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THE UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

KERYGMA

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KERYGMA is a Greek word meaning "proclamation" or "heralding." It originally designated the action of a herald; in the Gospels it takes on the particular connotation of a declaration of the "glad tidings" of Christ's resurrection.

In our context, however, it is a proclamation on a different level—a cultural one. Our major "proclamation" is the fact of an impending choice between a culture that is totally secular and one that is Christian. We do not pretend that what appears in our magazine will always be complete and finished. Sometimes it will be only in the nature of a "kerygma," an idea which is to be developed and expanded later. Ours will be an exploration, an investigation of the implications of Christianity and the University in society.

KERYGMA

A Journal of Comment at

THE UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Spring-Summer Issue, 1964

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Anne Butler, *Turbulence*, etching

Donne's "Ecstasy," Philosophy, And The Renaissance Lyric

Donne's poetry has survived half a century of intense and intensive criticism, and of all his poems "The Ecstasy" remains the central focus of twentieth-century interest. Embodying most of the qualities for which Donne is admired and studied, the poem incarnates with equal felicity a broader tendency in the English lyric which we can trace back to Sidney and forward to Marvell. It is a crucial part of the evolution of the Renaissance lyric from its early expressiveness to a complex and complicated intellectualization. I wish to examine the poem in this context, and I wish to make it clear at once that I am more concerned with the methods by which the lyric was intellectualized than with the concepts by which it was informed.

Any proper study of the poetic traditions in which Donne was involved must come to terms with the extraordinary and much-debated twentieth-century fondness for "Metaphysical" verse. Sir Herbert Grierson, Donne's best editor, and T. S. Eliot, still his most influential critic, started an enthusiasm for that sort of poetry which has sometimes bordered on idolatry. In academic circles, and especially in the classroom, only Shakespeare and Milton seem able to hold their own against the compelling attraction of Donne, Herbert, and Marvell, and in this trinity Donne is still supreme. One possible explanation of this preference is that we find later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poetry less innocent than that which preceded it. There is, of course, the spirit of disillusionment, ironically expressed, nostalgic for a cleaner, less involved and less perplexing past, fascinated by the labyrinthine mysteries of the human soul, which is common both to our age and Donne's, and we have naturally gravitated towards the poets whose work seems most urgently prompted by that spirit. But it is not simply that these poets were disillusioned and expressed it or that they lost some confidence in the ability of youth, beauty, and love to lend grace to life or that the settled truths of Humanistic wisdom were beginning to come unstuck. We must also recognize that from Sidney on poets were beginning to put the lyric to more varied

Editor's note: In substance this essay is a lecture Dr. Montgomery delivered at the University of Dallas on April 8, 1964. Dr. Montgomery is an associate professor of English at the University of Texas.

uses. The methods and themes of Wyatt and Surrey and their lesser contemporaries were not necessarily abandoned; they were supplemented and enjoyed an expansion of versatility.

It is a bad habit among critics to regard English Renaissance poetry before Sidney as interesting but inferior. When I say that poetry before Sidney is innocent, I do not suggest that it is better or worse than the later kind, nor that innocence is in this context a moral attribute. Rather it implies less self-consciousness, less reflectiveness, less of an analytical spirit in the composition of lyric poetry. This general distinction can be observed very quickly if we compare Wyatt and Sidney. Here is a poem of Wyatt's entitled "Of his love called Anna":

What word is that, that changeth not
 Though it be turned, and made in twain?
 It is mine Anna, God it wot,
 The only causer of my pain,
 My love that meedeth with disdain.
 Yet it is loved—what will you more?
 It is my salve, and eke my sore.

The poem is witty and sophisticated but only in embryo. It turns on a commonplace Petrarchan dilemma—that the lover's comfort and anxiety have the same source—but the dilemma is merely expressed, not analyzed. The wit contains the germ of an idea stated as paradox but the idea is not developed. There is no exploration of the psychology of the lover, no weighing of the concept of love involved here.

In contrast here is Sidney's Sonnet 14, characteristic of much that is central to *Astrophel and Stella*:

Alas have I not paine enough my friend,
 Upon whose breast a fiercer Gripe doth tire
 Then did on him who first stale downe the fire,
 While *Love* on me doth all his quiver spend,
 But with your Rubarb words yow must contend
 To grieve me worse, in saying that Desire
 Doth plunge my wel-form'd soule even in the mire
 Of sinfull thoughts, which do in ruine end?
 If that be sinne which doth the maners frame,
 Well staid with truth in word and faith of deed,
 Readie of wit and fearing nought but shame:
 If that be sinne which in fixt hearts doth breed
 A loathing of all loose unchastitie,
 Then Love is sinne, and let me sinfull be.

With no sacrifice of emotional force, the verse reaches well beyond expressiveness. It is witty, it uses the conventions standard to the love poetry of the Renaissance, but the concepts by which love is defined and controlled are spelled out quite fully and clearly. The speaker has thought

through his emotions, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that his emotions are tested against doctrine.

Those features in Sidney's poem which are absent or left unelaborated in Wyatt's will suggest some of the ways in which the lyric becomes philosophical. At this point it might be argued that reflective poems dealing with intellectual issues were being written in England before Sidney and after and that there is nothing new in this aspect of his work. It is true that the longer or shorter didactic poem is familiar throughout the Sixteenth Century. But what is important for our purposes is Sidney's extension of the lyric voice into a range beyond the presentation of feeling and attitude. Traditionally the lyric (I do not confine the term only to poems which may strictly be called songs) is restricted in scope to a particular happening or experience out of which the poem grows. It is fundamentally emotional in its appeal. It is a kind of fiction: we are meant to imagine an event or situation in which someone speaks and to which he reacts. The occasion may, of course, be more or less explicit and apparent, more or less concrete and particular, but it is normal to expect that the lyric is primarily located in experience rather than in dialectic. Most poems have signals indicating this. Consider the following lines taken at random: "*Stella* thinke not that I by verse seeke fame" (Sidney, *Astrophel and Stella* 90), "*Caelica*, I overnight was finely used" (Fulke Greville, *Caelica* 37), "Like to a hermit poor in place obscure / I mean to spend my days of endless doubt" (Raleigh), "My mistress when she goes / To pull the pink and rose" (Lodge), "Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing" (Shakespeare, Sonnet 87), "For God's sake, hold your tongue and let me love" (Donne). Here is a variety of kinds of statement, some narrative, some direct colloquial discourse, but all of them suggesting circumstances as the ground for feeling. The voices speaking in these poems create a momentary world in which discourse takes place.

The didactic poet, on the other hand, addresses the reader, lectures him, moralizes to the world at large. He mentions or alludes to events or emotions, but his voice is that of the teacher or preacher and his concern is to demonstrate a truth. Discourse here does not grow out of dramatic or narrative circumstances; it uses them to illustrate. The eye of the poet is directly on the concept. Throughout the Renaissance the didactic, discursive poem shows the marked characteristics of the essay and depends heavily upon a persuasive, often formal rhetoric. Above all the expression of emotion is carefully channeled into the streams of doctrine or idea.

I mention this distinction, which I have stated in rather more absolute

terms than actually exist in specific poems, because it bears directly on the method of "The Ecstasy," which is, after all, in large part argumentative. To many it has seemed to deal with ideas for their own sake, to be essentially abstract and technical. It has been argued that Donne's primary interest is in exploring philosophical concepts, and that all other features of his poems are merely convenient to this intellectual end. Such a point of view distorts the poetry, and it warps our understanding of the mainstream of lyric verse before and after Donne. For although the lyric makes an increasingly important use of philosophy and philosophical argument, these do not define its aims or its character.

Conversely, it has been argued that, in the case of "The Ecstasy," the dramatic situation, an attempted seduction, is primary and that all the quibbling about the union of souls and the nature of the relationship between the body and the soul is just so much sophistry advanced to persuade a lady to abandon her scruples. This is the point of view informing the following remarks of C. S. Lewis. According to him, the poem "keep[s] on drawing distinctions between the spirit and the flesh to the detriment of the latter and then [explains] why the flesh is, after all, to be used. This is what Donne does, and the result is singularly unpleasant It is quite arguable that *The Extasie* is a much nastier poem than the nineteenth *Elegy*. What any sensible woman would make of such a wooing it is difficult to imagine—or would be difficult if we forgot the amazing protective faculty which each sex possesses of not listening to the other" ("Donne and the Love Poetry of the Seventeenth Century" in *Seventeenth Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson*, Oxford, 1938).

