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IN LUCE TUA

Dulce Domum

It is only the second week in November, and yesterday I spent an hour at the local mall. People were caught up in something; I suppose it was our culture's equivalent of a feeding frenzy. I overheard this exchange:

"Do you think Grandma Edna would like this?"

"No," was the answer, "She'd hate it."

"Well, I know she doesn't wear perfume. Would just plain musk oil be OK?"

As long as she doesn't run across any caribou, I suppose. The fairly desperate-looking effort to buy presents for people from great heaps of things hardly anybody could want might strike the observer as repugnant, or maybe just sad. Somewhere within that effort, though, is the desire to recognize the special quality of the Christmas season, and the more deeply we have buried it, the more desperate our effort.

Christmas always sends us toward childhood—our memories, perhaps, or our fantasies. Among other reasons, such a motion lies with our instinct to remember that at some point in our biography, burying our feelings and desires was not an important activity. We remember that our joys and sorrows, our excitements and passions, were not only near the surface but even readily expressible. If, then, we longed for the perfect, wonderful, thrilling present—the bicycle beyond reason and expectation—we said so. We may have protected ourselves against the disappointment by reasoning that such a present was unlikely, but we didn't pretend to ourselves that such a longing was, well, childish. It didn't seem irreligious to expend energy in longing.

The longing itself, even when it is expended on lesser objects, is the message. Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*, a book I return to often, and always at Christmas, describes the longing for home of one of his animal characters. Mole has left home to experience the adventures and pleasures of a social world above ground and on the thrilling River, but suddenly, at Christmas, he senses the call of his home. Blocked from going there, he feels "a big sob gathering, gathering, somewhere low down inside him, to leap up to the surface presently, he knew, in passionate escape." Soon thereafter, his longing for home frustrated by other obligations and other people's demands, "poor Mole at last gave up the struggle, and cried freely and helplessly and openly, now that he knew it was all over and he had lost what he could hardly be said to have found."

Most of us have felt that gathering sob, I suspect. Even the lady pondering the purchase of the unwanted musk oil for Grandma Edna. But in this children's book, Mole's desire is satisfied, his tears move at least one of his friends to change plans, and both he and Ratty go to his house for a cozy supper, joined later by carolers, "singing one of the old-time carols that their forefathers composed in fields that were fallow and held by frost, or when snowbound in chimney corners, and handed down to be sung in the miry streets to lamp-lit windows at Yuletime."

God knows we have our miry streets, though we may not recognize that these airless corridors, crammed with the trash of an overstuffed society, are their equivalent. Some of us are pretty quick to condemn those malls and even the people who fill them, not acknowledging in those noisy searches for the perfect gift that gathering sob, that buried longing for our home, our God. But the carols are sounding there—debased, perhaps, ignored—but present still within the corrupted spaces we have made for ourselves.

"Villagers all, this frosty tide,
Let your doors swing open wide,
Though wind may follow and snow beside,
Yet draw us in by your fire to bide.
Joy shall be yours in the morning!

. . . .And then they heard the angels tell
'Who were the first to cry Nowell?
Animals all, as it befell,
In the stable where they did dwell, '
Joy shall be theirs in the morning! "

Get yourself a copy of *Wind in the Willows* this Christmas, turn to the chapter called "Dulce Domum" and in that sweet home recover for awhile the purity of longing and the joy of fulfillment that children know in their reading. Joy shall be yours in the morning!

Peace,

GME

The High Rise Evergreen

In the ascension daydream, the body
Rises like the final beam which carries
An evergreen to the high rise rooftop.

Blue spruce, juniper, white and scotch pines—
I am trimming the borders of our yard,
A sentry for height and unevenness.

Nearby are the Lambs' Ears I love to touch,
Early morning, moisture and the infant's
Face feel of these leaves enough to make me

Listen for breath and check the undersides
For insects, for blight, run my fingers
Along stems as if I had solutions

For flaws I find. Like the eternity clone,
Reconstructing the body cell by cell,
Sufficient time for the improbable.

A ferryboat, once, was hauled up by mules,
Piece by heavy piece, into the Andes,
And reassembled on the chilly shore

Of The Lake of Clouds. What's necessary
For the world's highest lake; what's possible,
I think, tilting my head to gauge the plane

Of my trim by eye. Like a mason who
Knows before the bubble in his level
Rides just right of center, I reach and snip

A small tuft of needles, thinking mortar,
Hair, and the fine calculations which
Suspend a thousand tons of iron in air.

