The discussion was thoughtful and probing with neither any self-pity nor any avoidance of self-examination. Once we began this process we decided to continue.

The next week we decided we would have another leader and would go in rotation until each of the nine men had practiced with this group. This was a major step. I also thought it was better to allow the leader to know in advance and for him to be able to select the text and the approach. The next volunteer was Vaughn, a prisoner who had played a very strong role in the last discussion. Michael, who had led the discussion, had the best sense of how to keep himself out of the way. I knew others would have more difficulty.

It is always a challenge to lead a group. Leading has little to do with whether you enjoy discussions yourself. In fact often the worst leaders are precisely those who want to be participants. However, there is no one model for conducting a discussion. One has to discern one's strengths and utilize those within this new environment. Vaughn's great strength as a participant in fact would, I expected, cause him problems as a leader. There was great seriousness and intensity in Vaughn. In a discussion he often took the group to new levels by his passionate thinking about a problem. In the Abraham discussion, when the discussion was becoming fragmented, Vaughn focused it on what we all knew we should talk about. He imagined Abraham, walking with Isaac those three days. He uttered what everyone in the group was asking about Abraham and themselves, "God, why me, why me?" It was Vaughn who could suddenly transform a meandering route into one of deep engagement. As one prisoner at a different prison said of a discussion on the *Iliad*, at some point it left the streets of Troy for those of Baltimore. Vaughn could effect that translation too. But this very power could also cause problems.

It is wonderful when a participant further raises the

depth and importance of a discussion. But when a leader does it, the group can become dependent on his enthusiasm or defensive and even go into opposition. A leader must rather show that he respects others and feels that the issues they have raised are serious. Vaughn was also not generally attentive to the needs of others in the group. He was not vain at all but simply so engaged by the question or topic that he would lose a sense of where the others in the group were in their thinking. Each of the men had different kinds of issues they would have to face as leaders but Vaughn's was one of the most difficult. He would have to subordinate his own ideas and help others to bring out theirs. He would have to surrender control of the content and focus on his responsibility to others. If anyone had to learn service it was he. I also had to let him choose the text.

What he chose startled and troubled me even more than the fact that he would lead it. It was a piece by an eighteenth century ex-slave about what owning slaves does to the slave owner. In one sense it was potentially useful because it at least took a perspective that the group of twenty black men had to infer. But as touching so directly on the topic of slavery it seemed beyond the ability of this group, much more so than the question about God. I was amazed that this was the text chosen though I had resolved there was nothing I would do to change it. They had to learn to select texts for a specific group at a specific time in their evolution and this was at least a start. And I had to learn to surrender my position and become a participant in the group. I hoped we could analyze it afterward in order at least to decide why it failed. The analysis would present an opportunity to explore the role of texts and how one selects them.

I decided I would sit next to Vaughan, thinking that

way at least I might control how much he spoke. Though the previous week had been so disciplined, this discussion collapsed within moments. The first question took us far from the text onto the issue of why whites enslaved blacks. All the issues with enslavement and abuse came up and the group could hardly sustain any exchange at all. Within minutes I sensed that we were near an abyss. The few whites in the room tried to speak but were not even listened to seriously. Some got up and left the circle, angry at what was happening. However, most eventually returned and sat down again since there was no place else for them to go. Even the blacks began to attack one another. And all the alliances that had developed broke down. I felt I had no idea where we were going, no idea whether the group could hold together for the hour or whether I would have to break it off if they allowed me. At that moment I was certain that the effort and the accomplishment of a year was really an illusion. The session seemed endless as person after person spoke. The area became electric when Arthur "Shaka" Wiggins said that in 1975 he was born a slave in Baltimore and his life would be devoted to becoming free. I remained silent, unable to speak after my one contribution was ignored.

After an hour, Vaughn suddenly broke it off, saying we had to move on. I was relieved that we had all survived this experience, and was ready to pack up and depart feeling that I had failed in this entire effort. But before I could close out the session, in a very steady voice Vaughn asked each person to reflect on the activities of the previous hour—what were the strong and weak points, was it a discussion, was it a success or a disaster, and how could it have been improved? I was startled both at what Vaughn had attempted at this stage and also at how the men responded.

They were very circumspect and considerate in their comments. Both the whites and blacks spoke calmly about what had transpired—what they felt and why they thought they were not allowed to speak—even discussing why some men had left the circle. I didn't expect, at the end of that previous hour, that we could ever reconstruct the discipline they revealed the previous week. But after the discussion everything changed. They began to reflect on other aspects of the issue as if they were no longer expected to defend their people.

After about fifteen minutes during which they considered how Vaughn had conducted the session, someone abruptly broadened the issue. Stuttering, Lee asked whether anyone had ever tried to enslave someone in the prison, or even whether that had happened during the discussion. There was a long silence and I could see many moving nervously in their chairs. Finally Thomas acknowledged both. And within moments, as if finally given the freedom to speak openly, all entered the discussion as if they were no longer just the victims but also the perpetrators. They began to describe the complexity of their emotions as slave owners. They recounted how when they first enslaved someone on the tiers they felt a power and sense of victory. They no longer felt imprisoned but human again. But then they began to feel the enslaved person to be a burden. Instead, only the free prisoners interested them. Their slaves were servile, willing to say or do anything they felt would ease their lot. These men here, all of whom were acknowledging themselves as slavers, wanted respect. They said they didn't want it from their slaves but from others—from one another. All felt that the moment they enslaved someone his respect was worthless and their own self-respect diminished. And others would

not respect them for such pointless conquests. After their first moment of euphoria, they said they felt debased and less human. And they began acting that way. It was again in reflecting on themselves and their discussion that the text Vaughn had chosen was finally explored.

As I drove back to Annapolis that evening, I finally had an occasion to reflect on what I had just lived through. In the prison I had heard the genuine reality of a critical section of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*—the section on Lordship and Bondage. However, unlike Hegel's illusive and obscure abstractions these men felt in their flesh and in their lives the very failures chronicled in that pilgrimage. They too, as Hegel pointed out about all of us, felt the deep and fundamental urge to be recognized as human, as beings who were different from the rats and insects that populated their world. And they struggled to do that even in their most heinous acts. These men, enslaved by their past and their world, used others to attempt to break free, to display their humanity in an act of conquest, of being willing to die to assert themselves as lords over a cell block or over a part of the yard. And in the moment of success, of attaining complete control over a space and its inhabitants, they acknowledged feeling their sense of themselves slipping away into the emptiness. In addition, the very men whose submission and recognition was meant to guarantee their own mastery and control showed to them the futility of that recognition. By succumbing to these conquerors, those men showed they couldn't appreciate what the victor truly was and therefore couldn't offer him their acknowledgement and recognition. They—these victors—began to recognize themselves as slaves even in their moment of conquest. In Hegel's story of the progress of human awareness to its complete self-awareness, the master who conquers is a dead end. The story continues

through the trials and struggles of the slave. And it is self-discipline that shows the way to Hegel's all too joyous conclusion at the end of what he called the path of despair.

And here too was despair, here in these yards and the echoing corridors, and yet these men showed a self-discipline I didn't expect. They had gone further than I had imagined or could go myself. They no longer needed a text to mediate to themselves. For that brief period they spoke of their own pain and anger and humiliation and then in a remarkable display of self-awareness commented on their own strengths and weaknesses. Though the road here was not directed toward Hegel's rosy culmination of history nonetheless the step through this discipline once again revealed the route to oneself. As one of the men said—the one who declared he was born a slave in Baltimore in 1975—it was in these discussions that for the first time he found his voice. The men had achieved more than anyone could give them, something which the act of bestowal would itself destroy. These men had to find their own voices—they had to surrender the idioms of their age and class and race and gender and for the first time risk hearing themselves. They had to break free together from the prison Eddie pointed out that they and I and all others inhabited. These prisoners thanked the discussions for making that possible. Perhaps that was correct, but they made the discussions. The discussions weren't there waiting for them. And in this moment I realized what it meant for me to surrender control. The utmost that I could do was merely to set the stage for acts of courage I could admire but which it might never be my privilege to display. I left the prison realizing that for a brief moment I had seen in men confined to cells for their lives an example of mutual respect and recognition, of freedom, that the rest of us rarely achieve.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

Herbsttag

Herr: es ist Zeit. Der Sommer war sehr groß.
Leg deinen Schatten auf die Sonnenuhren,
und auf den Fluren laß die Winde los.

Befiehl den letzten Früchten voll zu sein;
gieb ihnen noch zwei südlichere Tage,
dränge sie zur Vollendung hin und jage
die letzte Süße in den schweren Wein.

Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr.
Wer jetzt allein ist, wird es lange bleiben,
wird wachen, lesen, lange Briefe schreiben
und wird in den Alleen hin und her
unruhig wandern, wenn die Blätter treiben.

Autumn Day

Lord: it is time. The great summer is done.
Cast your shadow upon the sundial
And across the earth's floor, let the wind loose.

Command the last fruits to swell with ripeness
Give them just two more days of warm southern wind,
Urge them to their fulfillment and chase
The last drops of sweetness into the heavy wine.

Now, he who has no house, will not build one.
Now, he who is alone, will remain so,
Will wake, read, and write long letters
And will wander back and forth down the avenues
Restlessly, as the leaves float to the ground.

—Translated by Elsabe Dixon

KAT RIOS

Dwellings

I

The dunes rose high out of a sleeping giant that day.
The arching breath of the dreaming monster lulled and sent
Cold shivers rippling over silver specks at play
With the brilliant glint of summer light that skipped and bent

Buried in myriad years of debris we would find
Simple, beautiful containers; old abandoned homes
That could rest in the palm of a soft, small hand; remind
Us of skipping staunch waves amidst salty spray, sea foam.

We'd gather and keep a collection ever growing
To turn over from time to time in imitation;
And intimate to our drum soft wind's azure lowing,
Invisible, clearing skies for sun's salutation.

II

Most days wanted.
Always brought out
For turns,
Or simply gazed at.

Always in the end
Neatly arranged,
Put back
On the shelf again.

Neatly minding
One's own business. To tack
Or not tack; that is

One perfect question.
Over...over,
Shale stone,
Leafy and rolled smooth

Over shores. Spit,
As if waking
From such
A wonderful deep,

As tides with strange fish
Tug at hours
Compiled
Of swift sentiment.

Tug, salt memories!
Most grains time drags
—Soft sand—
Never meet again.

MAX SOCOL

Minnesota Avenue

The worm that trundles hardly stops
For you, young-and-pregnant. It hunts
Warmer, wide and deep, oceanic;
And the breath it breathes and the slop it slops
On you, marble-eyed three-term panic,
Is nothing to the howl spent

On the afternoon. Hear it barely, belly,
Don't run your hands down to your hips.
You shake on a seat, I sway and I stand—
And the worm is a cast off relic
That howls into the vat like a half-formed candle,
In hardened hands that dip and dip.