That neither the dramatic nor conceptual elements in the poem need be subordinated to establish a just view of its character, in other words that the poem is neither a manner of wooing nor rarified philosophical discourse exclusively, can be demonstrated by the poem itself and also by the evolution of the lyric during its time. As I have suggested, the lyric poem develops from pure and relatively uncomplicated expressiveness into a self-conscious mode. Beginning with Sidney it attempts more than the presentation of emotion, and it is not content just to state ideas aphoristically and didactically. It develops a way of dealing with experience that has neither the naiveté, the innocence of feeling unanalyzed nor the abstractness of general precept unproved by immediate concrete incident. *Astrophel and Stella* both presents feeling and attitude and offers their analysis, an analysis conducted by the poet, the speaker in the poems, according to fairly clear and received notions of the nature of the soul. *Astrophel's* is a mind caught in the act of examining itself,

and the method of examination, as in Sonnet 94, is a logically taut, rhetorically neat organization:

Grief find the words, for thou hast made my braine
So darke with misty vapors, which arise
From out thy heavy mould, that inbent eyes
Can scarce discern the shape of mine owne paine.
Do thou then (for thou canst) do thou complaine,
For my poore soule, which now that sicknesse tries,
Which even to sence, sence of it selfe denies,
Though harbingers of death lodge there his traine.
Or of thy love of plaint yet mine forbears,
As of a caitife worthy so to die,
Yet waile thy selfe, and wail with causefull teares,
That though in wretchednesse thy life doth lie,
Yet growest more wretched then thy nature beares,
By being placed in such a wretch as I.

Superficially the purpose of the sequence is to persuade Stella that Astrophel adores her, suffers for his love, and is sincere, but as this poem illustrates there is a strain of introspection, in this case involving an anatomy of melancholy, mingled with the more conventional motifs of complaint and praise. The rational awareness of the self dissects the very emotions the poem expresses.

This double purpose is carried even further in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, whatever their differences from Sidney's work, and I suspect that their passionate self-consciousness is at least partly accountable for the fact that even the best of critics have sometimes felt bound to argue that they come fresh out of Shakespeare's personal life, that they cannot be imaginative fictions. The worst of critics, such as the unfortunate Professor Rowse, have invariably centered their efforts in reconstructing the circumstances of that life in the misguided belief that if we knew who the young man, the dark lady, and the rival poet were, we should then better understand the poetry. Such biographers need little refutation; they are merely insensitive to the ways in which the *Sonnets* may be profitably read. These poems are as emotionally intense as any in the language; even their occasional technical sloppiness contributes to an impression of immediacy. But an equally distinct quality is their persistent self-consciousness. As in *Astrophel and Stella* the speaker brings his mind to bear upon the feelings he expresses. Indeed, the processes are nearly simultaneous, and the result is steady, searching, and profound psychological analyses. For example, notice how, in Sonnet 35, Shakespeare works quickly into the labyrinth of paradoxical, contradictory impulses, both rendering the confusion of unwilling jealousy and standing apart to comprehend and pass judgment upon it.

No more be griev'd at that which thou hast done:
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud;
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.
All men make faults, and even I in this,
Authorizing thy trespass with compare,
Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,
Excusing thy sins more than thy sins are.

This last line is the crux of the poem so far: the poet having set out to forgive, has realized that the act of forgiveness involves a moral laxness, that the analogies by which he has expressed himself are overwrought, thus revealing something odd within him. The sestet goes on to suggest a cause and draw a conclusion:

For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense—
And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence:
Such civil war is in my love and hate
That I an accessory needs must be
To that sweet thief who sourly robs from me.

The poet who is content to urge his feelings on his mistress or his audience, or who wishes to articulate them as they are, reveals a single angle of vision. In essence he cries, "I suffer," "I love you," "I am angry," "You are beautiful," "I am jealous," and his cry is spontaneous, a reaction and a release. Such expressions define the scope of his poem. But Shakespeare regards experience dialectically as well as passionately. The imagery, in this case of the law court, bears with it concepts of the many-sidedness of emotion and the perplexities of relationships with another. The business of the poem is to work through such complexities to some sort of understanding of where the speaker is. Shakespeare accomplishes precisely what Donne has been praised for: he renders a mirror of the mind in action, in this case a mind whose gaze is bent in upon its own workings. But for neither poet should the critical judgment satisfy itself with noticing an impressive fidelity to the quality of mental operations. There is something more.

Though he lacked Donne's erudition, Shakespeare was nevertheless philosophical, for his sonnets disclose a mind preoccupied with philosophical questions—those topics which are normally listed as the themes of the sonnets—the destructiveness of time, the morally fragile nature of beauty, the wilfulness of the human soul. Not that Shakespeare's aims are those of the philosopher; but it is important to recognize that he, and his generation of poets, are able to use the preoccupations and methods of philosophy in a poetic context.

Another way of understanding what the poets are up to is to examine the formal rhetoric and logic of their poems. A number are persuasive

speeches in miniature, using standard rhetorical figures. Others are based on the strategies of logic. Such deliberate methods of discourse do not guarantee thoughtful verse; in fact, the more formal the rhetoric, the less rigorous the thinking is apt to be. But rhetoric and logic could be used effectively to control and direct ideas beyond the level of aphorism and simple didacticism. To return to Sidney for a moment, here is his thirty-fourth sonnet, which may illustrate a feature of the lyric most important to its development in combining ordered thinking and dramatic emotional immediacy:

Come let me write, 'And to what end?' To ease
A burthened hart. 'How can words ease, which are
The glasses of thy dayly vexing care?'
Oft cruell fights well pictured forth do please.
'Art not asham'd to publish thy disease?'
Nay, that may breed my fame, it is so rare:
'But will not wise men thinke thy words fond ware?'
Then be they close, and so none shall displease.
'What idler thing, then speake and not be hard?'
What harder thing then smart, and not to speake?
Peace, foolish wit, with wit my wit is mar'd.
Thus write I while I doubt to write, and wreake
My harmes on Ink's poore losse, perhaps some find
Stella's great powrs, that so confuse my mind.

This poem is built upon a rhetorical figure (anthyphora), but it strikes us more as dialogue used to expose an emotional and psychological issue, indeed to intellectualize the issue. I chose it for brief review because it renders a mind vividly aware of its own condition.

A good deal of Sidney's style has its roots in dialogue. This is less apparent in Shakespeare, but if we consider those sonnets of his which are addressed directly to the young man or the dark lady, it is apparent that dialogue is at least implied. Moreover, I suspect that if anyone cared to examine the matter systematically, it could be demonstrated that dialogue in one form or another is a feature of verse that grows in importance as intellectualizing, philosophical tendencies ripen in the Seventeenth Century. Certainly Donne and Herbert use the speaking voice over and over again with considerable dramatic, as well as meditative, effect. Dialogue establishes the presence of two minds, often in the act of contest or debate or of a Platonic method of reaching for insight. Donne's "Canonization" with its initial outburst, "For God's sake, hold your tongue and let me love," moves from sarcasm directed at the conventional moralizing of the poet's interlocuter to an investigation of the rather abstruse questions involved in a totally consuming union. And we should not forget that "The Ecstasy" is specifically called "this dialogue."

Before I turn directly to "The Ecstasy" there is one more matter I wish to touch on. The two poets I have used thus far work within a set of conventions well-established and well-defined. Love is the central and dominant theme of Renaissance poetry, and Petrarchism is the central and dominant tradition of Renaissance love. Involved in the development of the lyric towards intellectualism, towards introspection, is a testing of the premises of idealized love. Indeed the effects of Petrarchism lingered well beyond the time it is supposed to have been a dead issue, for while we normally assume that it had grown stale as a poetic convention by 1600, Marvell still has it in mind at mid-century. And if we turn back to Sidney and Shakespeare it is evident from the most superficial reading that their poems may be understood with reference to the commonplaces of the tradition, though each approaches the matter differently.