Gary Fincke

THE WRITING OF *BRANTA* AND OTHER AFFECTIONS

WALTER WANGERIN, JR.

The child need not know—and the adult, therefore, may not remember—that the experience of story between a grown-up and a kid is *all and all for all*: all of the teller talks, and everything in the hearer responds. And the story itself may touch upon absolutely anything they both have encountered in this world. The story is another bucket of All.

Daddy, don't patronize! Mama, don't bowdlerize life for your baby. Teachers, we must not condescend—nor, author, lisp for the children. If we diminish the relationship by foreshortening ourselves or our story or our estimation of the child, we reduce the event itself. It becomes mere entertainment for one of us. But that kid sees everything, don-cha know. She just doesn't understand it.

Far from sweetening experience for the sake of her "tender" spirit, the story must be willing to embrace all and all of the basic truths of this existence. It must confront every form of difficulty (something children are experts in—difficulty) and go *through* it toward a blessed and believable conclusion. Then will the story be trusted. Then it will be true. And then both the teller and the told will experience—in the event of story—an ordering of anything they've met in "real" life, any mess or chaos internal or external, any trouble creeping under the sun. Or bumping in the night.

But I do remember. Even as a grown-up I recall the all and the all that tickled and tormented absolutely Every-Thing that was Wally then, the small me.

In North Dakota in the early 1950's when tractors were not air conditioned and farmers still suffered the sunlight and sat on metal seats to harvest their fields of an endless gold, my father told us stories. It was traditional. It was always Saturday afternoon, when he had finished his sermon for the next day, and it was always, always in a slanting sunlight.

Well, dad would come home and find us listening to the radio, an enormous RCA Victor against which we could lean our backs sitting on the floor, and he would gently mock us: "Lumpy," he would call us, nicking our names and referring, I thought, to our heads. "Lumpy, Lumpy, four little Lumpies, and I don't know which one is lumpier." Four children.

Then he would wink. "Okay," he'd say and, with no meaning I ever discovered, call us *Skeezix*. "Okay, Skeezix, let's go."

So we trooped upstairs to his and mom's bedroom.

Warm place. Dear place, all filled with killer odors.

I mean that in their bedroom I was surrounded by their bulking presence and personalities even when I was alone. I smelled my parents. My mother's aroma was the delicious and mysterious scent of her soft leather gloves, long gloves which she wore when she went out into the night for purposes dark and deeply exciting. She was knock-out beautiful. She took my heart with her in that aroma, dramatic woman, traveling blackness like the moon. My father's scent was in his pillow. Sometimes I'd sneak into the bedroom and bury my face in that pillow and

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breathe him into me deeply, deeply, like a buffalo snuffling sweet grass. By that inhalation, my father's spirit suffused my whole being, even to my toes. He loved me. He loved me, you see.

Well, into such a crowded air we sailed on Saturday afternoon, the man and his four eldest children. And always sunlight was slanted through the window rich and thick. The sunlight came through venetian blinds that sawed it into long blocks solid in the bedroom air—dust motes rising and rising inside those blocks—and they always fell on the bed. Where we were. The marvelous light fell on us and on our father.

He would lie at first on his stomach, and we would give him the gift of our wonderful selves: a back-rub. It was our part of the covenant, don-cha know, by which we knew our value in the event of story. Punch and push his tired muscles. Pummel his stress and strain. Yank and pull and raise that grizzled, whisker scent from his armpits, *his* scent. And then sneak down to his sock-foot and—

My daddy never laughed much. Not deeply or spontaneously. But if I surprised him by a tickle on a particular spot on the bottom of his foot, well, I could make him laugh. Softly, low, and musical, as if humming on one note: "Heh heh heh," he laughed. "Heh heh heh," and I felt as if I myself had just entered into and suffused his being the way his scent did mine. Blessed moment. Intimacy. Aw, say it: love. I loved him.

And then he'd turn over on his back and put his hands behind his head, and we four would—pop! pop! pop!—clap ourselves to his sides with our hands behind our heads, all in sunlight, staring skyward, smiling. And dad would then say: "Once upon a time, Ambrose—"

Ambrose. He told us stories about Ambrose.