What or who will entice you out?
And where will he do it? How studied and empty
The turn your shoulders take. No pity
For the barnacles of buildings that harden without, that
Grow arthritic and painful to the beating city.
Your shoulders say: I am ready.

Wheezing like a virus the worm charges on.
I cannot wait for the day I won't wait
For the car parks and dried-up gas stations, the sordid
Trash that builds and falls beyond
The windows, the burned-out, acrid
Flesh even a worm can escape.

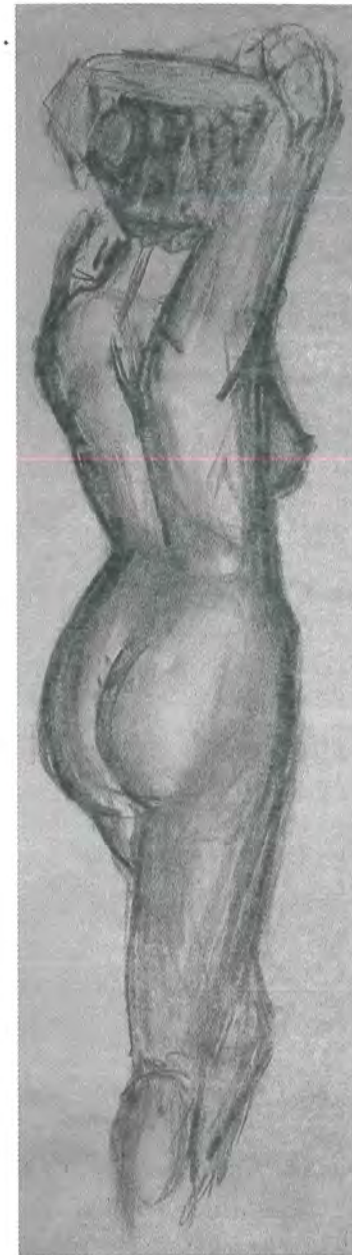
Ignore it for me and I'll ignore it for you,
Sad-sacks that we are. But credit us, even we're

Not getting out at Minnesota Avenue,
As empty and weird as the moon.
But the worm swallows deeper—and broader too,
And keeps to the ground its electric ear.

Incorrect Sonnet

The fullness of night beguiles me, rich
As expensive chocolate, unsteady as leaves.
I shutter in my bed. I toss and audit,
I wrinkle up like a dried fruit—with effort—
No one knows if I sleep or not
Because I sleep like a tree.

Displace me years hence, onward and wideward,
Whirling in and down while the world winds out.
I know that one day I will hide from day,
I know that I will sleep away the sun and
Scurry like a beetle under my furniture.
My room will have three doors, and
All will be for the nighttime.
Darling, I almost forgot: be with me for the nighttime.



Nude No. 5 / Allison Hauspurg

M. L. SHEAR

36th St.

There is a home,
A Cross from a Grave Yard.

The Dead, they speak
In silent tones.

Sickly flowers return.

Nursing in a home,
A Cross from a Grave Yard.
I see young tend these bold,
Crusting worriers of Night.

Their weight, the tripod gait.

The Sun now setting,
Fires flyfurring airs,
The soft eve,

My heart beat,
A successive pulse,
Rhymes till now.

But the jagged arc of life,
An old woman,
Obese, caned,
Expects the grassy Yard,
So close and beautiful,
Stone and green.



Susan and Anna / Dan Rekshan



Untitled / Justin Lee

Gender, Nature, and Politics in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

Ian Lindquist

Part I: Masculinity and Femininity

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* centers around the inevitable and eternal problem of the relation between men and women. Each character reveals his or her own belief about the role of men and women in the world and in relation to one another. While different conceptions of these roles are found throughout the *Tales*, the relation between the feminine and the masculine always reflects a distinction between the natural realm and the human political realm. Indeed, the natural and human political realms underlie the roles of femininity and masculinity. Not only does the conflict between women and men reflect that of nature and politics, but the former is simply a more particular manifestation of the latter. What kind of molding-together must be undergone by men and women for them to live in a harmonious society together? Do both sides have to give something up for this balance to work, or do they offer certain assets to each other that are beneficial for both? Likewise, what is natural for humanity? What kind of balance of nature and politics does humanity need in order to live in the world and what are the roles of each in relation to each other? Finally, if this balance is possible, what allows humanity to find it?

In *The Knight's Tale*, we are told that Duke Theseus:

Conquered al the regne of Femenye,
That whilom was ycleped Scithia,

And weddede the queen Ypolita,
And broghte hire hoom with hym in his contree
With muchel glorie and greet solempnytee.
(866-870)¹

By calling the country of the Amazons "Femenye" and only secondly calling it by its proper political name Scithia, the knight constructs a symbol that will be important throughout the *Tales*. Theseus conquers womanhood (Femenye) living on its own and therefore in its purest form. The knight places the story in a mythological time with mythological characters, something which is done to reveal the nature of humanity. Myth, and especially myth about the founder of ancient Athens, grapples with the issue of humanity coming to terms with the natural realm. It is no surprise that the knight casts Theseus as his main character, as Theseus unified the Attic region of Greece into what became Athens by slaying and conquering the great thieves and monsters of his time.² Political stability only came about because Theseus could see order and was able to destroy all the chaos, represented by thieves and monsters, standing in its way. The conquest of the Amazons is included among these feats. Simply by using this character, the knight reveals to his audience that the tale takes place in a time when the human political realm was first coming into existence out of the chaos of the natural realm. By contrasting men and women in his account of Theseus' conquering, he shows that the two parties, the feminine and the masculine, have always been in conflict by nature. It is not until the human political realm is

¹All citations from the *Tales* are according to Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, eds. A.C. Cawley and Malcolm Andrew (Great Britain: Clays Ltd, St Ives plc, 2004).

²Plutarch, *Lives: Theseus*

formed that the possibility exists for life without conflict between the two parties.

The miller "pays back" (3127 "quite") the tale of the knight in his own tale by creating a major difference between his tale and the knight's: the role of the woman. While Emily is the reason that the action within *The Knight's Tale* occurs, she is never the central actor in the plot. She is akin to an unmoved mover, being both the first and final cause of the knight's story. She forces the story to occur in that she motivates the men to fight for her while also being the ultimate prize of the fighting. However, in between these two places, she is virtually unseen and unheard; in order to win her as a prize, the men steal the stage to battle each other for her. In *The Miller's Tale*, Alison, the eighteen-year-old housewife married to the carpenter, is the character who brings the action. Unlike Emily, she acts in order to get her way: she speaks with each man who desires her, fooling or welcoming them, depending on the man. While the battle for Emily is a very public one in that the men battle each other for her according to the custom of the city, the fight for Alison is private, each man battling Alison herself for the right to her. Rather than using laws to regulate the competition between the men, Alison, as the ultimate prize, determines the laws herself. There is no necessity for the men to interact together and therefore no common code between them either. Accordingly, while Theseus, the ruler of Athens, was the ultimate judge of which man received the right to the woman in *The Knight's Tale*, Alison is the ultimate judge of that same right in *The Miller's Tale*.

Alison is very different from Emily: she has a "lecherous eye," (3244 "likorous ye") something we could never imagine the angelic Emily having. Alison also has an affair with the clerk, something obviously unexpected for a wife.

Emily, on the other hand, never does anything so unexpected; after her country is conquered, she willingly lives in Athens, as far as the knight tells us. Despite Emily not being married, there is no indication given which would make us think that she would act like Alison if she were married. Alison's disregard for custom seems to arise out of her marriage to the carpenter. While Emily is not married and does not attempt to defy the men in Athens, Alison is married, defies her husband and makes other men chase her for her love. Alison's insistence on making men chase her is the opposite of Theseus' conquering of femininity in *The Knight's Tale*; rather than the masculine forcing the feminine into the city, thereby controlling the way women must live, it is now the feminine who is conquering the masculine and controlling the way in which men live.

However, *The Knight's Tale* also contains the same form of conquering as *The Miller's Tale*. This second form is in addition to the first form, in which the masculine conquers the feminine. While Theseus conquers Scithia, bringing the Amazon women into the political society of Athens, his actions are governed by the wants and cares of women. While this second form of conquering repeatedly appears in *The Knight's Tale*, the knight never acknowledges it as a form of mastery in the same way that Theseus' conquering (the first form) is a form of mastery. Nevertheless, the story is dictated in large part by the feminine controlling the masculine after the masculine has brought the feminine into the human political realm. This is a combination of the first form of conquering, that of the masculine over the feminine, as well as the second form of conquering, that of the feminine over the masculine. Riding home after his war with the Amazons, Theseus comes upon a group of women who tell him that Creon has ran-

sacked and destroyed Thebes, including all the men who lived in the city. The knight, before telling us that Theseus agreed to help the women, describes him:

Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,
That whilom weren of so greet estaat;
And in his armes he hem alle up hente,
And hem conforteth in ful good entente.
(954-958)

His compassion for the women is odd, considering that he was just described as "conquering" the entire gender. Yet Theseus' compassion for women may help us to understand more fully his desire to conquer them.

By calling Scithia "Femenye," the knight has made Theseus' conquering a universal situation in which femininity is bound to be conquered by masculinity. From what we know of the war through *The Knight's Tale*, it appears to have been extremely brutal. The only survivors we hear of are Hippolita and Emily. The Amazons and, through the knight's symbolism, women, need protection from destruction such as this. Rather than locking Hippolita and Emily away in the tower as he does with Palamon and Arcite, Theseus takes Hippolita as his wife and lets Emily live in peace as long as she is in Athens. This is not a conquering for his political gain, but rather a conquering out of desire. Theseus' desire for women is thus manifested in his conquering them. His desire is for Hippolita, or for women generally. Theseus' decisions to go to war are motivated by different passions for women. In his war with the Amazons, Theseus is motivated by his erotic passion for women, while in his Theban campaign he acts

out of compassion for the women whose husbands have been brutally murdered.

Even in *The Knight's Tale*, men are able to conquer women by forcibly bringing them into the political realm, yet must be conquered by women in that they desire them and therefore often act according to their wishes and concerns. The two forms of conquering are once again intimately related. Because Theseus would not have conquered women if he had not already been conquered by his own desire for them, neither form of conquering would be present without the other. Both men and women need to be conquered according to these two different forms for there to be any relations between the two genders. By not providing any reason for Theseus' conquering of "Femenye" and later showing how Theseus is conquered by his desire for women, the knight constructs a tale where the mere existence of women means that men will desire them. In *The Knight's Tale* and *The Miller's Tale*, the second form, that of the feminine over the masculine, is both temporally and logically prior to the first form, that of the masculine over the feminine. Since the second form of conquering—that of desire—leads directly to the first form—that of bringing the feminine into the human political realm—it is inevitable that both these forms of conquering will occur.