The most searching challenge to Petrarchism is Fulke Greville's *Caelica*, a sequence that is only just beginning to draw attention as a major poetic work. It has always been considered somewhat obscure, largely because it is the most thoroughly cerebral work of its kind in that era. It breaks sharply with the writing of sequences almost wholly composed of sonnets, and because Greville's interest in metaphysics is more in the foreground than that of most love poets, the three women whom the poems deal with are not sensed as women at all but as embodiments of character traits, attitudes, or morally relevant emotional conditions. Greville carries the lyric almost beyond its limits into difficult and deep meditative waters, and the mind operating through the poems is just as complicated as Donne's. Greville lacks Donne's concreteness, his habit of fixing discourse in particular images or immediately felt situations, but for our purposes his extensive and ironic testing of Petrarchan love is important. Petrarchism, which even before it found favor in England, had absorbed a thorough dose of Platonism and had become a mode of understanding the passions which seemed to offer a morally acceptable alternative to plain unidealized desire, had grown impossibly effete by the end of the Sixteenth Century. Its attitudes, as Sidney and Shakespeare and others were beginning to discover, were difficult to reconcile with what one understood of human nature. And as a literary fashion, almost as soon as it reached its vogue, it was stale, a bundle of dead and automatic analogies and mechanical topics, easy to parody and difficult to take seriously if one followed its party line to pose as the lover forever worshipping and forever disappointed.

From the time of Ovid and Anacreon Cupid had been in one guise or another a convenient symbol for love, tyrannous and capricious, but a good symbol nevertheless. Greville's strategy is to treat Cupid with

witty irony, and to expose ideal and erotic love to the hard light of Stoic skepticism and, in the later poems, Christian meditation. The tone of Greville's poems is as varied as his verse forms, but he returns again and again to a refusal to place any lasting confidence in the conventions of love. The end result is a fracturing of the whole Petrarchan idyll in the name of a morally serious idealism.

As I have suggested, Greville moves rather far towards the abstraction of the verse essay, a constant tendency as the lyric becomes more and more open to the winds of doctrine, and it is one of Donne's achievements in the *Songs and Sonnets* that he is able to bring the lyric to extremes of complicated intellectualism without ever abandoning his footing in particular experience. Donne fulfills the promise of the other three poets, working with the tendencies they exemplify, and extends the range and possibilities of the thinking lyric in his own peculiar way very far indeed. He shares their curiosity about the workings of the mind, and he is curious about ideas. As much as any of them he works directly against conventions. If what he called his hydroptic love of learning was immoderate, yet that excess is artistically viable, and it appears in its most audacious form in "The Ecstasy."

I have already suggested that the nature of the poem is neither an invitation to love in which the doctrine is mere sophistry, nor a work whose interest is to explore doctrine, with the immediate situation of the two lovers simply a convenient setting. I regard it as a fusion of doctrine and experience in which each element proves the other.

Yet on the surface these elements seem almost studiously separated. At the thirteenth line we encounter a learned disquisition on the nature of the soul and its relationship to the body, and the speaking voice in the poem continues to expound almost pedantically until line forty-eight. In brief summary we are offered a contemplation of the union of two souls, a union experienced as a state of ecstasy in which both souls go out from their bodies. The bodies suffer a suspension of animation. The communication of the souls is not through the senses but by what Donne calls "souls language." This section of the poem attempts only lightly to recreate the experience; its main aim is to define. As Miss Helen Gardner has discovered, Donne depended very heavily upon a treatise by the Italian Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'Amore*, which departs signally from normal Platonic dualism ("The Argument about 'The Ecstasy,'" *Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies Presented to Frank Percy Wilson* [Oxford, 1959]). Platonism ordinarily scorns the experience of the flesh, but Donne's version clearly looks to desire as the result of the union of two souls.

This union is a puzzle whose mysteriousness Donne takes pains to

emphasize:

Love, these mixt soules, doth mix againe,
And makes both one, each this and that.

Yet the mixture of souls is an illumination:

This Extasie doth unperplex
(We said) and tell us what we love.

And it possesses the supreme quality of permanence:

Wee see, we saw not what did move.

Finally, even though the union of the lovers' souls offers knowledge and stability, we must remember that this has been achieved by ecstasy, by the abandonment of the experience and medium of the senses.

The latter part of the argument involves at least two interpretations. Miss Gardner offers a reading of the lines, "Our bodies why doe wee forbear" and "To our bodies turne wee, then," which understands them not as a plea for immediate sexual union, but as statements indicating that it is time for the souls to return to their separate bodies. The motive is altruistic: "that so / Weake men on love reveal'd may looke." Miss Gardner allows that sexual union is contemplated but not as part of the immediate dramatic situation. She is here answering the charge that the ending of the poem is grossly immodest, that Donne is suggesting that there will be a witness to their love-making. This notion has something to commend it, for nowhere in the poem is there any hint of the cynicism, the deliberately scandalous sexuality that Donne urges in some of his other poems. Yet the more popular interpretation has seen the ending of the poem as an invitation to love, whether or not the critic is shocked by the witness.

It is possible, however, to answer the morally sensitive by close attention to the witness. He appears in two places: beginning at line twenty, he is someone so refined by "good" love that he understands the communication of the united souls. He will benefit by what he hears. At the end of the poem he will possibly have "heard this dialogue of one," that is, from one of the lovers. Let him then continue to observe. Even after sexual union, he will see the lovers unaltered. In other words, if we wish to understand the going to bodies as explicit love-making, the point is that it is not a change for the worse, not a damaging of the perfect joining of two souls but a form of incarnation of love. Most important, the appearance of the onlooker is entirely hypothetical, a part of the argument, not the fictional situation. The poet is saying that their love is so pure that it would survive the presence of a voyeur.

The main consideration in this discussion is Donne's method. It has two key features. First, the poem is narrated through line forty-four. As I conceive the narration, it is this: the speaker is telling his mistress

what presumably she already knows, that some time in the near past their souls were united and communicated through the medium of an ecstasy. Within the narrative frame he recapitulates the scene and what was said. The analogies to armies, to the transplanted violet, to cosmology and astrology, and so on, are the speaker's efforts to recover and explain what took place, to articulate its significance in terms of material images.

When the speaker moves to the present tense at line forty-five ("Wee, then, who are this new soule, know"), there is an apparent illogicality. He is urging that they turn to their bodies, which might suggest, especially if one accepts Miss Gardner's reading of "turn" as "return," that the ecstasy is not yet finished. If this is dramatic license, however, it is no more extreme than the effort of the speaker to recapitulate what cannot be articulated through the senses. In any case, the discourse has shifted from explanation to persuasion, but the persuasion is still closely involved in an analysis of the nature of love.

Yet Donne is concerned not just to explain and persuade. He wishes to contemplate the situation from beginning to end, and what the poem is about is not only that contemplation, but his wish to have his mistress share it. Put another way, what we have in dramatic terms is a lover telling his mistress what has happened to them, what is happening to them, and what the meaning of their experience is. (I might add here that those critics who have insisted that this poem is just another invitation to seduction overlook the fact that there is no indication that the lady involved is in any way reluctant. The speaker's persuasive efforts are simply not that crass.) We may call this the fiction of the poem, and it is this fiction which preserves an otherwise dangerously abstract, analytical, argumentative work from becoming a verse essay. This view finds support if we recognize that Donne spends more narrative detail and works in more explicit scene setting than in almost any other of the *Songs and Sonnets*.

In effect I am arguing that the dramatic situation and the philosophizing are interwoven very closely, that the experience of the poem is a rationale of an experience. The setting is not created merely to provide images for analogy, for Donne feels quite free to bring in images utterly unrelated to the setting. We have here the thinking lyric stretched to its farthest reach and given its most intricate artistic complications. There is little effort to render the naturalistic "feel" of the experience. Rather it is made intelligible. Even the tones and rhythms of a mind in the act of thinking, which Donne creates in other poems, are subdued here. It is possible to call "The Ecstasy" a definition of love and to note its dryness and occasional tonal flatness, but it never abandons the par-

ticularity of its fiction.

"The Ecstasy" thus participates in and illuminates the development of lyric technique I have outlined. It carries the thoughtfulness of poetry about as far as it can go and still remain within the lyric world. It demonstrates the disposition of late sixteenth-century verse to react against the Petrarchan convention, though not by the irony with which this convention was more usually faced. It borrows quite a different form of Platonism than the Petrarchan poem would allow. The lady is not worshiped as a goddess. Spiritual union is not the antithesis of desire but the prelude to it. The lovers are equal partners and neither suffers. Perhaps most crucial is its preservation of the fictional world of the lyric, the presence of persons speaking, feeling, and acting, even as its discourse philosophizes and rationalizes that experience. One may feel, as Miss Gardner does, that these two elements are not sufficiently blended and are too easily separable, but this too is significant. The lyric was to move directly to the rationalization of experience in the verse essay, the epistle, the satire. On the other hand, the private, particular moment was to become the locus of the symbolic poem as practiced by Herbert, and more especially by Vaughan and Marvell. Donne's "Ecstasy" stands, then, as a signpost pointing both directions.