Ambrose was a young knight in rusty armor who lived in a crumbling castle and went forth to fight a dragon that had its tail in a sling. Funny, you see. Funnier, really, than I knew at the time. But tricky, too, since the story always presented a problem Ambrose had to solve, sometimes thinking, sometimes fighting, sometimes figuring riddles. Ah, me, but it was exciting. I went into the thing, you know. I lived in dad's stories. All of me, all of me was invited and trembled to be there: my little body smack against my daddy's body; my soul soaring not just in a North Dakota bedroom but also through medieval mysteries and my father's mighty imagination, his holy imagination; my eyes and ears; my reason, working hard to figure the problems and puzzles and riddles upon which life and death depended; and all my senses, scent-smelling and sunlight seeing and daddy-touching, right? Right: the whole child comes to life—a good and ordered life, a life able to look trouble straight in the eye and still prevail—in the event of story.

All of me was given the honor of existence, even my strength in that I laughed at dragons and giants, and my emotions, fear and wonder, and this: my love for my father. Love, too, was given presence and place here. How much one did experience as a child! How lovely and utterly important the event! How sad if I could not participate now, at the age of 49. What an amputation, hey? What a loss of personal self. Hey.

When I went to the seminary and studied church history and they told me that Ambrose was a fourth century saint, the Bishop of Milan responsible for increasing the secular power of the church over-against the emperor and the Priest who converted St Augustine to Christianity, I said, "No." I declared, "No! Ambrose is a young knight in rusty armor living in a crumbling castle who—"

Well, of course I knew the difference. But that figure, that silly knight, bore so much reality and blessing and memory and love for me that to lose him for some "real" person in history was in fact to lose much more than I gained. Listen: as real as were my father's love and mine and the order of those Saturday afteroons in a chaotic world, even so real was Ambrose. Insofar as love and comfort and insight are concerned, Ambrose was absolutely *true* and truer than the Saint.

Did he have to die?

No! Well, yes, but no.

The effect of the story-event shall stay with me until I die, because it shaped me. It was a means of my father's love to shape both my character and my relation to existence on all its levels.

More importantly, though, I can still participate in the event even now, but from the other side: I am no longer the child listening with all; I am the grown-up telling with all.

This is the wholeness of that relationship and the story experience; that story also allows the teller to give with his and her entire being.

For didn't my father also deliver his body to the event? And his soul? (Consider that particular participant at great length; genuinely true stories *are* the expression, even the manifestation, of their teller's faith). Yes, and his eyes and ears as reapers of detail like reapers of wheat, and his inner eye—his imagination—as the baker of wonderful bread. And his reason did also participate, raveling forth a story of right order and harmony and integrity, a story as true to existence as it is to itself. Yes, and all his sense. Yes, and his love. All.

To all.

No, I was not banished from this good, generative and shaping event; but it is less likely to happen to an adult me who is also a *passive* me. The grown-up has to choose it. And I have chosen:

Ambrose lives!

Or figures *like* Ambrose, who bear the same sacred

significance as he, now live and go forth to the children from my imagination.

And my heart. This is why I make up and tell stories. Because I love to. Because I love the children. Because I wish dearly to awaken and honor every part of themselves; to call them to life, as it were; to suffuse their beings with my own, but in spirit and in a righteous way; to order chaotic existence by the cosmos of a story; and by the experience of love and honesty and hard truths and true triumphs to persuade the children that they themselves bear strength and goodness into the world. They do. The whole of themselves does. They go forth and make order in the midst of chaos.

A tall order, hey? Well, yes. But story can handle it, being all and all to all. That's its nature.

And that is why I would write a *Branta and the Golden Stone.* My dear one, my beautiful Branta, is the middle "all."

What does not belong in the story wherein teller and told meet together—what this third "All" should not put into its bucket—is a lie. It must not lie. One sort of lying would be to name either the world or the child or some citizen of God's earth with a false name. Because the name may stick and cripple the thing it sticks to. Girl-children have been named with demeaning names, diminishing them, hobbling them, deceiving them regarding their freedoms and strengths and their very beings. Black children have been named with downright nasty names—and since the story is remarkably powerful, they believed them and so became those false, imprisoning names. These are just two examples on the false name. Another is to name this world as pretty only, only cuddly and kind—or to name the child as a trinket, a trifle, a toy of no sense which might be loved by the parent but which cannot be admitted to the truth and value of this parent's "real" world.

What, however, *does* belong in story—precisely because children have already encountered it but do not know what to do about it—is evil. I am making a careful distinction here. I want to say that everything of the child's existence and daily experience, all of it, is admissible. All, finally, might righteously appear in the stories she hears. Bad stories are stories that *do* bad, like lying. But stories that contain the badness of the world are not bad stories. They are, in fact, some of the best. Because a story-teller who loves the child and gives the whole of the self to her by the tale, inviting at the same time the whole of her self, is best able to confront true, truly horrible things *with* her. Otherwise she meets these things helplessly and alone. The story-teller takes her by the hand and companions her to the evil, and then through the evil, to the promise of triumph in the future and even now to the present sense of personal success.