But where is the problem the miller so vehemently wants to "pay back"? While Theseus is clearly conquered by women (or, Hippolita) in *The Knight's Tale*, his relationship with Hippolita ultimately works well. If it were not for Hippolita's break-down due to "verray wommanhede" (1748) during Theseus' encounter with Palamon and Arcite in the grove, both of the Theban knights would have been slain by Theseus on the spot and Emily would

never be wedded to either of them. Each time Hippolita says or does something, it is a correction of something that Theseus has done; Theseus is quick to jump at the opportunity to follow what she wants. The knight's portrayal of him is as a man who has willingly submitted to Hippolita's mastery. Theseus has only mastered Hippolita in order to become mastered by her because of his desire. Hippolita, in turn, accepts Theseus' submission to her without rebelling against him.

Alison does not accept the submission of John the carpenter, her husband and an unfortunate cuckold of a man. Her marriage vows mean absolutely nothing to her. Despite being forced into this binding marriage in the same way that Hippolita was forced into the city, she still rebels and is unable to be truly conquered. The only difference in the two relationships—between Hippolita and Theseus on the one hand and Alison and John the carpenter on the other—is that Hippolita accepts Theseus' submissiveness to her while Alison rejects John's submissiveness. By refusing to take notice of it, Alison refuses to acknowledge her marriage, which is the product of John's desire for her. She is conquered insofar as she is legally and politically involved in a marriage with John—the first form—but is not conquered in a more personal and meaningful way; she is only bound by human law and the rules of the political realm. The miller is simply disagreeing with the knight in regard to whether women will be conquered in the paradigm of the second form. But what is the second form in this context? How does it differ both from the way we have been speaking about the second form already and from the first form?

In the *Knight's* and *Miller's* tales, we see that the only way for a man to be in a successful relationship with

a woman is for him to be submissive to her. Submissiveness can only happen *after* the first form of conquering, whereas the masculine being conquered by desire—or, the second form—must take place, both temporally and logically, *before* the first form. However, being conquered by desire is submissiveness as well, since actions of men (Theseus and John the carpenter) are determined by their desire for women both before and after the feminine is brought into the human political realm (or, in Alison's case, into a legally binding marriage). The first form of conquering—bringing a woman into political society despite her wish to be outside of it—does not give the woman a choice. The second form—submissiveness to the woman by the man—gives the woman a choice of whether or not to accept the man's submissiveness, as Alison does not accept that of Absalon or John. While the first form of conquering makes compatibility of men and women possible, only the second form, the submissiveness and acknowledgement of it, actualizes this compatibility. Why must there be a choice for women in the second form of conquering if there is none for them in the first?

The wife of Bath, in explicating what women desire, deals with this question directly. After returning home, the knight of the tale tells the queen "Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee / As wel over hir housbond as hir love, / And for to been in maistrie hym above" (1038–1040). Having agreed to marry the woman who taught him this answer, the knight now puts up a huge fight; ultimately, the woman gives him a choice:

"Chese now," quod she, "oon of thise thynges tweye:
To han me foul and old til that I deye
And be to yow a trewe, humble wyf,

And nevere yow displese in al my lyf;
Or elles ye wol han me yong and fair,
And take youre aventure of the repair
That shal be to youre hous by cause of me,
Or in som other place, may wel be."

(1219–1227)

The knight, after pondering for some time, tells her:

My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,
I put me in youre wyse governance;
Cheseth youreself which may be moost plesance
And moost honour to yow and me also.
I do no fors the wheither of the two;
For as yow liketh, it suffiseth me.

(1230–1235)

After confirming that she has gained mastery over him, the woman turns into a beautiful, young and faithful bride.

While the knight and the woman would have been married even if the knight had picked one of the two options laid out for him, it would not have been a complete relationship. According to *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, marriage guarantees that one out of two of the necessary qualities given by the woman is already present, though two out of two is not guaranteed. While the woman's beauty clearly refers to her body, she will only be faithful to the knight if he has been able to make her love him with her soul. However, without both of these present in their relationship, it will never be complete. If the woman only gives her body, the relationship will exist only insofar as two people are politically or contractually together (like Alison in *The Miller's Tale*); this is the first form of con-

quering. The knight, knowing that having mastery over the woman will never yield a complete relationship between the two, gives the decision back to her; this is the second form of conquering, where the masculine submits to the feminine.

It is at this point that the woman becomes beautiful. But is it the woman who is making herself beautiful, or the knight who has made her beautiful by giving her back the decision? Rather than choosing either the woman or the knight as the person controlling the action, it must be acknowledged that the woman's transformation, which changes their relationship from a battle over mastery to love, is the direct result of the knight's submission. The love between them can only be unlocked through submission, which is the opposite of mastery. Love, as opposed to marriage or political and contractual bondage, is contingent upon a surrendering of mastery, not a fight over who possesses it. While the knight submits to the woman by giving her back the decision, the woman submits to the knight by making herself both beautiful and faithful to him. It is only at the point that both the man and the woman submit to each other that a relationship between two lovers can begin. This is the problem encountered in *The Miller's Tale*; Alison never submitted herself to John after his submission to her. Without this mutual submission, love does not exist. Marriage does not have any bearing on this submission.

While in the first form of conquering the man conquered the woman before he submitted to her, in the second form the man submits to her, or is conquered by her, before she submits to him. Similarly, the first form of conquering is wholly about the body. The man can always conquer the woman's body, but it is the woman's choice

whether or not to give the man her soul. This second form of conquering is that choice. Without submitting to the feminine, the masculine guarantees humiliation for himself like that of John the carpenter in *The Miller's Tale*.

The first form of conquering is something which makes this submission of the masculine and the feminine to each other possible insofar as it simply brings the two together in the political realm. However, the second form of conquering produces a good relationship between the two. The mutual submission produces an equilibrium in the second type of conquering that cannot be found in the first. Still, both types are necessary for any equilibrium between the sexes to be reached at all, for without the two living in political society together, no chance of equilibrium being reached would even exist.

Part II: Nature and Politics

The conflict of masculine and feminine, found in the pilgrims' stories throughout the *Tales*, holds still greater significance. Chaucer illustrates this by placing the pilgrims' stories in the context of a greater story: the pilgrimage itself. Each tale told by the pilgrims reflects some truth about the person who tells it. While the pilgrims tell tales of the conflict between masculine and feminine, it seems that Chaucer is pointing to an underlying conflict of which the pilgrims as characters are not entirely aware. The pilgrims, unable to change the foremost identity of their characters as men and women (something naturally given each human), simply change the way the two sexes interact and clash, presumably based upon their own experiences. Keeping their identity as men and women, the characters hold certain characteristics which are constant

for each sex throughout the entire body of the *Tales*. As we read further into the work, we see that these characteristics show more than simply the forms of the masculine and the feminine.

In *The Knight's Tale*, Emily prays to Diana before the great battle between Palamon and Arcite. The knight describes the statue of Diana that stands in her temple:

This goddesse on an hert ful hye seet,
With smale houndes al aboute hir feet;
And underneth hir feet she hadde a moone,—
Wexynge it was, and sholde wanye soone.
In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,
With bowe in honde, and arwes in a cas.
(2075–2080)

As a perpetual huntress, Diana is invariably tied to nature. She can never escape the natural cycle of things, as evidenced by the moon underneath her feet. Her chastity makes her forever separate from the masculine, just as the Amazons were before Theseus conquered them. As a representation of the pure feminine, she is not simply a part of nature because she is existing in the world, but rather her being is somehow rooted in nature, so that she could never totally separate herself, even if she is assimilated into political society. The natural thing for the feminine seems to be to exist as nature does.

The most striking characteristic of Diana is how many personalities she has. On the one hand, she is a protector of chastity and virgins, a noble office for a goddess. On the other, she is a vengeful, dark deity, taking the form of Hecate in the underworld. In the knight's description, the moon under her feet shows that she is a goddess of both

dark and light. She accompanies the moon both in its waxing phase and its waning phase, its lightening and darkening. This characteristic can be said to apply to nature itself. While nature makes human life possible, it never actively attempts to determine human life. Though a human may see nature as active insofar as it affects a human in an active way such as a hurricane or tornado, nature itself is never active in seeking out that specific human. Natural disasters occur regardless of whether human beings are affected by them. Nature is unresponsive to human wishes and claims; it is unforgiving and impartial to humanity.

Diana's temple has images on the wall that, though rooted in nature in the same way as the goddess, are unnatural for humans. The knight describes these images, painted on the wall of the temple:

Ther saugh I Attheon an hert ymaked,
For vengeaunce that he saugh Diane al naked;
I saugh how that his houndes have hym caught
And freeten him, for that they knewe hym naught.
(2065–2068)

While Diana turns Actaeon into something that is closer to nature than a human, this is not necessarily natural for a human. After being turned into a deer, Actaeon is murdered by his own dogs because of their inability to recognize him. Unlike a human, a deer is a part of nature in the same way as Diana. It partakes of the unresponsiveness and impartiality which is nature. His hounds were subject to his control while he was a human, yet Actaeon loses this power of control now that he has become a part of the natural realm. Completely being a part of nature is not natural for humans, although, judging from Diana's repre-

sensation of womanhood, humanity must always be partially involved in this natural realm. What separates humanity from nature?

The Knight's Tale reveals, along with the role of nature in defining womanhood, the role of politics in determining what humanity is. Theseus, after conquering Femenye, brings Hippolita back to his city, always a representation of the human political realm:

And weddede the queen Ypolita,
And broghte hire hoom with him in his contree
With muchel glorie and greet solempnitee,
And eek hire yonge suster Emelye.

(868-871)

Theseus' capture of Hippolita alone is full of political allusion: marriage, the idea of a country as opposed to simply a land where one abides, and "solempnitee" (meaning ceremony) are each political qualities in that they are constructed to communicate to other humans something that has occurred. What need is there for marriage or ceremony or borders of a country in nature, where the hunt, something prior to the political realm in immediate importance to human life, is always taking place? Watershed periods such as the one celebrated by Theseus and Athens here only occur in the human political realm. Nature is unresponsive to these political things, these changes that seem so drastic to humans. The idea of conquering itself is a political thing. No conquering ever truly takes place in nature; rather, in the future, small misbalances will eventually be made even again. Each conquering or misbalance is swallowed up by the unresponsive and impartial perpetual existence of nature.