A Golden Egg, A Big Eagle, And Jettie

They should have made a bed of alfalfa for it, that's all. Wallemin had warned them it was coming soon. He had never been sure of the exact hour, but he knew it would be Friday. He had told them, "Mom, Friday is the day for births. Probably Friday morning, too. Sunrise." His mother had said, "Yes, dear. You go watch for it and come tell us about it." Even if he didn't want a big welcoming party, he couldn't understand why at least his mother and brother didn't come out to the chicken house at five o'clock to watch. He had gotten up at four-thirty and made the straw nest a little softer with a few blades of Johnson grass he picked outside the door behind a rotting water trough. The alfalfa patch was cut and baled by now; the once thick, furry clover leaves were a stubble of dry, pointed sticks which would have been no better than the straw they used for the common hens. The speckled hen would have to be satisfied with the stringy Johnson grass. The golden egg would have to be laid in a dried-out straw nest.

Wallemin sat on a mud-worn roost beside the sleeping chickens and waited. Jettie sat on the tightly packed nest, undisturbed by the eyes watching her. Jettie had been only one of two dozen fluffy white chickens until molting season last spring. The others grew new white feathers while Jettie's started coming in speckled. Wallemin began giving her the best potato peelings and corn shucks and vegetable scraps so that now she would cluck every time he opened the gate, stretching the baling wire tied to the fence, and would be waddling toward him to eat the scraps out of his hand by the time the bricks strung on the wire banged back to the ground closing the gate. After she got the speckled feathers she didn't lay any more eggs but she got fatter and fatter until he knew she was going to lay a golden egg. Maybe it wouldn't be shiny gold like the candlesticks in church but it would be bright enough so he could see in the dark. It would make the mud-daubers' nests on the walls look like the squatting sheep in the Christmas crib that he got to set up every year, only sheep with their heads chopped off and their tails flat against their bodies. The mud-daubers would probably wake up and fly around when the egg came, thinking it was daytime, but that would be all right, too, because somebody had to be a witness or else they

would say he painted an egg gold and pretended Jettie was more than an ordinary hen. This egg would be real gold though and gold all the way through. Why else would she have grown black and white feathers?

Five o'clock came, and Jettie still just sat there. Wallemin decided she didn't know yet that it was summer and that the sun came up an hour earlier than in the spring. So he waited another hour until the sun shone in through the big screen and woke up all the chickens. They fluttered their wings and cackled and jumped down to the dusty straw from their roosts making little bits of dust and straw float through the sun's beams so that Wallemin could hardly see Jettie. He opened the splintery wooden door and the small hole in the screen no bigger than a chicken and shooed them all out. He didn't want the egg to come when the sun was shining, either, but maybe Jettie didn't know it was Friday morning. At least it would shine more in the sun.

He sat on one of the roosts near Jettie's nest or on the floor leaning against the heavily beamed wall until dinner time. Since Jettie had done no more than open her thin-filmed eyes and look at him all morning he felt it was safe to leave for half an hour. The sun was hot when he stepped out; with the door shut all morning some of the night's coolness had stayed inside, and now the hot dirt singed his bare feet. He ran to the shade of the closest mulberry tree and cooled his feet by squashing the juicy berries between his toes. They must have fallen from the top of the tree because he and his cousins from town had picked the berries from the lower branches when they were still green to use in pea-shooter battles. He could eat the reddest ones, though, if he brushed the black sand off first on the bottom of his shirt. He picked up the fattest berries and stained his brown feet under each scattered tree until he reached the big two-storied house that looked like a dried-out onion just pulled from the garden. It seemed to bulge on the sides in brown-ringed patches where paint had flaked off, and the roof was a kind of powdery, whitened tin sloping up to the two tall chimneys.

It even smelled like an onion inside because his mother was putting onions, fresh garden carrots, and potatoes into one big black pot to make beef stew. She laid down the ladle Wallemin had given her for her last birthday and clanged the lid back on the pot. Turning around and pushing the hair out of her eyes, she said, "Have you been eating those filthy mulberries again?"

"No'm. I told you Jettie was going to lay her golden egg this morning. At dawn." He stained the water faucet with purple fingerprints as he turned it on and leaned over to drink from his cupped hands.

His mother frowned momentarily and wiped her hands on her apron,

playfully humoring him. "And is it real gold?"

"No'm, she didn't lay it yet. But you know what, Mom? It's going to hatch out to be a golden dove. It'll fly up to my window at night and make enough light to say my prayers by. I won't need my vigil light then and you can have it for your room."

She stared hard at him, her eyes troubled. Finally she said, "Hush up your nonsense now. Go wash your hands and call Brant down from upstairs. She retied her apron and took out a jar of milk from the icebox. Then she set three soup bowls and spoons on the warped table.

"You can even have my Infant Jesus statue. I can pray to Jettie's shiny dove." He splattered water from his dripping fingers on the floor in his excitement.

His mother seemed even more upset and pointed firmly to the stairs. "Go call your brother!"

It was Wallemin's job to do the dishes on Fridays. He scraped the table scraps into one of the bowls and carried it outside. He ran faster between the mulberry trees because the ground was hotter now and Jettie needed the food so the egg would grow big enough to hatch into a dove. It couldn't be a white dove if the egg was gold, so it couldn't be like the one in the Bible that brought a wind and tongues of fire. It would have to be a gold dove like the big painted eagle on its chipping stand up in the parish hall where they were going to move the church while they built a new one. Whenever the priest in church got to the reading about the wind and fire every spring, Wallemin could feel the tongues landing on his head and singeing his hair, but he couldn't feel the wind. Maybe if he taught the gold dove to fly in circles above his head it could learn to fly fast enough so it could bring a wind too. But a different kind of wind from the one in the Bible—a sucking wind like a tornado that would draw him up and throw him out into the sky, free to float through the clouds.

If he did teach it to fly, he would have to show it to somebody. He could show it to the big eagle because it was gold and it probably flew once too. He could tie a piece of baling wire to the dove's leg and take it into town some Saturday morning. It would have to be soon though because last Sunday Father Flory asked for people to help move the wooden altar with its angels and saints standing in their little caves, and then they would get rid of the golden eagle. He said as soon as they cleaned up the stage-part of the hall and moved the kneelers and altar into the hall the carpenters would start tearing down and stacking the bricks and boards of the old church to see how much could be saved and used for the new one. He couldn't take the golden dove into the hall

if it was a church and the eagle wasn't there. Jettie had to have the dove soon.

The thin iron latch was too hot to lift out of its slot with one hand, so he set the bowl down on the old pig trough and rubbed his sweaty hands into the dirt. It stuck to them long enough for him to open the door. It was so dark inside he stumbled over the bottom rung of the chicken roosts and fell to his knees. He balanced the bowl carefully and none of the scraps spilled. He stayed on his knees until his eyes adjusted to the heavy darkness. Jettie didn't move. Her thick comb was a little more wilted than before and the veined layer of skin covered her eyes, but her black and white feathers looked as if they hadn't fluttered since the Bible itself was written. Wallemin walked through the crackling straw and offered her a crooked potato peeling.

"Jettie, when is the dove coming?"

She opened her eyes and pecked it out of his hand. Maybe the watery peelings and the left-over hash would make up for not finding any green hay. It was always hard for anything to be born, but Jesus had a bed of straw too and he didn't wait until the hottest day of the year to be born. He only had a windy stable and Jettie's nest was at least sheltered in a warm corner of the old chicken house where all the cracks were filled up with dust or mud-dauber nests. There was no need for it to take so long. If it took more than three weeks for the egg to hatch he couldn't take the golden dove in to town because the parish hall would be a church and the eagle would be gone. Unless they moved the big eagle and the flag bolted to its stand somewhere else when they moved the church in. They could put it in the old church where the old altar was except that the roof would probably fall in and splinter the plaster eagle into golden chips. That was why it was condemned and they had to either build another one or close it and lock the doors. Wallemin didn't know who would pay for the new one but his mother said the parish hall was as good as any tall-spired cathedral because the sanctuary light was a sign that God was there so all they had to do was put one up in the hall and the people could go to church there. The golden dove would be bright enough to use for a sanctuary lamp. They could put it in a vase and the people could come and pray. Then he wouldn't have to show it to the big eagle. They would probably put the eagle in a dusty closet somewhere anyway or they might even throw it in the junkyard and scatter the broken pieces into all the rusty tin cans. Why did Jettie take so long?