So I wrote *Branta and the Golden Stone.* And in Branta I caused a third love to arise and join the two other loves of child and teller together. That is, I truly (though in a manner fantastic) love the woman called Branta. And I would hope that the story's hearers would likewise (truly and yet in a fantasy-sort-of-way) love her and trust the tale and its teller thereby.

(And how fortunate that she found an extraordinary artist in Deborah Healy, who also loved her and did—with all of *her* self and being—give image to that love and to Branta's character. Such art participates completely in the construct which I am here defining, the event of story. Deborah Healy is a story-teller fully as much as I am. Artist and author move in a certain harmony when it works well, each offering a complete thing to the child, a complete self too; but these two things sing the same song.)

All and all to all.

Branta, as that middle "all" here, carries both bad and good to the child. She knows loneliness in the extreme. So do children. Her loneliness is not unlike abandonment, that which the children fear. She has seen dying, and she has heard the sound and the consequences of the terrible sins of pride and greed. Hard life, hey? Yes, as hard as it is in the nightmares and the apprehensions and in the hearing of little children.

But even at a distance I love those children. So I offer my love in this beautiful, sad Branta. And by means of *her* experience I hope to conclude in knowledge the experience of the children.

Branta and I and they—we all acknowledge these evils in the image of the island where she lives, "The northernmost island in all the world" which is cold and dark and isolated. Her father's cottage always has a fire, "warm and bright and lovely" to stand contrast to the island as life opposes death; but it is little and contained, overwhelmed by the north.

Even so do children sometimes feel that their little goodness might never prevail in the huge difficulty of the world.

But some friends do always come. That is to be expected. A little sunlight anyway. Geese come to Branta's island. They lay eggs and little babies are born, so vulnerable! And then what? Well, what often happens when friends appear in the cold, dark places which we have suffered: they are in danger too. Down comes winter upon the geese whom Branta has come to care about. All the cruelty of the world comes down in wind and snow upon them, and they could die. Who will save them? Why, Branta. Of course: the child who hears the tale wants to save them that she has come to love. Well, but how? However could a little kid *save the lives* of others? Is that possible?

Yes, child! Yes it is. Yes, you are able, the whole of

you, all the pieces put together, and the whole of me, all my pieces added to the mix (which, you know, includes also what I know about sacred matters and holy things, like God and mystery and gold and the baby Jesus and mother's tears and love). All of you, all of me: *boom!*—together we discover possibility in a world otherwise clumsy and tangled. But you go forth. You, kid, are the one who is able to go forth and in love (in fact, *by your love*) to save the lives of your dear ones, yes.

Yes. By my story I murmur into your soul's ear, Yes. And this is how "yes" sounds. I say:

—suddenly Branta knew exactly what she would do. She walked into the cottage. She reached for the golden stone and held it in the palm of her hand, gazing at the tiny fingerprint. "Baby King," she said, "I want— ❑

THE MIDDLE YEARS

Dawn has brought room service
of squirrels hopping on snow.
I pull the curtain back
and snap it. Elk nuzzle the drifts,
their scruffy coats like fleece.

Last night the chimney popped
so hot I roasted, dumping another log.
Pine sparkled like champagne
we raised to each other,
another year in skin

tough as the coats of elk.
These are the dawns we worked for,
logs in a rented A-frame
far from telephones.
Rutting in fall is not enough,

even as old as we are.
Sunlight dazzles ice
thawing before our eyes.
If others are up this early,
let them be bold and lazy,

coffee for every cabin.
Here's to long nights
and bones as old as ours,
thankful for chimneys and elk,
for snowfall melting fast.

Walter McDonald

FORMED BY "TUNES":
EXPLORATION, BIOGRAPHY, AND A NOD TO CHER

Elizabeth A. Hoger

Just as I notice the mail when it doesn't come, a disruption in my musical routine jarred me into reflecting on music in daily life, that is, on "tunes." Classical music didn't seem appropriate for the mindless work of sanding an old kitchen chair, so I was singing along with song after song on an "oldies" station. Judy Collins, Led Zeppelin, Simon and Garfunkel, Creedence Clearwater Revival—even the Cowsills—teamed with me for a shameless concert on the lawn. After Cher and I survived a rousing rendition of "Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves," the light bulb of curiosity flashed "On," the sanding stopped, and I asked "Why the hell do I still know this dreadful song more than twenty years after its premiere?"