At the end of *The Knight's Tale*, Theseus, after a long and eloquent speech, announces that Palamon will marry Emily. Theseus' decision only comes about because the marriage would result in an alliance between Athens and Thebes, which would be advantageous for all involved. While this decision initially seems like a fitting ending in that it provides a way to tie up loose ends—among them Emily's status as unmarried—it is one of the main things that the miller attempts to "pay back." Stopping the tale at the marriage of the two does not take into account the difficulty of the second form of conquering, wherein the masculine submits to the feminine and the feminine is thus given the choice of whether or not to submit to the masculine. Theseus assumes that women can be politically conquered by bringing them into the city. This is an assumption that nature can be conquered by human politics. He does not take into account that the city exists within the natural realm and is therefore determined by nature. Despite the fact that nature will never actively seek out the political realm, the political realm still has to face natural problems, such as an earthquake, and also respond to natural opportunities. This is reflected in Theseus' conquering of the Amazons, only to unconsciously submit himself to the will of Hippolita. Politics conquers nature and yet must submit itself to the superiority of nature. While Diana's chastity and punishing of Actaeon is too rooted in nature to identify her with humanity, Theseus' attempt to overcome nature is too bent towards the use of the political realm. Humanity must end up somewhere in between these two pure things. In the same way that the conflict and balance of power between the masculine and feminine form a complete relationship, the conflict between and ultimate resolution of nature and politics forms

the natural existence of humanity as a whole.

But how does politics conquer nature (as has been claimed) while also being in its service? Aristotle gives us one way of addressing this problem. In *On the Soul*, he lays out four qualities of the soul in his definition of a living being, all of which are spoken of as having potentiality. The number of these potentialities that a living thing actualizes determines the group it belongs to as a living thing.³ Rather than be in conflict with these potentialities, the political realm helps humans to actualize these potentialities by eliminating the necessity for each person to hunt, cook and care for himself. Humans, thanks to the potentialities given them by nature, can partake in the higher things rather than exist in the natural realm. While the person living in nature lives for the sake of survival, the person living in the city lives for the sake of living well.⁴

Politics is the actualization of nature's potentiality. Thus, politics must conquer nature in order to make these potentialities its own and actualize them, while at the same time only doing this for the sake of the natural potentialities themselves. This is the most important defining characteristic of humanity. While the potentiality and actuality of other living beings is determined completely by nature, humans, by using the city as a place of education where these actualizations already exist, are able to actualize these potentialities themselves. Another living being can never separate itself from nature but humans are able to do this, and it is what makes them unique. Still, the use of the city for the actualization of these potentialities is not completely removed from nature since the city exists within the natural realm and so any actualization must exist in it

³Aristotle, *On the Soul*, Book II, chapter 2, 413a20-30.

⁴Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, chapter 2, 1252b25-30.

as well. After the city conquers the natural potentialities by actualizing them, it ultimately submits to nature because it is still a part of the natural realm. The city is never an entity unto itself (and thus never something which can be absolutely juxtaposed with the natural realm), but rather the thing peculiar to humans that allows them to exist in the natural realm in the best way possible.

Part III: Transcending the Conflicts

In an attempt to understand the two forms of conquering, the knight, miller and wife of Bath separate them by making them two different actions. The franklin does not separate them. He says:

Ther was a knyght that loved and dide his payne
To serve a lady in his beste wise;
And many a labour, many a greet emprise
He for his lady wroghte, er she were wonne.
(730-733)

The knight's submission convinces the lady to marry him. This combines both forms of conquering into one action. The knight, by submitting, is conquered according to the second form—that of the feminine over the masculine—insofar as he desires the lady, while the lady, by marrying the knight, is conquered according to the first form—that of the masculine over the feminine because she is brought into a marriage with him. In the franklin's account, both forms of conquering are a result of the knight's submissiveness to the feminine. The occurrence of both forms of conquering is necessary for the emergence of love between a man and a woman. Indeed, Dorigene tells Arveragus that it is because of his "gentillesse" (754) that she married him

and that she will be a "trewe wyf" (758). This agreement to marry him comes directly out of the knight's submissiveness. How is this situation unique from the other relationships between masculine and feminine in the *Tales*?

Whereas the woman is drawn into marriage before love exists in the knight's, miller's, and wife of Bath's tales, Arveragus and Dorigene's marriage is a direct result of their love. This is the only time in the four tales that marriage and love coincide. Arveragus' knowledge that mastery does not produce love is the reason that this occurs. He combines the submissiveness *before* the woman has been brought into the political realm and the submissiveness *after* this has happened by completely giving the decision of whether or not to marry him to Dorigene. The franklin, after telling the other pilgrims this part of the story, says:

Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrye.
When maistrie comth, the God of Love anon
Beteth hise wynges, and farewel, he is gon!
Love is a thyng as any spirit free.

(764-767)

The franklin recognizes, as his main character Arveragus does, that mastery does not make love free, but rather strangles and kills it.

After Arveragus has come home from war and the suitor Aurelius has revealed that he now has the right to Dorigene because of a promise she made to him "in pley," Arveragus, adamant that Dorigene keep her "trouthe," proclaims:

Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay!

For God so wisly have mercy upon me,
I hadde wel levere ystiked for to be,
For verray love which that I to yow have,
But if ye sholde youre trouthe kepe and save.
Trouthe is the hyeste thing that man may kepe.

(1474-1479)

Arveragus is willing to sacrifice his marriage with Dorigene for the sake of "trouthe." This type of "pledge" or "word" clearly has more than simply a contractual meaning; as the highest thing that man may keep, it is set apart from other virtues as that which describes someone who has the greatest and noblest integrity. Arveragus, by sacrificing himself and hiding this sacrifice from the public, ensures the maintenance of Dorigene's integrity. He would rather lose her than see the destruction of her integrity.

Dorigene's challenge to Aurelius was made "in pley." Clearly, she does not understand the gravity of integrity and "trouthe," else she would not "pley" with it. These virtues all exist within the political realm, where men are free from the activities of beasts such as hunting, killing, reproduction and finding shelter. "Trouthe" holds men accountable by provoking and maintaining virtuous actions. Dorigene's misunderstanding of the seriousness of this accountability puts her in a position where she faces the shaming of her higher virtues. Because she brought this shaming upon herself, it is incredible that Arveragus remains submissive to her. In doing so, he holds Dorigene accountable by convincing her that keeping her "trouthe" is the best course of action. Arveragus, whose only involvement in the situation is his marriage to Dorigene, does not necessarily have to take part in the resolution of her dilemma. However, "trouthe" once again shows how it

holds men accountable. Because of his love for and marriage to Dorigene, Arveragus does not disappear from the situation, but rather willingly relinquishes his own desires in order for Dorigene to have the ability to keep her own "trouthe." It was Arveragus' "gentillesse," not his ability to forcibly conquer, which convinced Dorigene to marry him; their relationship, founded upon this "gentillesse," holds both individuals accountable for their actions, as they strive to be as virtuous as possible in each other's eyes. The two lovers actualize the greatest integrity in each other in the very act of being forced to split up.

Arveragus' desire for Dorigene leads directly to his quickness to sacrifice his desires for her physical body in order to preserve her spiritual good. However, another submission takes place simultaneously: Arveragus and Dorigene together to Aurelius, the man claiming the right to Dorigene as his wife. This submission is only possible because of Arveragus and Dorigene holding each other accountable according to the same idea: "trouthe." Because they experience the same accountability, they go through the same experience together of being forced to split up. Whereas the adversaries of the previous tales have all been either other men who desire the same woman—as in *The Knight's Tale*—or the woman herself before marriage—in the miller's and wife of Bath's tales—*The Franklin's Tale* presents an adversary who attempts to break up the marriage which has already been created by transcending the problems brought about by mastery in the three previous tales. Because their marriage is already established by the time Aurelius deceives Dorigene into promising herself to him, he does not have a right to her as does Arveragus; this right is not just contractual or physical because of the marriage, but also spiritual, as Dorigene has *chosen* to

give herself to Arveragus. Aurelius tricks Dorigene and is seemingly rewarded for it when Arveragus and Dorigene jointly submit to his claim that he has the right to her.

Why is this submission not a reward for Aurelius? After all, he has shown himself to be very clever in making the rocks appear as if they have disappeared; by doing this, he has mastered the opportunity handed to him by Dorigene when she told him that she would be his if he could make this so. This physical appearance attained through mastery is directly contrasted with the spiritual gravity and moral steadfastness held by Arveragus and Dorigene in their submission. Whereas Aurelius masters physical things, or those things that will always be inconstant and changing, Arveragus and Dorigene, because of their belief that spiritual things, or those things that are eternal, are the greatest things, submit themselves to "trouthe." By doing this, their relationship is made eternal since they will both forever be partaking in "trouthe," an eternal virtue. Aurelius, on the other hand, might enjoy Dorigene's body for a time, but she will eventually grow old and all that will remain will be her soul, which will still have the spiritual goodness she attained by keeping her "trouthe." Unfortunately for Aurelius, he is not concerned with this part of her. By the end of the tale, however, he does realize that his notions of possession of another human being by mastery and not love are ridiculous when he gives Dorigene back to Arveragus because of Arveragus' "grete gentillesse" (1527).

The problems presented by mastery were transcended by giving Dorigene the choice of whether or not to marry Arveragus without forcing her into the political realm, or without any need for the first form of conquering. In the same way, the problem of Aurelius is transcended by the

two lovers. In both cases, Arveragus and Dorigene leave the world of becoming to partake of something higher and more spiritual, that is, the eternal virtues to which "trouthe" belongs. They leave the world of appearance, where physical things can be mastered, and are connected on a level where their souls will never be separated, since they are together in the keeping of "trouthe." Connected in this, unlike in the other tales, the two lovers *together* face the notion of the political realm itself. Because Arveragus and Dorigene submit to the virtues accepted in political society, they too are accepted; however, they do not submit to these virtues because the virtues themselves are political, but rather because they are absolute in that neither the goodness of the virtues nor the virtues themselves will ever change. By partaking in these eternal virtues, the love of Arveragus and Dorigene is eternal as well and therefore fundamentally distinct from the political realm.

The transcending of the political realm starts with the founding of the relationship between Arveragus and Dorigene. In initially submitting to Dorigene, Arveragus takes mastery—the first form of conquering, the form according to which Theseus acted when he conquered femininity—away from their relationship, replacing it with "gentillesse." In doing so, he transcends any problem of mastery. In the other three tales, the second form of conquering—that in which the soul is given to another person—is a necessary step *after* the first form; it corrects the first form. Arveragus is able to act according to the second form directly, without correcting the first form of conquering. Furthermore, the relationship between Arveragus and Dorigene does not depend directly on the political realm. In the same manner in which the first form of conquering was removed, the role of the political conquering of nature

is removed as well. Though potentialities for higher virtues such as "trouthe" are actualized in *The Franklin's Tale*, this actualization is a result of the direct relationship between the higher virtue and the individual without the mediation of the city as there was in *The Knight's Tale*.