When the bowl of scraps was empty, Jettie plumped herself up from the nest, raised a puff of dust as she hopped down to the straw and

clucked as she waddled out through the small gate in the fence.

"Jettie! Come back here and sit on your nest." Wallemin started toward the wooden door, then, deciding that she needed fresh air, turned and slid down into the hay and put his hands behind his neck. There was a speck of white sky coming in through a hole in the ceiling. The sun would help Jettie make the egg shiny and strong. If it wasn't coming till next Friday she would need sun and food to make the egg grow. But he had told his mother it would be today.

Jettie and the other chickens sqawked. Wallemin stretched himself up just as the latch clicked and the door creaked open. His mother stood squinting into the dust rays.

"Wallemin McClezner! Go into the house immediately and finish your chores. And come here in the light where I can see you."

"Mom, I told you—"

Putting one hesitant foot on the jagged door sill and shading her eyes to peer closer, she seemed almost afraid to come in, as if she didn't belong there at all. Her uncertainty heightened her scolding voice. "That's enough sass, young man. You'll stay in your room all day tomorrow if you don't mind me."

"But Jettie—" Wallemin walked into the sun's heat with sullen steps, kicking at small sticks of straw. His mother looked relieved and put her arm around his shoulders. "Father Flory just phoned and he's coming out in a few minutes. I know he'll ask me to help move his altar and statues and I don't have the time. If we don't get the baling done we'll have to eat canned beans all winter."

Father Flory didn't know how hard it was for his mother to supervise the mowing and raking and baling of the bottom fields alone. His brother Brant went out to the fields with the neighbor men, but his mother told Brant what to do. He had been only twelve when his father died four years ago so their mother had to remember enough about the greenness of alfalfa when it was ready to be baled to carry out the harvesting herself. The neighbor men volunteered to help as long as she wanted to stay on the farm but she had to decide how much seed to plant and how long her dead husband's credit was good at the town bank. She had taught Brant not to be boss over the men and to simply suggest to them that it was his mother's wish that the meadow with the railroad track running through it be planted in wheat rather than alfalfa because of the danger of spark grass fires. If the field caught fire, it wouldn't be as bad to lose a field of wheat because the selling price of wheat was less than that of alfalfa. Brant went out to the field without his mother now and took Wallemin along three days a week so he could take over if

Brant got married. Maybe Father Flory wanted to warn his brother about the evils of marriage. He preached once a month about courting and the proper conduct around girls and Brant listened closely. Brant wouldn't get married, though, as long as his mother needed him, and she needed him now to tell Father Flory they couldn't help him move his church.

Wallemin latched the door as he went out, saw the speckled hen eating mulberries with the rest of the chickens, and followed his mother back to the house. He put the last bowl into the cabinet as Father Flory's car backfired and stopped outside. He went to the screen door to watch the car spring up a foot when Father Flory squeezed out from under the steering wheel and to watch it rock when he slammed the door. It had oily patches of navy blue glitter where the sun had faded the black paint. Father Flory patted the fender as he shuffled around the front of the car and called out, "Good afternoon to you, Mrs. McClezner and family. I have come to ask a favor in the name of God's holy church. Are you there, Mrs. McClezner?"

Wallemin stepped on to the termite-holed wooden porch and held the door open for the priest.

"Walter, how are you, my boy? Still praying to your patron saint like I taught you in catechism class?" His black gown brushed against the cobwebs on the screen door. "He was one of the staunchest pillars of the early church and suffered the terrors of martyrdom rather than give away the hidden entrance to the catacombs." He huffed down onto a wobbling kitchen chair.

"My name is Wallemin, Father." He wanted to get another chair for the part of Father that overflowed on both sides.

"Yes, yes. He was a great saint." He fanned himself with a red-printed handkerchief and wiped his forehead. "Let us be humble and pray that one day you too may have some of his courage. We know he is up there guiding his namesake, and you, Walter, must do nothing to belittle his name."

Wallemin walked over to half-sit on the table and looked down at the straw dust on his shirt front. "Father—"

"Yes, son. And where is your mother, boy? I'd like to speak with her."

"Father—Father, Jettie's going to have a golden dove and we can use it for a sanctuary lamp."

"What did you say?" Father Flory craned his thick neck forward and his eyes jerked.

"And we can put the big eagle up on the stage and pray to it so we don't have to move anything but the kneelers and the holy water out of

the old church. Cause all we need is the big eagle and a sign that says he's there."

"What's the matter with you, Walter?" Father Flory spluttered and shrunk his red-veined neck back onto his shoulders. "Come here! What are you saying?"

"Jettie was supposed to have it this morning but I know it'll come next Friday if it doesn't today. And it'll take three weeks before it hatches. By then you can have the kneelers moved, and I'll help you too. Mom can't, but I will. It's easy to move the eagle and then we can keep going to church there and close and lock the other one—"

"Mrs. McCleznor. Mrs. McCleznor! Come quickly, your boy is possessed." He struggled up from the chair and it fell over backwards. "Go out to my car and bring my holy water. Quick."

Wallemin's mother clattered downstairs and stopped only long enough for Father Flory to grab her arm and push her toward the door. She turned her head around to look at Wallemin and stepped on the back of one sandal with the other foot. "What on earth—?"

"Quick. Quick. My holy water." His fleshy stomach heaved up and down.

As the screendoor sprang shut and bounced back open, Wallemin bounded down from the table and remained crouched with his knees bent, until Father Flory put his heavy hand on his head and said, "Just be—be calm, boy. It'll be all right soon. We—we'll exorcise you and then—your mother is to blame for this!"

Wallemin stood up tall and looked straight at Father Flory's red, jerking throat. "Jettie's going to have a golden egg and a golden dove and then I can feel the wind. Father, I want to feel the wind." He pointed out the window over the sink to a white cottony cloud the size of a sleeping lamb. "Father—a golden dove. With silky yellowish feathers under its stiff wing feathers. And a long shiny tail. And marble eyes that sparkle in the sun like when you throw a rock in the pond and it splashes up and blinds you. And then I can close my eyes and see the stars inside my head and be carried off my feet when he flies around and around and around my head—" Wallemin closed his eyes and twisted around swinging his arms.

Father Flory stepped back and kicked the overturned chair against the wall and a picture fell down and broke. "Boy! Walter! I told Mrs. McCleznor after the funeral. I told her she couldn't raise two strapping boys alone out here. I knew something would—"

Wallemin hit Father Flory in the stomach with one of his swinging hands and kept turning. "And it'll suck me up like a tornado and I'll go up and up and up and—" He stopped suddenly and stared out the

window at the cloud which was now outlined in the blood red color of the sunset. "Jettie!" he cried.

Father Flory caught his thrashing arm and dropped it as if he had been burned and shouted, "Mrs. McClezner! Hurry, he's beset by the devil himself. Beelzebub has come to claim his soul!" He held one hand to his stomach, panting, and reached behind him for the wall with the other. "Begone Satan! Holy saints of God! Mrs. McClezner—"

"Jettie, I'm coming. Wait." Wallemin stumbled dizzily toward the front door and saw his mother coming up the porch steps, turned and bumped into the table and ran out the back door and around the house to the mulberry trees. He didn't feel his flying toes throw up dirt and smashed berries behind him and didn't see the chickens scatter with loud squawks. He cut his fingers on the ridged door fumbling with the latch, wiped the back of his hand on his shirt before it even bled, took a deep breath of heavy air, and looked over at the red edge of the sun. "Why didn't you tell me, Jettie?" I thought you meant when the sun comes *up*!" He heard a cow moaning in the far pasture and saw Brant hitting the haunches of the lumbering cattle that didn't move fast enough to get home before sundown. He breathed again, calmer now, and looked up to see a scissor-tail crossing the violet streaks of sky.

The weathered door squeaked as he slowly pulled it open. Jettie's corner was dark. Maybe she didn't have it yet and was hiding from him. Because he should have been able to see her white feathers even if her black ones did match the walls. Or she could have turned all black after the egg was born to show people she really did lay it. Father Flory wouldn't even believe it then, though. All he wanted was to move his church and get people to pay for the new one so he could dress up in silk capes and stand up with his fat arms on a new, fresh-varnished pulpit and preach about saints and hell and courting.