Starting with the pragmatic answers is probably easiest. Tunes, especially pop tunes, are riddled with powerful mnemonic aids, beginning with syntax (musical and linguistic). In language, remembering a string of nonsense syllables is harder than remembering a sentence where almost every word prompts the next word in the sequence. In music, the strong shaping forces of "tonal syntax" create an additional framework of syntactical reminders. Musical structures help our ears predict and remember melodies, harmonies, and rhythms—regardless of our ability to name or read them. When musical syntax and linguistic syntax are coordinated (as they are in most pop songs and hymns), when tones and lyrics are arranged in metric patterns, and when lyrics rhyme, mnemonic effects multiply. The intricate wedding of tones and text also explains why many lyrics seem limp apart from their musical settings.

None of these features, though, compares to the mnemonic power music itself finds in repetition. Unlike language, repetition is an expected structural feature of music. In Cher's song the accompaniment motive is heard 26 times, the refrain (with repeats within it) is heard four times, all verses repeat the same music, and verses 1 and 3 have almost identical lyrics. Simple musical details like these help explain why those reading this article who also know this song probably have little trouble replaying it in their memories. These details also explain our great capacity to remember tunes—perhaps more than we remember Bible verses and sermons. Special joy, for instance, accompanies the "Alleluias" of kindergartners, who cannot yet read, but who can quickly learn refrains.

Pragmatic details of musical and linguistic construction provide only a part of the answer to my original question. Rejecting another common explanation, the proverbial "I could relate to it," seems prudent before this essay continues. After all, my authorial credibility would certainly suffer if I admitted to identifying with "gypsies, tramps, and thieves," or the "content" of this particular song. The content of some songs can enhance the function of our memories, but our ability to relate to a song provides no guarantee that it will be remembered or forgotten, or that it will play any significant formative role. We remember countless songs to which we never "related" and we relate to countless songs which have minimal shelf lives in our memories.

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Explanations based on my own tastes are also suspect since I never had a Cher period and only recently with sheepish discomfort purchased this recording. The "wisdom" of my incipient middle age, which prompted that discomfort, reminds all of us how we are chosen by (rather than choose) particular "historical moments" of music. In my case, when Cher was in her "outcast" period and this song was popular, Top 40 radio dominated my musical habits, even if my "tastes" lay elsewhere. Cher (Nutrasweet, Sonny, and the works) is part of my cultural heritage, a fact which I cannot avoid, deny or alter. This discovery is not limited to those of us who grew up (and are continuing to grow up) with Cher's various boyfriends and product endorsements. Similar realizations haunt and amuse all generations. How have Spike Jones, Elvis, The Beach Boys, or The Grateful Dead affected their contemporaries? Or, how are Ice-T, The Indigo Girls, Billy Ray Cyrus, and Pearl Jam shaping *their* contemporaries?

These two simple observations about Cher extend to spiritual "tunes" as well. A spiritual song deeply embedded in the memory is not guaranteed a place there because someone can or cannot "relate" to its content or tune. Our relations to a song's content shift as we experience life's joys and tragedies, accompanied by the peaks and valleys of faithfulness. Our relations to its tune shift as our tastes and those of larger societal groups change. Such shifts suggest that a person's ability to "relate to" a song may have more to do with short-term needs than with long-term spiritual formation, a fact which creates constant dilemmas for those involved with church music. How can a hymn writer connect the bedrock content of the Christian faith to the constantly changing particulars of contemporary individual lives? Can or should that hymn writer link "Love Thy Neighbor" to racism or homophobia, for example? Tunes are perhaps even more problematic because they are often shared within groups with highly diverse tastes. One set of pews might hold persons who favor Christian rap, Bach chorales, folk hymns, Gregorian chants, and Amy Grant songs. Well aware of this, should a church musician choose the lowest common (musical) denominator, target particular tastes within that group, or ignore them altogether? How church musicians answer these specific questions is not as important as an awareness of the complexity within rationales which feature "X can relate to it." The content and tunes to which persons "relate" are constantly in flux and complicated further by the diversity within groups where they are heard—just as readers of this essay all "relate" to "Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves" differently.