The Franklin's Tale is the culmination of the conversation concerning nature and politics and femininity and masculinity in the *Canterbury Tales*. While the knight was too bent on conquering natural differences with politics, the miller, influenced by his own experience, was too quick in thinking that politics could never affect nature in any capacity. The wife of Bath gave too much credit to the forced marriage, believing that submission could only come out of a surrendering of mastery on the part of both the masculine and the feminine. While these three all start with mastery and end in congruence (except for *The Miller's Tale*, which simply rejects the possibility of congruence between the masculine and the feminine), the franklin is the only one to start with submission, showing how this transcends the problems that mastery presents. Whereas the other three were held back by the problems of mastery and therefore the political realm, the franklin, through submission, allows us to glimpse the truly wonderful relationship humans may have with higher things.

WILLIS McCUMBER

The Gamekeeper's Son

Rain fell across the field he had left an hour ago,
fell like scattered seeds,
was surveyed from the birches by a solitary crow,
that perched above the weeds—

But he was walking under hemlock-branches now, his body
bright like a deer's,
the rain-swelled stream, dark; the lichens, tattered, richly shoddy,
spreading in ancient fans.

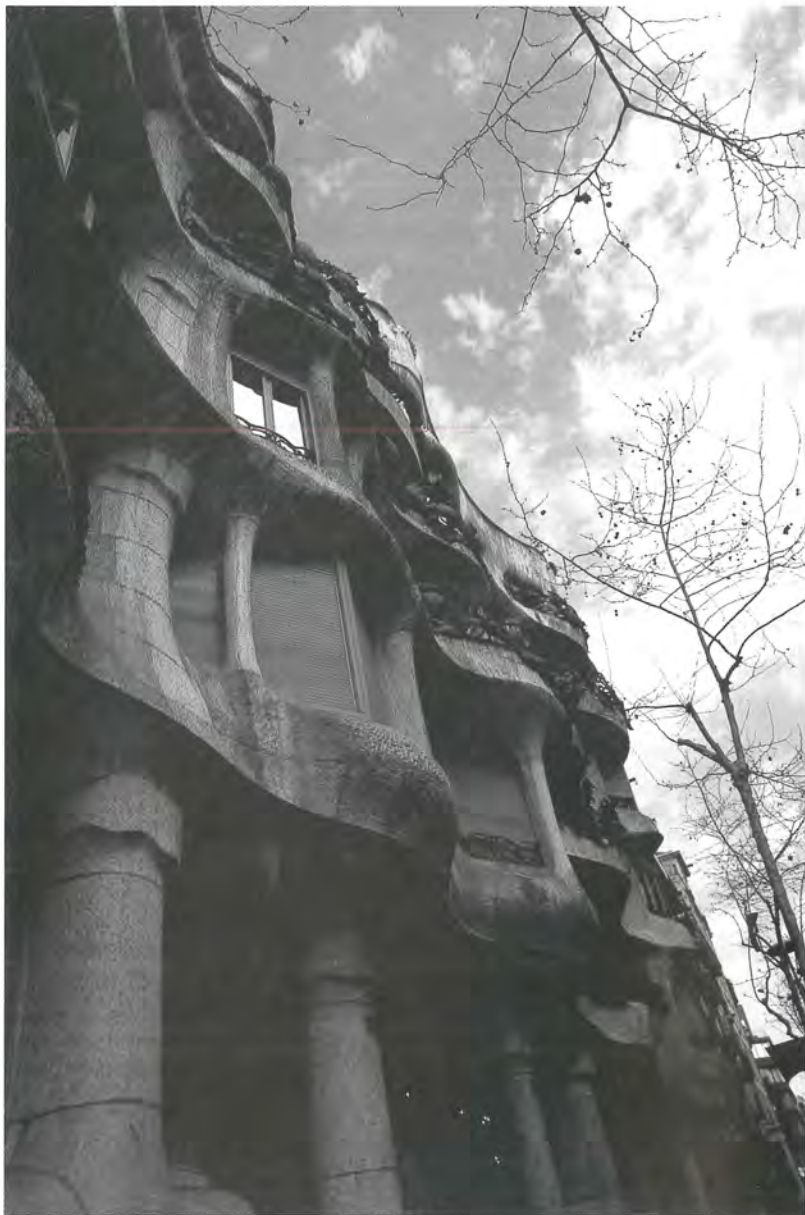
He brought his father's gun,
But the dark breath of rain
had hidden in the woods its warmer life,
had darkened the woods
that held the wild pheasants
whose snarled trails he followed
until they vanished
where the birds ascended
into the hemlock-thicket overhead.

He thought of game-pheasants roosting in the shed,
he called to mind their bright, strange stares at evening's dusk;
he thought of hounds at dawn, barking, blind,
chasing a deer between the trees by smell.

When the leaves around his feet exploded bombs of blurring wings,
shook his gun and shook the trembling leaves,

stock-still, he stood and gathered in his life,
stared after what foreknows, foresees, and flings
its nearness like a throwing knife.

Rain fell within the hemlock woods, rain ran
between the folded palms of fallen leaves,
rain spread across the bark of aging trees.
He walked again, attended to the rain.
He faintly heard his darting, pausing heart,
now inaudibly behind, now running to the side,
now waiting for his constant coming stride—
a blood-red pheasant
that held its dark green wings across its back,
that blinked the pale yellow iris of its eye.



La Pedrera No. 2 / Allison Hauspurg

ALEXANDRA WALLING

City of Trees

Deep in trees and mountains on a cloudy day
my mind seeps into fog and into rain.
I travel low across decay, I taste
the leaves and littered needles,
I smell the warmth and heaviness
the forest cradles in its gentle birth
and gentler death.

Above the mountains' veil of clouds
wind-stunted pines who've caught the fires of heaven
learn to grow in curves
if they're to grow, not straight and noble
like their sheltered cousins far below.
These twisted sages of the mountains
fight for life and when they die
their bones lie bleached and lonely
on a cold and rocky peak.

But down below all's soft and thick
and redolent with rotting life: the scattered limbs
of those new dead provide a nursery; and nothing
grudges death the intermingling.
I, with my foreign customs, I
must send my thought a pilgrim into mists
and wander on the borders of my mind,
if I'm to hear the woody mountain's rhythm
if I'm to learn philosophy from trees
that think as forests, not as hermits
who preach the wisdom of defiance
to their tormentors, winds.



Untitled / Allison Hauspurg

Stuck in Sheremetyevo

Kirstie Dodd

The autumn Gregory turned twenty-one he decided to drop out of college and go to Russia. He was sick of whittling away existence in cramped-desk academia, forced to listen to lectures in which fat, dull words like “mitochondria” and “cytoplasm” were repeated over and over by his professors. He would often slouch down in his chair during biology class and let the words swirl about his mind like snowflakes above a bleak tundra. After half a semester of dropping grades and interest, he officially dropped out of school. Gregory emptied his bank account, secured a visa, and bought a one-way ticket for Moscow. The next day he called his parents. “I am becoming an expatriate,” he told them, aware of how ridiculous such a pronouncement sounded, though his voice was solid with determination. “I am taking a break from school to become world wise in Russia.” He heard silence on the other end of the line and imagined his mother’s face, her eyes narrowing and her mouth becoming a thin line of disapproval. His father broke the silence. “Do what you have to do, Greg.” In a matter of weeks he was walking up the plane ramp into Sheremetyevo Airport, his hands shoved into the pockets of a new lime-green parka his mother sent him in the mail. She might have disapproved of his trip, but as a final symbolic assertion of motherhood she sent this parka to him with a simple note pinned to the top, “Stay warm.”

Gregory followed the other passengers down a long glass corridor toward a sign that said “Customs.” A young man in a grey vest was standing at the end. He was yelling in fast Russian into a walkie-talkie while simultaneously directing Gregory and other American arrivals

to a holding area on the left. Gregory sat down and took off his neon parka, a bright shot of lime green in a sea of muted tones. It made him feel silly and loud.

After twenty minutes, an attractive Russian woman sat down behind a counter one hundred feet away from him. She had that kind of intangible, Eastern European beauty with wide-set eyes and bone-white skin. She stared through the glass partition right at Gregory, her eyes burning the message "Do not get up. I will not talk to you." They stared at each other for a few seconds, he in his chair and she behind her glass, their own little cold war. He looked away.

The chair he was sitting in was exactly like the ones back at his college—rigid, ninety degree torture devices made to keep students awake during hours of lecture. Morning biology class might have failed to teach him how to use a microscope, but he had learned how to be a good observer. Anyone could ask him where all the pretty girls sat in class and he would know. He was using those same observational skills now: most of the airport employees were young women. Dozens of them stomped past in razor-sharp stilettos and grey suits. In front of him, the woman behind the counter was constantly arranging her platinum-blond hair in a cheap hand mirror. Gregory supplied her internal conversation to keep himself amused: "Foundation? Check. Mascara? Check. Arched eyebrows? Check. Icy demeanor? Double check. Perfect." She was as cold as the air in that purgatory of a holding area. He could tell she had no *glasnost*, openness, for any soul-searching, American college dropout.

After a while, the man with the walkie-talkie came back and talked with her. He told her a joke and she laughed with a foreign-sounding giggle. Gregory could do nothing but stare at them. They talked for a long time,

each intermittently glancing at Gregory as if he were some unimportant sign on a wall. By now he had been waiting for over an hour. Slumped down in his chair, his brown hair was still sticking up on one side from sleeping against the airplane window. He looked pathetic. Either out of pity or protocol the man finally strolled over to where Gregory was sitting.

"I'm sorry for wait, sir. We are needing of passporrrt and veeesa," he said in a loud, professional voice. Gregory, who had begun to doze off, sat upright in his chair. He handed the man all of his documents, reticent to let go of them. In this cold holding cell they were the only proof of existence he had. "Now you go into airrrrport. Check back in one hour for documents." With a curt bow he practically goose-stepped through a side door, wielding his walkie-talkie like a parade baton.

Gregory looked around for the other Americans from the plane but they had all left. He was totally alone. The woman gestured for Gregory to come near. He walked across the marble tiles, hearing his heartbeat as loud as his footsteps. Thinking she was going to yell at him, Gregory was surprised when she got out of her chair and walked over to a side door, opening it to reveal the main airport terminal with all of the duty-free shops selling expensive watches and perfumes. Gregory was about to step through the door when she grabbed his arm. Strangely enough, she was smiling at him. "Welcome to Russia," she belabored, obviously the only English she knew. Gregory laughed to himself; he had never read any travel books about the oddities of the Russian woman. He was going to have to get used to this. "*Spaseeba*," he said, smiling back.