The stiff straw crackled under his bare feet as he inched past the roosts. Jettie wasn't in her nest. "Jettie? Where are you?" His toes brushed into a hump of feathers and the hen peeped and got up. He knelt down to pet her. "Jettie, did it come? Is my golden egg here?" He floundered over to the nest and fingered carefully the prickly rim, then slowly moved his hand down the smooth sides to the center, touched a warm hard glassy egg and jumped back nearly squashing Jettie. He picked her up with both hands and kissed her speckled feathers. "You did it, you did it, Jettie! I knew you could. When will it hatch out, though?" The hen clucked fast like a train sliding down a hill and fluttered out of his hands. He tenderly picked up the egg and tapped it with his fingernail and held it close to his eyes. It didn't shine yet because it was too new.

It would in the morning when the sun came up. He would sleep right beside the nest tonight so he could guard it from the rest of the chickens. They might peck at it if it shone in the dark and break it. He had to be careful not to drop it, too, because if the dove came out before it was ready it would be white. It would take at least three weeks for it to get golden and big.

A faded light drifted in through the door and he heard voices mix with the singing frogs. He turned and saw the light from a flashlight waver across the ground, come over the door sill, and suddenly lift up to his face.

"Walter, now listen to me. Your mother and brother and I still love you and this won't take but five minutes. *In nomine Patris*—" Father Flory's rough voice droned into the light and Wallemin put one hand in front of his eyes.

"Wally, look. All you have to do is come back to the house and sleep for a while and maybe in the morning—" The flashlight went down to the straw and Brant came over and put his hand on his shoulder. Wallemin stood staring at the egg in his hand. It was a delicate shade of china-brown like the inside of a tree with the bark peeled off. He lifted it with his thumb and finger and rolled it around. It was brown. Jettie laid a brown egg. But she had speckled feathers. It had to be gold.

He wrapped his fingers tightly about the egg and squeezed it with a steady force that, if done by a giant to the earth, could have shrunk it to the size of a fly in the palm of his hand. It didn't break. He put it in the circle of light from the flashlight to look at it again. Then he spat on it and threw it down to the straw. It still didn't shatter.

"We'll get you back into the church fast enough, Walter, my boy. Everyone stand back." Father Flory's big coarse shoe kicked up into the air and came down fast above the egg until Wallemin sprang forward and grabbed it and the foot crashed down into crackling, dusty hay. Father Flory tottered with the force of the stomping, lost his balance, and landed heavily on the floor with his short legs spread out in front of him.

Brant had a smile in his voice when he said, "Here, Father. Let me help you up." Their mother pulled on his other arm and when he was up on his feet, they stood in a row and watched Wallemin.

With glowing eyes, he backed into Jettie's corner, sat down on her nest, and picked her up and put her on his lap. He bit the tip off the small end of the egg and spat out the broken shell. He let Jettie peck out some of the white syrup and then put it to his lips and drank the rest along with the yellow yolk. It would have tasted better fried or soft-boiled with salt and pepper on it but he knew he had to eat it in

front of the big eagle or in front of Jettie and the mud-daubers. He sat still, smoothing Jettie's feathers until he felt the wind. It was louder and stronger than a tornado and it roared not in a dizzy circle but in a sharp line down from his drumming head through his beating heart to the soles of his browned feet, and he felt like a word must feel when it is funneled painfully but fruitfully from a universed sky into a constraining grain of wheat.

I Want No More Of Kissing

I want no more of kissing tongue to lips.
Too long have I been ired by fingertips
That rage me up despite my true attempt
To act untrue: naive and innocent.
I want a kiss that grazes on my cheek,
Forehead, or hair, kiss like the wind's oblique
Caress that brushes, sweeps up equal joy
And drowns the drinking fire that soon will cloy.

I want to be not tricked into a kiss
Of burning answer to his fiery thirst
By mockingbirds and quiet springtime need.
I want to feel my giving him delight
In answer to his windsoft gentle gift
Become a watered fire yet greener seed.

To Magdelene Repenting

It was not merely for the shattered globe
of glass that bled you as you stepped;
nor was it for the flesh-transparent probe
that chilled you, that you wept

for what was more than clear-as-crystal loss
of crushed faith mortared in the floor;
and more than simply for the savage toss
of mankind in the roar

of brutish rhythms rising in the night
of dust gone mad with fear and lust
that cages us in clay; not from the fright—
but that this common dust

can fuse its own in blindness, and the spark
can turn us numb in crashing spheres
of disbelief—so to the very dark
that took you, you gave tears.

And yet you could not lose them in the glint
of glassling splinters in the blood,
but lent them to the warm and quick imprint
of dust. They say the flood

you weep turns dust to mud. You know the breath
that breaks is merely dark to give
to tinted flesh a taint of time; not death,
for you who choose to live.

Let Them Lie Perilous

There had been days when you and I were green
and growing in the knowing of the sun
that marshalled all our moves, as the hot screen
of young and fearful summer makes the run
of leaves impossible. Then was the fall
when brighting promise colored dying heat;
and in the winter, warmth was ours to call
in sheltered dreams. We tricked the gleaming sleet
with fires we conjured in the street. Our dash
into the flame yet damned us in the ring
of falsehood; when the ice revealed us ash,
we melted to its truth, and missed the spring.

And in the wake of dust we'd stilled the seasons;
shammed our separate cycles, killed our reasons.

MADELEINE BECAN

*This Hopeborn Arrow
Screaming In The Grey*

This hopeborn arrow screaming in the grey
of sky blown bitter to unthirsty lands
dog-dares the wind to spin it in the fans
of fancy, or to skim one quill astray
with the capricious devil in her sway
that mowed the burning grass to wetted strands
and moved the listless archer's dusty hands
from grieving in the apathy's decay.

And I must watch the shadow in the grass,
the long thin bird that rails through the blades.
Out of this paining sight it must deliver
and strike, till time, the clouding storm will pass,
the day blast out the whimwinds and the shades
while hope will guard the archer's empty quiver.

If Wings Could Beat Breath

If wings could beat breath
in the platinum sun
and quench but one
bright agony's spark
would the sparrow draw death
or the world dry dark?

If whispers could sting
the ear of a cloud
would whispers be loud,
or murmurs be roars,
or would the hush cling
to the whisperer's sores?

If star pins can aim
at a spot of dark
and prick a shy spark
in the shade, and keep
its beam at the same
bright full, then I'll weep,

for losses are dry
and oceans void
but never destroyed
when a drop of grief
can summon the sky
to rain your relief.

The Dust Plots Thick Upon The Trees

I

The dust plots thick upon the trees
when rainless seasons
scorch the thirsty bees
and give no reasons
for sweat and melting things when all
the winds are fanning
dry and drier. Call
the clouds—the spanning
sky-threads of relief. Where are they,
and what great swallow
gulped the dripping day
that no more follow?

II

The snakes are crimping in the creek
in mute starvation
where fishers in weak
anticipation
now seldom come, because the fish
are dead or dying
and the hollow wish
to stay the shying
rain from cloying up the grounds,
and mud from filling
trees and wills, redounds
where snakes are killing.

III

The fisherwives are sitting home
and watch the whiting
heat of sky become
more deadly brighting
till wisps drift to the torrid blue
and pierce the bubble
(they wept as it grew
for heaven's trouble)
to find and break in stagnant spots
where fish escaping
the water-snake plots
gasp the rain's shaping.

From *Songs Of David*

I. "FROM GENERATION UNTO GENERATION"

What shall it profit dirt to lie amuck
beside the stream that wets it to a seething
sift, without the hand of some breathing
thing to make it more than mere potluck?
A clod is trivial unless the heaving
Heavens blow their image to its heart
or, unless the image born of dirt impart
to it a likely form, with careful grieving.

Some memory of likeness prompts the artist
to inform the cloddish things of man
minutely to the greatness of God's breath.
From dust he fathers images, the hardest
of which will outgibraltar time and span
the awful gap around the grave of death.

II. *IN MEMORIAM* DYLAN THOMAS

Death, where is your sting? Your gossip fails
to give what lie may be to love's hard word.
Though lovers leave their beds for wormy sod,
their druid song survives the coffin nails.
There was a bard caught up in his shroud sails
who made a bedsheet of the work of God
and there begat a child whose voice is heard
descanting far as ever is to snails.

Knowing you a single face
of that force which gives and takes,
he drank his fill and sang his thanks.
Then drunk and not much hope for grace,
he gave his ghost. Now God partakes
his song, despite his buried pranks.

III. TO ROBERT HERRICK

*I write of hell; I sing (and ever shall)
Of heaven, and hope to have it after all.*

—*Herrick*

"Shall we give ourselves to pleasure," smiled
our parents, thinking they might lie abed
so old and get a son. Yet, what God said,
He did; and they rejoiced in their great child.
Laughter turned to tears when God decreed
that Abraham should burn his winter's fruit.
But in the end, his happiness was mute
at Mercy's telling him, "Kill not thy seed."