One final thought prompted by the artistry of Cher: The "badness" of the song (enhanced by its datedness) serves as a mnemonic device. (Why else would so many people know the words to the Flintstones' theme?) Bad songs give us the perverse pleasure of a harmless aesthetic elitism: "Everybody knows that's a bad song, so it's OK to make fun of it!" Our love for bad songs also transcends time as the pleasure we find in a song like "The Name Game" (The "Banana" song) or "A-Tisket, A-Tasket" remains consistent. Once a song is "bad," we aren't likely to discover its deep meaning and worth as we grow older; on the other hand, our opinions about "good" tunes change as we age. Readers can pause here and wince at tunes they once thought were exceptional. (My confession won't go beyond the tunes of Herb Alpert.) Applied to spiritual tunes, the "bad song" phenomenon looms so large that I even hesitate to offend a reader by naming what I would call a "bad" song of the church. Suffice it to say that such tunes may never be timely, but can become timeless in spite of themselves simply because they are bad.

Fortunately, "Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves" is not the only tune to clutter my memory and shape my autobiography. Many other tunes, good and bad, classical and pop, spiritual and otherwise, add inextricable layers to the process of autobiography. For one thing, music is often joined to our collective times and experiences in ways that other arts are not. Hearing the Navy Hymn, most of the nation recalls the funerals of John Kennedy or the Challenger astronauts. At the ballpark, "The Star Spangled Banner" and "Take Me out to the Ball Game" unite otherwise disparate crowds. Our collective national identities are also defined by ubiquitous commercial jingles, those adapted from other tunes and those written specifically for the product. A timeline of jingles for Coke, Pepsi, and McDonald's could easily be appliqued to most of our personal chronologies.

Music identifies, defines, inspires—and undoes—many other "collectives" (although perhaps not as many as in times when singing was more common). Consider the "collectives" defined by the "Theme from the Olympics," the "Theme from *Star Wars*," "Fire and Rain," "We Shall Overcome," and "A Mighty Fortress." Such collectives are not necessarily communities, but the ensnaring net of a tune literally "collects" persons who may share few other characteristics, interests, or beliefs. Collectives are formed when people hear as well as when they make music, but the joint activity of music-making probably holds the greater cohesive power. In support of this point, Cubs fans could cite the difference between hearing the organist play "Charge" and singing along with Harry Caray during the seventh-inning stretch. Tunes also collect persons who don't share histories, but who may share the same tune.

More than old pictures or texts, the tunes of previous generations are often the basis for succeeding generational collectives because they are so subject to new arrangements and variations. Sammy Cahn's "Love and Marriage," for example, is a movie tune for my mother, a Campbell's soup commercial for me, and the theme to *Married...With Children* for many college students. This generational flexibility is enhanced by music's situational flexibility. While situations shift dramatically, the same tune can star or understudy, waltz, trip, or gush, stand naked or blend in with the scenery.

A similar flexibility is found in the tunes of the church. A tune may be barely noticeable as parishioners search out choice seating, vaguely familiar in a chorale prelude or in support of a new text, prominent in a choral anthem, or unavoidable in an opening hymn. Some tunes reach individuals while others trigger shared memories within a congregation or family. At one of my congregational homes, a baptismal hymn became an immediate tradition after it was lovingly introduced by a guest minister accompanying herself on the guitar. In almost any guise, the tunes of the church undergird belief and community. More importantly, though, they can free powerful spiritual feelings which, even though articulated in language, may otherwise be corralled by propriety, reserve, or objective detachment. Although such feelings often remain private, the power of the collective to generate, surround, focus, and support them is not to be underestimated. Therefore, while tunes are generally thought to shape collectives, in the church, collectives also shape tunes, giving them greater power than they might otherwise hold. "Amazing Grace" not only gives spiritual definition to a collection of persons, but those persons give it spiritual power when they sing it together.

The interdependence of tunes and collectives benefits further from the different ways in which language functions with music. Most obviously, the language of words and sentences is not always present; freed from words, a musical theme which evoked childhood innocence in one situation may evoke nostalgia in another or wonder in another. When music sounds within a collective, the gamut of possible responses is almost boundless—and yet, bounded by the shared experiences of all who heard or sang the same tune. Sharing a tune functions similarly in a collective when words are present since individuals sing the same words, but resonate with different phrases. Even when text is present, it may border on irrelevance, while the music affects the collective. The texts of many Christmas carols, like "Angels from Their Realms of Glory" or "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" are so wedded to their tunes that the words are little more than vehicles for familiar tunes. Regardless of how combinations of language and music function in a collective, music's very presence separates collective experiences with it from those without it.