Inside the main terminal, the vaulted, Soviet concrete ceiling was stubbled with brown tubes of different

sizes, ugly and imposing. Above him an enormous brown ticker board was alive with letters fluttering into place, announcing arrivals and departures. On his right was a four or five story wall of windows; beyond the panes snow was swirling dutifully. Heavy steel bars connected each sheet of glass to the next, making them look like the prison bars of this airport *gulag*. A woman with a firm voice announced plane arrivals in different languages over the intercom like she was the prison warden. People were everywhere, walking to their departure gates, speaking in various unknown languages—as anonymous to Gregory as bacteria in a Petri dish swarming about trying to find open space.

Gregory passed through the moving crowd over to the shops. Two Russian men in fur hats rushed towards him talking in the plaintive, deep sounds of their mother tongue. He ducked into a nearby shop to avoid being mowed over by them. The shop was quiet and empty; it felt like the first delicious inhale of breath after being temporarily suffocated.

As Gregory walked around the store, though, he started to wish he had not come in. The saleswoman sitting by the cash register was chewing bubble gum, her suspicious eyes trained on him as he walked down the aisles. All of the souvenirs were strange. There were shirts that said “I work for the KGB” and painted spoons and diapers and Soviet replica hats and chocolates with little sickles and hammers stamped on them. There were painted babushka Russian nesting dolls with American basketball stars painted on the glossy wood. Gregory picked up one of the traditional Russian ones. Its little red mouth looked sinister. Holding it in his hands, he stared at the smile for a long time. He set it down and thought sadly to himself about America teaching the

world to chop up, process, and package just about anything.

He could not buy anything from that store; it was made for *Amerikanski* businessmen who needed kitschy gifts for their wives, not people who actually cared about Russia. He walked out of the shop feeling the hostile eyes of the sales lady on the back of his head. He found a fluorescent-lit restaurant in a small corner on the other end of the terminal and sat down. A waiter came over, bobbing his head to the American rap song that was quietly pulsing over the intercom. The waiter handed him a menu, raising his eyebrows in expectation. Gregory looked over the menu, but it was all in Russian. He decided to make things easy for both of them and simply said “Borsch?” The waiter nodded, bringing back a steaming bowl of red liquid a few minutes later.

As Gregory ate, he noticed the strange mixture of people in the restaurant. Behind where he was sitting, a British couple was arguing. On his left he heard Hindi—a family of five returning to New Delhi. At the bar there was a drunken old man with skin like tanned leather knocking back shots of vodka like it was water. After he downed the last of it, his wild eyes caught onto Gregory with interest. He came stumbling over to where Gregory sat with his borsch, screaming “*Droog? Droog?*” He smelled awful—a mixture of rotting cabbage and cheap alcohol. He held out his gnarled hands as if he were begging for more booze money. Gregory looked around uncomfortably, unsure of what to do. The British man near him broke off his argument with his wife, turned and said, “He just wants to be your friend. That’s what he’s saying in Russian.”

“Droog?” said Gregory. The drunken man thought Gregory was talking to him. He grinned, showing a line

of broken teeth on red gums. With a hiccup he stumbled back over to the bar.

"That's some Russian hospitality for you," laughed the British man, "Are you here in Moscow for long?"

"Uh," said Gregory. He did not want them to know he had dropped out of school. "I'm here for a student exchange program. This is my first time in Moscow."

"Splendid! We're in the oil industry. We try to touch down in Russia a few times every year." He jerked his head at the drunken man, now being led out of the restaurant by security guards. "You think this is bad, just wait until you get into Moscow. You better learn some Russian if you don't want any more trouble from the locals. There are two rules to follow if you want to survive in Russia: wear a warm coat, and for God's sake know Russian." He leaned back in his chair, laughing obnoxiously. He reminded Gregory of a humanities professor he had last term: the same condescending mannerisms and arrogant tone. He talked to the man and his wife for a little longer. Looking down at his watch, he saw it was time to go back to the immigration counter where the walkie-talkie man had his papers. Gregory jumped on his chance to escape these people.

"Well, it's been nice talking to you. Thank you for your advice."

Gregory finished his bowl of soup and left the restaurant, leaving a colorful stack of rubles on the table because he was unsure of how much to tip. When he made it through the crowd back to the immigration desk, he was disappointed to see a different, much older woman sitting behind it.

"Can I help you?" she said in flawless English.

"Yes. I believe you took my papers—"

"Name? Origination? Destination?" She stared up at

him with hard blue eyes, the lids frosted with white eye shadow. One half of her face was discolored and scarred, as though she had once been caught in a bad fire.

"Gregory Privet. I flew in from New York on the red eye. I am staying in a hostel in Moscow." He looked around her desk for his papers but they were not there. "My papers—"

"There is a problem with your papers, Mr. Gregory. We are still waiting for some documentation from the States in order to approve your stay here. It's Moscow protocol."

"What am I supposed to do then?"

"Depending on whether your papers are in order you'll either be in Moscow or on a plane back to New York. For now, though, you need to stay on international soil before you can go anywhere."

"You mean I have to stay in the airport."

"Yes, Mr. Gregory."

"For how long?"

"Oh, these things never take that long. I would say no more than twelve to twenty-four hours."

Gregory raked his hair with his fingers and took many deep breaths—the same thing he used to do when he encountered an impossible question on a biology exam. The woman led him out the same door as before and then slammed it behind him, no smile, no-nonsense. There was the ticker board above him, still a-flutter with plane times. He stood outside the door for a while, letting the wave of travelers surge past him as he thought about what he should do in Sheremetyevo for a day.

Feeling stressed, trapped and alone, he made his way back to the familiar artificial glow of the restaurant, hoping to find the British couple. He needed their knowledge of the airport so he could find a place to sleep for a few

hours. As he pushed open the door to the restaurant, though, he was surprised to see the saleswoman from the souvenir shop with four armed security guards, her face contorted with rage. She screamed something in Russian, pointing at Gregory. The security guards lunged toward him, pinning his hands behind his back and forcing him into a chair at a nearby table, the same one he had eaten borsch at a few minutes ago.

"Mr. Privet, we are taking you into custody for stealing from this woman's airport shop," growled the head security officer, a solid-looking man in his fifties with connected eyebrows. Gregory could feel little lines of sweat forming in the creases of his palms. The saleswoman was leaning on the adjacent wall, arms folded across her chest. She sneered at Gregory like he was some sort of disease, much less a scared, lost American in the Moscow airport.

The guards talked amongst themselves for a few minutes, ostensibly about their captive. They made a bewildered Gregory get up out of his chair. Pinching his innocent hands behind his back, they marched him out of the restaurant. It was a strange parade that led Gregory to the security section of the airport; in front was the head security officer, trying to calm down the angry saleswoman, followed by Gregory with his retinue of three other guards. As they were walking, Gregory realized he had frozen the ever-moving crowd. Hundreds of eyes were riveted on this sad-looking youth in a bright green jacket being led by security past shops and the ticker board.

When they got to the other end of the terminal, the parade stopped in front of a large door. The head security officer opened it, revealing a long, grey corridor. They marched all the way down to the end and threw Gregory

inside the last door, locking it behind him. He was stunned. The room was small and dim with a low ceiling. As soon as his eyes adjusted to the low light, he felt two furry hands grabbing his arm. He looked to his right and there was the drunken, leather-skinned man from the restaurant, hiccupping and grinning with all of the teeth he had.

"Droog?"

SANDRA QUINTANA

The Giantess

Before, in the time when Earth, open wombed and panting,
Brought forth beasts of prodigious appetite and strength

What a birth to be whelped then and there

To have crawled from living rock
Naked and warm under the cold sky and new air
A monster to make young gods tremble and a mother's heart shake
Playing in a world that remembered my passing
Scarring or shaping as I pleased
Licking from my fingers sugar and blood
Dappled by old wounds,
Scabs and scratches, a map of mistakes and joys,
One eyed, all eyed, blind, but great
With hungry mouth and rock-shattering cry—
Gulls shriek at the shine from my whalebone picked teeth
The whole sea heaves against me, bathwater on my thighs
Into the deep, I join it and make a tide
And I surface, a new island,
Tricking tired birds to rest on my salty flesh
Inviting otters to play in the kelp of my mane
Atlantis' prelude when I wake
The sea sluicing down my legs as I search for someplace new
The desert is a summer day's walk, the marsh a mud bath,
Alligators unwilling pumice stones—
I walk tasting clouds on my tongue
And lay with wolves at my front and lions at my back
A warm mountain collecting naïve visitors through the cool night
That curl in the hollows, drunkenly secure in my warmth
When I rise whatever has made a home of me wakes
Shaken and expelled
Screeching as my companions get the scent of him.

I stretch my arms up against the pressing palm of the sky
Summer beats down, the morning is dark and the clouds are heavy
Deep as old smoke and sweltering
Rumbling complaints at the loads they carry
I tear at the pressure with my nails
Rain breaks over me, running channels of muddy water down my back
The old wind roars, and the sky opens
Cold and pure, purging the world of all that stands
Throwing down stars and curses
But I stand in the storm, in the earth turned sea
Hot bolts tear left and right, searing my flesh
There is no place to hide.
My arms are up, my back arched. I feel death in the air,
See it tear old oaks apart, make the fire-eyed beasts shiver—
I open my wide mouth. My skull falls back
And I laugh
Because the world is wide, wider than my hips
And there is no space for fear in me



Kneeling Pose / Sarah Fry

The Heavenly Condition

Sarah Hogan

Milton sets *Paradise Lost* against the backdrop of an immense angelic war waged by Satan against God. Satan's initial rebellion comes about in answer to a decree God has made in Heaven, commanding that all in Heaven shall obey Christ, God's only begotten Son, or else become apostate, fallen, and eternally damned. The notion of a heavenly rebellion and war is difficult to fathom; how could some kind of failure or feud arise from the perfect harmonies of Heaven, even in light of God's threatening pronouncement? As Adam is awed by Raphael's account of things "so unimaginable as hate in heav'n, / And war so near the peace of God in bliss / With such confusion" (7.54–7.56),¹ so the reader is taken aback by the induction of this chronicle to the history of Adam's fall. The idea that a state of perfect harmony could naturally give way to a corrupt state of war is inconceivable, recalling only God's creation of heaven and earth in its incomprehensible spontaneity: it is the creation of something out of nothing, of evil out of good and of discord out of harmony. To some extent, Satan's rebellion is even more perplexing than God's original creation, precisely because it appears not to issue from God's all-powerful will, but instead to go directly against it.

In Milton's history of the world's origins, Satan's rebellion is the first instance of creation aside from the creations of God. Through his rebellion, Satan becomes second only to God in his creative achievements, though not necessarily in his creative capacities. After his revolt,

¹All quotations are from John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Scott Elledge (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975).