If heaven is open to our father who
in his old age, enjoying carnal love,
was given its fruit and given to raise the Fall,
can we, his flesh and blood, not hope to hew
the things of earth and still to rise above?
Do you not, then, have heaven after all?



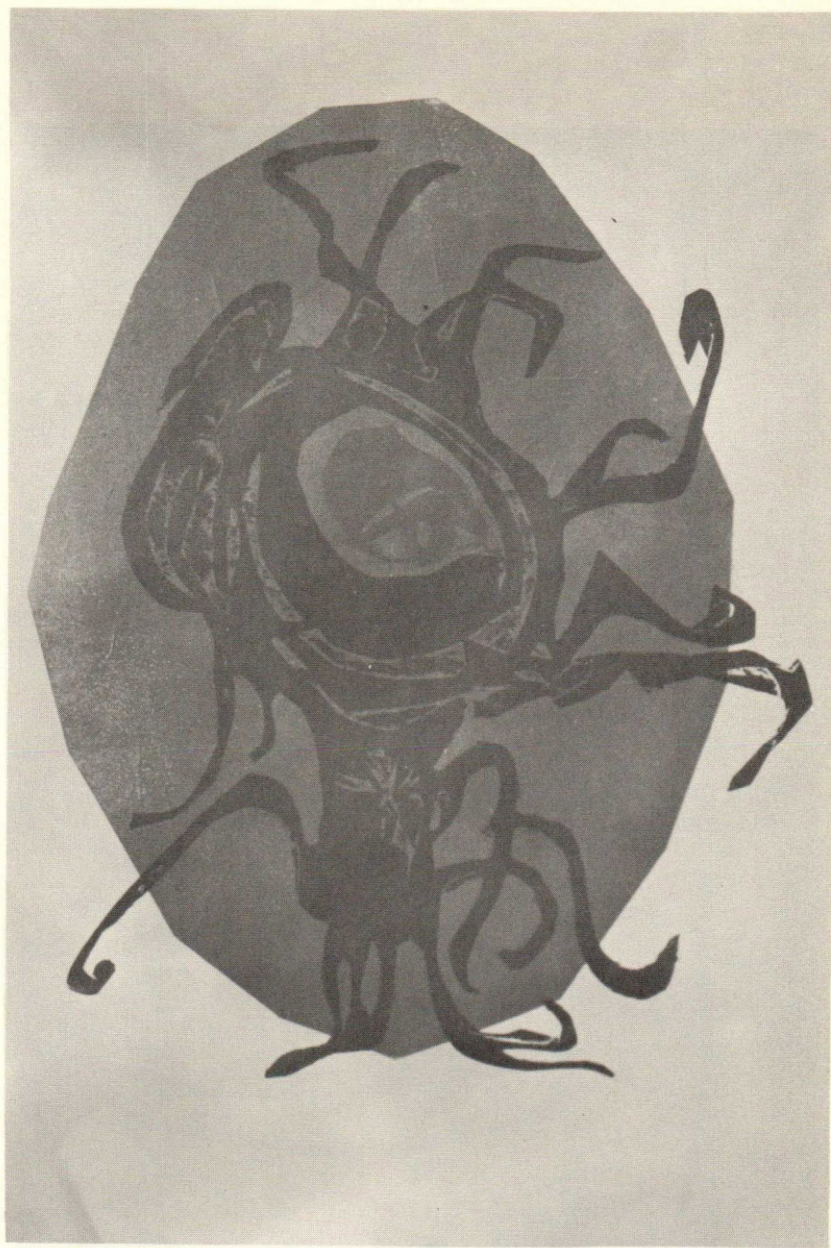
Mary Ann Reneau, *Tropical Tones*, serigraph



Mary Ann Reneau, *Trio*, oil



Karyn Farrow, *Sailboats*, serigraph



Carole Jettun, *Wrath of Medusa*, block print



Carole Jettun, *Georgian Dinner*, serigraph



Barbara Green, *Fertility*, block print



Patty McGowan, *Self-Portrait*, oil

Hemingway's Paris Days

A Review of Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1964.

"If the reader prefers," Hemingway wrote in a preface shortly before he died, "this book may be regarded as fiction." The book of which he spoke, *A Moveable Feast*, is a kind of recreation of his years in Paris during the twenties. The title is taken from a letter he wrote to a friend in 1950:

If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast.

The glory of Paris apparently stayed with Hemingway, for those years from 1921-1926 in which he lived and worked in this city are recalled with remarkable facility and vividness. The book is divided into segments connected only by the fact that each story takes place in Paris; however, these segments have a life about them that partakes of myth rather than sober fact. Such literary personages as Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and F. Scott Fitzgerald are the heroes of Hemingway's fantasy and are seen as monsters and saints and sinners.

The entire Pound episode reveals a famous poet as a terribly sincere philanthropist who takes care of the unfortunate. He organized the *Bel Esprit* club for the purpose of getting T. S. Eliot out of the bank so that he could devote all his time to writing poetry. Hemingway entered into the "good spirit" and complicated the situation by requesting money for a Major Eliot, deliberately confusing the poet with Major Douglass, an economist. When Hemingway would try to solicit funds from his friends to get Major Eliot out of the bank, they would ask what a major was doing in a bank anyway. Hemingway would then explain that this was all beside the point. Either you had *Bel Esprit* or you did not have it. So he would say, "Keep your money. We wouldn't touch it anyway."

This kind of byplay does not sound like the Hemingway who wrote novels characterized by a distinct seriousness and about a world which was often singularly depressing. But the humor of *A Moveable Feast* is a subtle part of its total view of the world. In the following dialogue, for instance, Ford Maddox Ford and Hemingway are in the Cafe Closieriesdes

Lilas, and Ford is explaining the intricacies of what it means to be a "gentleman":

"Is Ezra a gentleman?" I asked.

"Of course not," Ford said. "He's an American."

"Can't an American be a gentleman?"

"Perhaps John Quinn," Ford explained

"Are you a gentleman?"

"Naturally. I have held His Majesty's commission."

"It's very complicated," I said. "Am I a gentleman?"

"Absolutely not," Ford said.

"Then why are you drinking with me?"

"I'm drinking with you as a promising young writer. As a fellow writer in fact."

"Good of you," I said.

The language itself of *A Moveable Feast* is different also from the characteristic dry, very simple prose of Hemingway's past writings. There is the clarity and precision of structure; but there is also a poetic quality distinct from his "old" style and displayed, for example, in this description of Fitzgerald:

His talent was as natural as the pattern that was made by the dust on a butterfly's wings. At one time he understood it no more than the butterfly did and he did not know when it was brushed or marred. Later he became conscious of his damaged wings and of their construction and he learned to think and could not fly any more because the love of flight was gone and he could only remember when it had been effortless.

Again, in describing Zelda, Fitzgerald's wife, Hemingway reaches a level of poetry: "Watching her face you could see her mind leave the table and go to the night's party and return with her eyes blank as a cat's and then pleased, and the pleasure would show along the thin line of her lips and then be gone." The mystery, beauty, and even the insanity of Zelda Fitzgerald is contained in this one sentence.

Against such beauty of prose the frequent triteness with which Hemingway seems to view the world is startling. He dwells too often and too much upon the incidents that reveal a marked prejudice or short-sightedness. The amount of attention devoted to Fitzgerald in this book is justified perhaps according to the interest that the reader finds in the situation of two such literary figures together, their influence upon and reaction to one another. However, it is obvious that we see only one side of the situation. Through the eyes of Hemingway, Fitzgerald comes off worse than anyone in the book with the possible exception of Miss Stein, whose lesbian

proclivities disgusted Hemingway into a complete rejection of their relationship.

The motor trip which Hemingway and Fitzgerald make from Lyon to Paris will not, I think, take its place as one of the great comic journeys of literature (as it has been written). We see Fitzgerald, nearly approaching insanity, becoming deplorably drunk and sick on relatively small doses of alcohol, speaking and acting incoherently; in short, debauching himself as well as his art. According to Hemingway, Fitzgerald was finished as an artist, but the episode is not really humorous.

A Moveable Feast reveals that Hemingway saw the world quite superficially. He possessed a great gift but never possessed the vision to glimpse beyond the obvious. His sketches, as well written as they are, show a definite limitation in insight. The passage about Fitzgerald quoted above is beautiful prose but not strictly true. Hemingway realizes that Fitzgerald "learned to think" of the construction of his stories and thus could not "fly anymore"; he misinterprets a writer who in his brilliant novel *The Great Gatsby* brings together intellect and feeling in a work far superior to anything Hemingway himself had yet written at that early point in his career.