We cannot discount the formative power of tunes when we are within collectives, but my original reaction to Cher is a reminder that our musical autobiographies feature multiple, uniquely personal chapters. Our personal attachments of tunes to times touch us frequently and deeply, often for a lifetime. Whether we make or listen to music, it vividly connects (usually reconnects) us to times, places, events, emotions, and persons. At this point, I hope that readers are flipping through their mental Rolodexes of anecdotes, pausing long enough to notice and appreciate how many of them feature "soundtracks." Among my musically-scored memories are these:

- Sarah Hartman, one of the most jovial sopranos I've ever known, intent upon the glissando in "My Man's Gone Now."

- My sister Sarah's pinched face as she reached for the High B-flat in "How the West Was Won."

- The kids of Millbrook High stepping out to "Blow, Gabriel, Blow."

- My friend, the Notre Dame graduate, who defiantly sings the last line of the fight song as "While her loyal sons and daughters march on to victory," with every touchdown.

All of us have lists like this, with many startlingly vivid entries, which are supported by many of the "musical" factors already discussed, but several others seem to be at work. First, the individuality of our stories is magically private. No one has any idea what memories are triggered for me by "Everything's Coming Up Roses," "The 1812 Overture," or "Steam Heat." Secondly, pieces of music are significantly redefined by such memories, giving them additional vitality—especially when the music reminds us of people we care about. Ordinary tunes, particularly those in love songs and songs of collectives (like the church), take on the almost irreplaceable value of the persons with whom we associate them. I can no longer hear any of the songs mentioned earlier (and many like them) without the additional associations and memories.

Third, those memories associated with tunes almost transcend time. You are amazed at what is triggered by an innocuous tune (barely recognized in its musak incarnation) which catches your attention in the checkout

line at the supermarket. Suddenly, you are transported to your junior high social studies classroom where your teacher played "Allentown" to teach you about "the decline of industry," and you remember who sat next to you and that stupid T-shirt he always wore, and how funny his hair looked in his class picture, and what a crush you had on him anyway. That entire web of associations is typical of how "tunes" lead us through hyperspace to stunningly accurate recreations of past moments which might otherwise disappear into the black hole of "unimportant" memories. Tunes therefore can remind us of the preciousness of our everyday past, functioning like old letters. They lead a reader (listener) beyond nostalgia toward the deeper perspectives on the past afforded by the distance of time, but without the cumbersome stopovers at all the chronological points in between.

Finally, our musical associations give us a kind of "ownership" over the music, not as likely with other arts. How many couples have "their song" and how many couples have "their movie" or "their play"? That "ownership" sometimes frees us up to share stories we might otherwise keep private. Here are two of mine, one frivolous and one not: Story #1: Picture a women's basketball team in the visitors' locker room and add the cranked-up sounds of the Eagles "Blackwater" (their "psych song" for that season). Enter an administrative type who chastised these fine athletes for daring to bring such music, complete with dancing, into the locker room of a Christian college. Like youth everywhere, we took the rebuke as an imprimatur, and the song took on a life of its own, not only as a "psych song," but as an all-purpose adrenalin inducer. Story #2: My mother sang "Children of the Heavenly Father" to my sisters and me all the time when we were children; every time I sing the hymn, mom and her deep love for her family are part of my singing, although I'm usually impervious to being emotional about that. Recently, I served as godparent for my adopted nephew. I was proud to stand beside him at the font as he did his best to control his fidgety nine-year-old body. I maintained the composure required of adults until the end of the rites when my Mom, the ever-faithful organist of a small and struggling church, sang this hymn to Derrick. No matter how many times she claims to love us, the power of the love cut through all my filters of reserve as she sang.

My mother's heartfelt singing reminds us all of music's deep effects on us as makers. Probably, everyone who reads this piece has made and will make music because the church is one of the few remaining places for amateurs to sing without self-consciousness. The "tuneful" autobiographies of professional music-makers are perhaps more dominated by tunes, or at least "parts" in tunes (alto, bassoon, or panflute), than those of amateurs, but both groups know what it is to make music "in your head." All manner of tunes distract, accompany or comfort us at times when a soundtrack isn't otherwise provided by an outside sound system. The puzzles of these private soundtracks are for psychologists to pursue, but the uniqueness and frequency of the phenomenon suggest a formative role in our autobiographies.