Satan gains a reputation as a fearful and powerful creative being whose abilities are recognized even by his enemies. When the archangel Michael speaks to Satan after having vanquished him in battle, he addresses him as the "Author of evil, unknown till thy revolt, / Unnamed in heav'n, now plenteous, as thou seest" (6.262–6.263). Michael proceeds to exclaim:

How hast thou disturbed
Heav'n's blessed peace, and into nature brought
Misery, uncreated till the crime
Of thy Rebellion?

(6.266–6.269)

His words heed Satan as a powerful creator, his rebellion as an inventive act, and the ensuing evil and misery as Satan's proper progeny.

In depicting evil and misery as satanic creations, Milton departs substantially from the account given in Genesis, where evil and misery first appear on earth as inexplicable manifestations of God's created order. According to Genesis, Adam's disobedience brings about evil and misery; in *Paradise Lost*, Satan's defiance is the primordial insubordinate act that *creates* evil and misery. In Milton's description of Satan's transgression, there is no obvious serpent on which to shift the blame or trace the cause; he himself is the serpent, and he alone the cause and author of his defiant actions. Though God's decree and the freedom God created in Heaven provide a catalyst and a context for Satan's revolt, God in no way creates the evil and misery that accompany this rebellion. Distinguishing between the apostate angels and men, God speaks of the absolute responsibility of angels:

The first sort by their own suggestion fell,
Self-tempted, self-depraved: man falls deceived
By the other first; man therefore shall find grace,
The other none.

(3.129–3.132)

God attributes to Satan, the leader of these fallen angels, full responsibility for his misdeeds. In speaking of him with such severity, God, like Raphael, acknowledges Satan as the complete author of his actions, thus denoting to him a certain status as a creative being. Milton's emphatic depiction of Satan as a creator invites us to seek within his character the condition that fosters and brings forth creativity.

The condition in which Satan exists prior to his rebellion is one of uncertainty and limitation. More generally, it is the condition in which one finds oneself naturally after coming into being, and thus it is a state that is common to all creations. As a created being, Satan is forced to participate in an order that has been established independently of his own power or input. Politically, he is governed by God, his creator, whose authority in Heaven endures unopposed and who has the power to make decrees and assign rank to his hierarchy of angels. God, who has created everything in existence, who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and ubiquitous, rules Heaven by just merit; however, this merit has never been proved by any trial nor attested by any witness, nor has the relative demerit of his subjects been illumined by experience. As only God bore witness to his creation, and only God's all-knowing sensibility could be sure of His supremacy without any empirical test, God's subjects cannot be obedient on account of any proof of God's merit or of their own demerit. Satan describes this state of created uncertainty

after his rebellion leads him to fall from Heaven in final proof of God's superiority in force:

But he who reigns
Monarch in heav'n, till then as one secure
Sat on his throne, upheld by old repute,
Consent or custom, and his regal state
Put forth at full, but still his strength concealed,
Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall.
(1.637-1.642)

In this light, God's supremacy and the subsequent inferiority of his created order, whose relative ignorance requires that knowledge be revealed through empirical evidence, allows for and even breeds mistrust, skepticism, and ultimately, the creation of rebellion and war.

The condition that leads Satan to create misery and evil and that drives creation in general throughout the poem is one that is common to all created beings. This creative condition consists in a kind of perceived imperfection, in which a creature understands that he is, by generation, inferior to his creator in power and subordinate to him in knowledge. Moreover, it is the condition of owing an infinite amount to one's creator, to whom one is forever indebted by the gift of existence. Though those beings which are descendant of God are born with a freedom that equals that of God's, they are otherwise born into a position of lowliness and servitude in relation to Him; indeed, it is only God's allowance of freewill that keeps these creatures from becoming mere slaves. Thus the faithful angel Abdiel responds to Satan's plan to rebel by saying:

Shalt thou give law to God, shalt thou dispute

With him the points of liberty, who made
Thee what thou art, and formed the pow'rs of Heav'n
Such as he pleased, and circumscribed thir being?
(5.822-5.825)

God's creatures cannot help but belong to Him, to whom they owe their original existence, and they have, relative to God, no belongings of their own except choice and judgment. What is more, until they create or discover some other relationship through which to be defined, they can be defined only in contrast to their maker, and consequently only in light of their comparative inferiority of knowledge, their subordination in power, and their infinite debt. In this sense, it is not surprising that one would seek to overcome this created existence.

While the endowment of free will allows a creature to gain a degree of independence, it cannot resolve the deficiency that accompanies the created identity. Creation, on the other hand, the root from which this degeneration first stemmed, supplies a model for a kind of cure. Just as a creature realizes that he is inferior and subject to his creator, so he sees that, by himself becoming creative, he can establish himself in a position analogous to that of his creator, a position of superiority and dominion in relation to a created object, whose debt and obligation to him is unlimited. In this sense, the instinct to create is no different from the instinct to overcome the degenerative condition to which one is subjected by birth. Thus the creative urge has its origin in the deficiency that attends all created existence, and this deficiency has its basis in this creative urge. Through this instinctual cycle, creation becomes naturally repetitive and widespread.

While the condition of created existence gives rise to creativity, the created being's decision to accept or

deny this condition informs the way in which he creates and the subsequent character of his creations. The creations of Satan are very different from those of Adam, whose reproductive creativity allows him to be the father of all men. While Adam's creativity is acceptable to and even commanded by God, Satan's creativity is always offensive to Him and constantly coincides with some kind of revolt. To understand what it is that allows Adam to create in accordance with God's will while Satan appears to be incapable of aligning his creative instincts with it, one must first consider the ways in which each of these characters understands the origins of his existence and his created condition.

When he speaks to Raphael, Adam tells of his first experiences on earth as a newly created being, the first of his kind. Adam begins his account of this awakening with candid humility, stating the difficulty of the task at hand: "For man to tell how human life began / Is hard; for who himself beginning knew?" (8.250-8.251). For some time, he continues to speak in terms of this original ignorance: "But who I was, or where, or from what cause, / Knew not" (8.270-8.271). Despite his wonder and uncertainty of his own origins, Adam does not conclude that he has come into being from nothing, nor does he determine himself to be his own maker. After Adam discovers his innate capacity to speak and to name what he perceives in the landscape around him, he commands these natural entities, over which God has given him dominion, to tell him of his origins and of his creation:

Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?
Not of myself; by some great Maker then,
In goodness and in power preeminent;
Tell me, how I may know him, how adore,

From whom I have that thus I move and live
And feel that I am happier then I know.

(8.277-8.282)

Despite the ignorance into which Adam is born, he naturally and aptly recognizes certain things as necessary truths. These accepted truths have in no way been revealed to Adam by any empirical proof, but come rather from some inexplicable and innate understanding of his relation to his creator. This fundamental awareness of his relation to a God that is greater than he does not lead him to rebel against God, but rather to seek the way to praise and worship him best. Unlike Satan, Adam does not view his created condition as one of odious subjugation, inferiority, and death, but rather he perceives it to be one of grateful existence and happiness. This particular understanding of his existence allows him to accept and embrace his subordinate relation to his creator.

In contrast to Adam, Satan actively denies his origins and rejects the condition into which he is born. It is difficult to know with certitude what Satan truthfully believes to account for his existence, as Satan, "the false dissembler" (3.681), does not always speak in the open, sincere way that Adam does. Throughout the poem, Satan offers conflicting statements regarding whether or not he believes himself to have been created by God. In each instance that he demonstrates doubt in his divine origins, he is before a crowd of angels whom he means to convince of the unworthiness of God's rule. Thus Satan asks Abdiel, his opposer:

Who saw
When this creation was? Remember'st thou
Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?



Rockledge Farm No. 1 / Allison Hauspurg

We know no time when we were not as now;
 Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised
 By our own quick'ning power when fatal course
 Had circled his full orb, the birth mature
 Of this our native heav'n, ethereal sons.
 Our puissance is our own.

(5.856–5.864)

In this speech, Satan not only expresses uncertainty that he was created by God, but suggests that he and all the other angles were self-spawn, authors of their own creations. At other times, when Satan is alone, his words indicate a firm recognition of God as his creator. At one point, while reflecting upon his war against God, Satan says:

Warring in heav'n against heav'n's matchless King:
 Ah wherefore! he deserved no such return
 From me, whom he created what I was
 In that bright eminence, and with his good
 Upbraided none.

(4.41–4.45)

Alone, Satan expresses an understanding of God as his creator similar to that natural understanding expressed by Adam when he awakens from creation.

This division between Satan's public doubt and his personal sense of conviction leads us to believe that, while Satan in truth attributes his origins to God, he pretends to doubt them in order to justify his rebellion and to convince the other angels of their own doubt and power. On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that Satan, were he entirely confirmed that God was his creator, would have attempted to rebel and war against God.

Such confirmation would render Satan's war absurd and his rebellion foolish even in Satan's own eyes, as it would involve a revolt against a power he has acknowledged as superior. The war would be reduced to a vainglorious attempt to achieve the impossible. While it is unclear whether or not Satan is in fact bothered by having no empirical evidence of God as his creator, his resolute transgression of God's will and his unyielding war against God indicates unequivocally that he has decided to govern himself as if he did not have his origin in God.

While it may seem unthinkable or ridiculous for one to govern oneself according to a principle or belief one knows to be untrue, there are many reasons why one's given condition would necessitate the willful production of this kind of illusion. Satan's words after God has banished him to Hell encapsulate this sense of an existence that is at once false and meaningful: "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n" (1.254-1.255). These words fail to recognize the inescapable condition in which Satan is fated to exist; at the same time, they accurately reflect Satan's constructed illusion of his existence, an illusion that is itself very real and has valid significance and use; for who, condemned to Hell, would rather dwell in the reality upon which they had fallen than rise and enter into an illusory world of their own creation? The false sense of his condition that Satan creates for himself allows him not to give in to the despair of his true condition. It allows him to continue fighting his war against God with a false sense of hope and purpose, even after God's omnipotence has been revealed to him.

Given Satan's capacity to construct around him a false yet meaningful understanding of his condition in Hell, it is possible his initial rebellion against God is also

informed by a false, contrived understanding of his condition in Heaven as a creation of God. God's creation of Satan is a kind of fall from God's greatness, and Satan sees his subsequent condition as a kind of insufferable Hell that obligates and subjugates him under a "debt immense of endless gratitude, / So burthensome" (4.52). Certainly, if he can find no meaning in his given created condition, the least Satan can do is to contrive a false understanding of his creation that allows him to act with a false sense of power, hope, and purpose. In this sense, Satan's decision to actively reject his origins is a logical response to the absurdly subordinate position into which he is thrown by God's will, and not his own.