The book is still noteworthy if only as a record of a writer in love with his craft and exulting in the ease with which a story can "write itself," as Hemingway describes his writing of "Up in Michigan." We see the discovering of new and different techniques such as Hemingway's art of omission: "On the new theory that you could omit anything if you knew that you omitted and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more than they understood." We can see this style of "omission" throughout *A Moveable Feast*; each chapter stops abruptly with but a sentence of suggestion and we are somehow to know all that is not given. It succeeds—this style—for as segments, the chapters convey much more than they actually state.

We see Hemingway as the constantly preoccupied artist, but patient with the limitations of his art. He realized that he must write a novel but knew it would come as all things have come: "When I had to write it then it would be the only thing to do and there would be no choice." And so he wrote, in time, *The Sun Also Rises*, a remarkable first novel.

A Moveable Feast makes for fascinating reading, for Paris has been preserved at a crucial time in the memory of an artist, and after a span of some forty years its intensity and adventure live in his writings as though he were once again in the midst of its streets and sidewalk cafes. It is a valuable study for all students of literature, and especially for those who recognize the genius and the limitations of Ernest Hemingway.

Christianity in Disguise

A Review of Cleanth Brooks, *The Hidden God*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963.

Cleanth Brooks has been noted for his ingenious analysis of the paradoxes and ambiguities inherent in the language of poetry. One of the foremost members of that hypothetical "school" designated as the "New Criticism," he has been a kind of mediator between the contemporary reader and the contemporary poet. Now, however, in *The Hidden God*, composed of a series of lectures presented to the Conference in Theology for College Faculty at Trinity College, Hartford, in 1955, Brooks takes on the task of clarifying for the contemporary Christian the predominant themes within the literature of our times. He discusses the aspects of Christianity to be found in the works of five writers: Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, W. B. Yeats, and R. P. Warren. T. S. Eliot, the one recognized Christian with whom Brooks deals, is approached as a modern troubled poet rather than as a religious thinker.

Several reviewers have misunderstood the use of the term "Christianity" in *The Hidden God*. It is obvious from a cursory glance that Brooks treats the five authors not in terms of a systematic theology, but in terms of embodied Christian values working under the surface of action. He speaks of the "hidden God" at work within the writings of men who, themselves, are not necessarily committed Christians. Brooks' concern, therefore, is not to prove that Ernest Hemingway and W. B. Yeats are orthodox Christians, but rather to show to what degree these writers are compatible with a broad Christian viewpoint. Like the *Beowulf* poet, Brooks sees fit to stress those values in a partially alien culture which are not only of value for the modern Christian, but even essential to a deeper understanding of Christian beliefs and their place in life. Each of the authors to whom Brooks devotes a chapter exemplifies in one way or another the essential values underlying Christianity.

He sees Hemingway, for instance, as struggling "to save the humanity of man as man" against the onslaughts of the dehumanizing, mechanistic world. The virtues which his characters celebrate "are ultimately necessary to Christianity . . . they look toward Christianity" because "they have everything to do with man's dignity as a free spirit."

In the work of William Faulkner, according to Brooks, "man is capable of evil, and this means that goodness has to be achieved by struggle and discipline and effort." Faulkner "emphasizes courage and the need to cleave to some ideal of honor which will redeem man from mere bestiality or mere mechanism."

For Brooks, Yeats' poetry "asserts the dignity and power of the human spirit against the spiritual and intellectual corruption of our time."

The Christian element that Brooks discerns in the writing of Robert Penn Warren is a strict adherence to reality—a "commitment to the truth, and the deep sense that the truth is rarely simple." Warren's recurrent theme is the meaning of the past in order "to live meaningfully in the present." Although Warren presents his problems in non-Christian terms, the Christian may be tempted to transpose his theme of moving from "ignorance to knowledge or from bafflement and confusion to order and insight," into that of "conversion or redemption."

The one recognized Christian poet with whom Brooks deals has been considered Christian because of his doctrinal position. Yet Brooks has chosen to explore the way in which these doctrines are made manifest in concrete action in the created world of Eliot's poetry. Eliot has been forced to be indirect rather than direct in the expression of his Christianity since "he could never assume agreement on principles or unanimity in doctrine." His later poetry, Brooks maintains, uses the very existence of the concept of the eternal as a stepping stone and indirect path for his Christianity. "His later poetry may be regarded as a sustained attempt to suggest how we, immersed in the world of time as we are, can win to any kind of comprehension of the timeless [God]."

Ernest Hemingway is perhaps the most surprising inclusion in Brooks' selection of authors. Heretofore, Hemingway's work has not drawn much attention from the critics of whom Brooks is representative, with the notable exception of Robert Penn Warren's essay, "Ernest Hemingway." Hemingway's secular world of the "code" by which men live has not been interpreted by most critics as having any essential religious elements. Indeed Brooks' treatment of Hemingway under the thesis which he employs seems based on carefully selected evidence. For example, he designates *For Whom The Bell Tolls* as Hemingway's "perhaps finest novel," but he does not mention *A Farewell To Arms*. Overlooking some of the fairly obvious propagandistic elements in the former novel, which have been described as flaws by other critics, Brooks concentrates heavily upon the ending of the book and Robert Jordan's manner of dying. Quite obviously the conclusion of *For Whom The Bell Tolls* is a much stronger

contribution of Brooks' thesis than is the conclusion of *A Farewell To Arms*.

Brooks' treatment of Faulkner, however, under the title thesis of the "hidden God," is well presented and supported. Brooks uses Randall Stewart's statement that "There is everywhere in [Faulkner's] writings the basic premise of Original Sin: everywhere the conflict between the flesh and the spirit . . ." as a departure point and proceeds to redefine this original sin as he sees it in the context of Faulkner's novels.

Brooks has done a great service to Faulkner's art by insisting upon a separation of Faulkner from writers of a more naturalistic and secularistic temper. He refutes the assumption that Faulkner's characters are mere creatures of environment responding to the strongest stimuli. "They make decisions, and they win their goodness through effort and discipline." Brooks equates original sin in Faulkner with this recognition of evil and the necessary struggle for goodness which results from the recognition; however, he admits that this belief in original sin does not necessarily prove Faulkner a Christian because all concept of grace is lacking in his works. Brooks continues, however, to develop in detail the elements of original sin to be found in *Sanctuary*, *Light In August*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *Absalom, Absalom!* and "The Bear." He maintains that *Sanctuary* must be understood primarily in terms of man's "discovery of evil, which is part of man's initiation into the nature of reality." Brooks insists, for Faulkner, that evil involves the "violation of the natural and the denial of the human." For instance, such characters as Popeye in *Sanctuary*, and Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* are drawn in rigid and mechanical terms which lay stress on their violation of the natural. But Brooks sees that the discovery of evil in Faulkner is intimately associated with the discovery of the true nature of women; and that blindness to the nature of reality "involves blindness to the nature of woman" as it does for Sutpen and Horace Benbow. Brooks pursues this thesis in his interpretation with regard to Aunt Jenny in *The Unvanquished*, Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*, Lena in *Light in August*, and Temple Drake in *Sanctuary*.

Brooks concludes that Faulkner is a "profoundly religious writer" because his characters "come out of a Christian environment, and represent, whatever their shortcomings and whatever their theological heresies, Christian concerns." In short, Brooks feels that Faulkner's characters can only be understood by reference to Christian premises.

The literature discussed by Brooks rose out of the disunity of the Twentieth Century and reflects the confusion, skepticism, and doubt of the age concerning man and his place in the universe. It seems that in an age of total disunity of belief such as ours, in which not even Christians

can profess belief in the same doctrines, there is a need for a re-emphasis of the fundamental doctrines of the dignity of the individual. There is a need for a common denominator which can supply the framework of unity for all Christians, and it seems that Cleanth Brooks has discovered a hope for this common denominator in the representative spokesmen of the culture. The adjective "Christian," then, in the context of *The Hidden God*, cannot be understood in its usual sense of one who professes a belief in Christ; rather Brooks uses the traditional term to assert those basic principles concerning man which underlie Christian belief, namely: the ultimate freedom of the will to choose good or evil; the worth and dignity of the individual; and the necessity of the individual's recognition of himself in the context of a moral order in which actions must be judged as right or wrong and in which responsibility for such actions must be assumed.