While this comparison between Adam's acceptance and celebration of his created condition and Satan's denial and rejection of it illuminates both the positive and the negative aspects of the created condition, it does not show why one creature would view his condition in a positive light while another would view it negatively. In order to address this question, one must observe the different ways in which God created Adam and Satan, and one must consider the capacities of the dissimilar substances into which God made them. When God creates Adam, he blesses him, saying:

Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth,
Subdue it, and throughout dominion hold
Over fish of the sea, and fowl of the air,
And every living thing that moves on the earth.
(7.531-7.534)

His blessing, or command, is one that establishes Adam both as the father of all men and that establishes him, as man, as ruler over all other earthly creatures. When

Adam first becomes conscious of his existence, his ability to name the earthly creations around him demonstrates an innate understanding of this creational blessing of reproduction and dominion.

Though less is said of the way in which Satan and God's angels were created, it is clear that they are not created to have their end in reproduction and dominion. Unlike Adam, man, and the other earthly creatures, the angels were not commanded by God, upon their creation, to populate the heavens and father nations. What is more, the angels are incapable of reproducing in the way that earthly creatures do, by breeding with a particular mate. This distinction between earthly and heavenly reproduction becomes apparent when Satan first looks upon Adam and Eve as Eve embraces Adam and the two kiss one another in Eden. The narrator states, "aside the Devil turned / For envy" (4.502-4.503). While Satan's jealousy stems in part from watching two creatures enjoy the state of paradise that he has lost, the placement of this line just after the image of Adam and Eve, as Satan puts it, "Imparadised in one another's arms" (4.506), suggests that Satan's envy is also of Adam and Eve's earthly, conjugal affection for one another. This particular affection is enviable to Satan insofar as it reflects their blessed fertility and their fate to father an entire world of men. In this instance of Satan's jealousy, we discover a possible explanation for the disparity between Satan's rejection and Adam's acceptance of their created conditions; for while God has blessed Adam with a kind of creative or generative outlet, He appears not to have blessed Satan with anything of this sort. Thus while God endows Adam with a blessing that directly compensates for those painful aspects of his created existence, He gives to Satan no such compensation, thus compelling him to look outside of

God's blessing for a means of overcoming the pain of his created existence.

The ways in which Satan and Adam choose to understand the history of their own creation directly affect the nature of their own creations. Adam's creations imitate those of God, exalting the model set forth to him by his maker, while Satan's creations are unlike them, perverting the creational trend that God began. The creational model that God establishes when he creates the heaven and earth and all its earthly and heavenly inhabitants is the paradigm for ideal creation. God, foreseeing the fall of man, explains to Christ why he chose to create both man and angel free to fall or stand, and why the creation of a being whose will is free is greater than that of one whose will is bound, despite the risk of disobedience:

Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere
Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,
Where onely what they needs must do, appeard,
Not what they would? What praise could they receive?
What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
When will and reason (reason also is choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled,
Made passive both, had served necessity.
(3.103-3.110)

God explains that to create what is free is not only good for the created being, but also for the creator, who gains the opportunity to be worshipped and praised more completely.

God does not limit his creation of free beings to the creation of men and angels; instead, this freedom is manifest even in Nature as he first creates it. Milton describes this Nature as being "wild above rule or art" (5.297), and

Adam says to God's created air and elements, "let your ceaseless change / Vary to our great Maker still new praise" (5.183-5.184). Though Nature and man are both described as praising God with their freedom, Nature praises God by simply existing in its free state, while man must choose to worship God. While man is free because he can choose to obey or disobey God's commands, Nature is free because its growth is not fated or predetermined by God. Nature's simple, existential praise of God suggests that the creation of a free being is not only ideal because it allows the maker to be worshipped freely, but because it reflects well upon God as a creator, since it is a greater feat to create something that is free than to create something enslaved.

Adam's creativity nearly meets this precedent of creation that God first sets. Through his conjugal relations with Eve and through God's blessing, Adam spawns children; from Adam grows a world of men, and the earth becomes populated according to God's command. In God's own words, "out of one man a race / Of men innumerable" (7.155-7.156) is born. By having children, Adam is able to reproduce the image of God, the image in which God originally created him. Milton describes this image of God in Adam and Eve as "severe, but in true filial freedom placed; / Whence true authority in men" (4.294-4.295). In this illustration of God's image, Milton locates the origin of man's "authority" in the freedom God has given man; this authority can be understood both in the sense of man's dominion over Nature and in the sense of Adam's destiny to become the author, or father, of all men, and to govern the path of his own life. This authority is considered "true" because it stems from a free creator. Thus the creations of man are made in freedom and, consequently, these creations are themselves

free and able to create freely. Like Adam, Adam's children and his children's children are born with free will, and thus may obey or disobey God. In each of these ways, Adam's creation by reproduction is similar to God's divine creation and allows God's initial creation of man to persist even after Adam, man's prototype, has been born and died.

Satan's creations, on the other hand, do not reflect God's model of ideal, free creation, wherein a thing comes to be from and in a state of freedom; instead, they are bred from a servile condition and subsequently assume a state of slavery in relation to their maker. While it has been said that Satan is responsible for the creation of war and misery, he is also the creator of many other evils, including the personified Sin and the great mechanized engines with which he fights the war in Heaven. When Satan brings these new things into God's created order, he does not bring them into the world in a manner that is free, despite the fact that he was created to exist in a condition of freedom. Satan births Sin during the assembly he holds of rebellious angels. Though Satan wills the assembly and the revolt that brings sin and disobedience into the world, the actual birth of Sin from his own head surprises him, and does not manifest as a direct effect of his free will. To some extent, even Satan's decision to rebel does not come from the state of freedom with which God endowed Satan; indeed, Abdiel, God's loyal angel, criticizes Satan's decision to rebel against God, condemning Satan as one who is "not free but to thy self enthralled" (6.181). In this sense, though God makes Satan free, Satan enslaves himself by revolting against God and defying the condition in which God made him.

Like Satan, Satan's creations are described as being devoid of the freedom with which God first created the

world. Satan's machines act as an extension of Satan's will, with no free will of their own. While God's creations are constructive, Satan's creations are destructive. Satan's creations hinder the development of those more powerful and impressive aspects of existence, such as free will, with which God originally provided the created world. Many of these creations are even destructive to themselves. One can consider Sin as an embodiment of this self-destructive creation. Sin, who was spontaneously born of Satan's head, conceives a child with Satan, which she names Death. Death proceeds to rape Sin, who then becomes pregnant with monstrous hell-hounds, which harass her incessantly. Sin refers to Death as her "inbred enemy" (2.785) and describes the pain which the hell-hounds inflict upon her. The incest present in Satan's lineage also differentiates Satan's creations from Adam's, whose lineage is enigmatically expansive: though Adam is the sole father of the human race, his descendants manage to avoid the incest one would imagine so inevitable. Through the creation of Sin, Satan's lineage becomes slave-like, destructive, and incestuous. His inventions and progeny differ greatly from those of Adam, whose offspring are free, constructive, and un-incestuous.

Throughout *Paradise Lost*, Milton exalts the creativity of God and Adam while condemning that of Satan, saying, through God's authoritative mouth, that "to create / Is greater than created to destroy" (7.606-7.607); and yet, as a reader, it is difficult not to sympathize with Satan's plight, with the misery of his created condition, and even with the way in which he addresses this pain by means of destructive and ungodly creation. Part of this sympathy comes from the fact that it is unclear what Satan could have done to confront his situation differently, in a way that would have been acceptable to God.

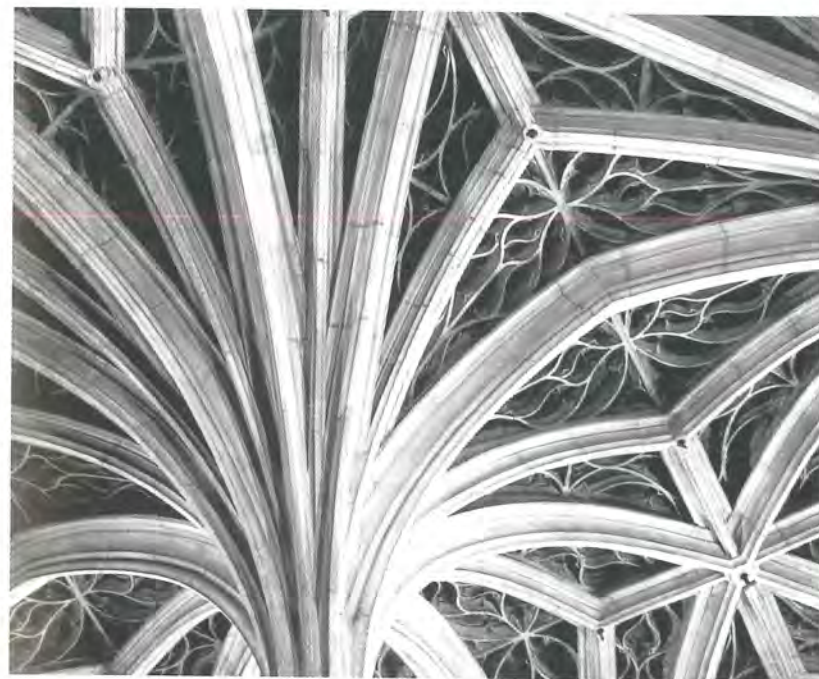
As a creature with no blessed creative outlet through which to overcome the subordinate and inferior position into which he is born, Satan's decision to create in a way that is odious to God is comprehensible and worthy of compassion. In light of the impossible hardships of his given lot, Satan's rebellion seems predestined, and it is as easy to pity him as it is to pity any creature whose path is limited by necessity and determined by fate.

Milton does not explain how Satan should have acted given his situation, but he does offer an alternative to Satan's rebellious creation in his authorization of *Paradise Lost*. In writing this epic poem, Milton presents the reader with a way in which one can overcome their existence as a created being without reproduction, yet in a way that is un-offensive and even pleasing to God. Milton opens his poem with a prayer to his divine muse:

What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great argument
I may assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.
(1.22-1.26)

Milton begins these lines by acknowledging his condition as a being that exists among elements of lowliness and darkness, ignorant and impotent in relation to his divine creator. Though he indicates the suffering with which this condition fills him, he does not respond to this pain by rejecting his origins and transgressing God's will, but by seeking God's assistance, in order that God Himself might raise him up through inspiring him with poetic creation. Milton's desire for enlightenment through creativity differs from Satan's, as this desire has its end in

God, and not in himself. Milton states that his desire is not limited to his own self-improvement, but ultimately involves a justification or defense of God. Milton's acceptance of his relation to his maker allows him to create constructively, in imitation of divine creation. The poem that Milton ultimately creates is also similar to God's creations. By calling upon a muse for the inspiration of his poem, Milton differentiates himself from his creation, allowing his created product to have a kind of will of its own and independence from its creator. Through this divinely inspired creation, Milton is able to transcend the lowly existence into which he is born by creating a product which is itself modeled after his God's divinely created order.



Apoptosis (Revelation 21:8) / Justin Lee