As rich as many "professional" music-making experiences have been, I am often most aware of music's effects when a collective of amateurs, like a congregation, sings. It's not so much what is sung as it is the act of singing, individually and in community. In many church traditions, singing frees worshippers to acknowledge their bodies as instruments of worship, regardless of individual singers' ability or degree of physical involvement. The metric and rhythmic patterns of many pieces of music also structure corporate singing, literally making many disparate voices into one. Regular worshippers may be so accustomed to this unified voice that its role in spiritual formation is overlooked; yet they can readily name especially moving moments of congregational singing. So can I. On my mother's side, I have scores of cousins, aunts, and uncles who gathered for my grandmother's funeral several years ago. At the graveside, the minister said: "I know that this family is musical. Instead of a benediction here, why don't we sing the doxology in four parts?" We sang, and once again, were deeply and unwittingly "formed" by a tune.

The first draft of this essay ended here, with an obvious closure accomplished by a reference to the essay's title. A thoughtful editor reminded me that an "essay" by definition shouldn't necessarily be closed or sealed off at its conclusion. It can also be left "open," with an invitation for readers to look beyond this author's circumstances and tunes to their own, in hopes that readers will also see (and hear) the tight interweaving of their circumstances with the tunes of their daily lives. ❑

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"What's the Use of Stories that Aren't Even True?"

John Ruff

Much of the action in Salman Rushdie's recent meta-novel, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (Penguin, 1990), is driven by the question, "What's the use of stories that aren't even true?" I save Rushdie's novel for last in a literature for children course that I teach here at Valparaiso University, and I have used that question, "What's the Use of Stories that Aren't Even True?" as the final exam for the course, which I think makes sense, given the fact that many if not most of my students are prospective elementary school teachers. I think elementary school teachers need to think hard about this question. I think it is a question all of our students, and all of us, their teachers, ought to be forced to confront periodically. For the sake of argument, I'd say we are not meeting our "Moral/Social/Political Responsibilities" as teachers and critics if we and our students are not fully prepared to consider the question, "What's the use of stories that aren't even true?"

I must confess that my first reaction upon hearing the title of this conference, "Teaching, Criticism, and Moral/Social/Political Responsibility" was at the deepest, most visceral level, purely sophomoric. To defend myself just barely, I did *not* unbutton my shirt, put my hand into my armpit, and begin to flap my arm back and forth until my reaction became rudely audible. But were I pushed to name the "objective correlative" of the emotion I felt, and the reaction it produced, and I did admit it was "sophomoric," an "armpit fart" would not be too far from the mark.

I don't mean to be disrespectful or scatological, about teaching, or criticism, or about our "moral\social\political responsibility." But it all sounded rather grim to me, and grimness seems a dangerous malady of our times, and of our profession of late. I teach writing and literature, and the public is right— it really is a scam— but not in the way columnists think. It's a scam because this semester, three times a week I get to teach Milton and Blake to undergraduates who are really taking those poets seriously, young men and women with whom it is a rich pleasure to spend time, from whom I may learn as much as I teach. I get paid to do that. Twice a week I get to teach a course on literature for children. I get paid to read and study and discuss A.A. Milne, Kenneth Grahame, Mark Twain, Lewis Carroll, Dr. Seuss, the notorious Salman Rushdie. I teach a course called English Grammar twice a week, and that too is a lot more interesting and fun than it sounds. Sometimes I am tempted to put things on my phonemail greeting like, "Sorry, can't come to phone right now, I'm reading Winnie-the-Pooh, and it's going to take me all morning"; or, "Sorry I can't take your call; this morning I am thinking about all the bugs in Tom Sawyer, and how to prevent the Jabberwocky from becoming a member of an endangered species." Or, "I'm with William Blake, we're talking with God, please leave a message at the beep." Granted, there's no major league second baseman out there that would swap pay checks with me. But he and I are both getting paid to do something we might do for nothing, if somehow we could afford it. In fact, I'm much closer to doing this thing I love for nothing than he is, but that's beside the point.

John Ruff *teaches in the Department of English at VU. He is a published poet, and supervisor of student teachers. Next spring he will offer his popular course on American Literature and Landscape.* *This article was delivered at the annual Indiana College English Association Conference, held this October at Valparaiso University. The title of the conference was "Teaching, Criticism, and Moral/Social/Political Responsibility."*

What is the point? I didn't get into this profession to save the world, or even to change the world. Not that the world doesn't need saving or changing. It clearly does. And I hope I never stand in the way, or slow the momentum of significant change that is good and necessary. But if I am really honest with myself, I have to admit that that's not why I teach English. I suppose wanting to become an English teacher started when I became an English major in college, which I did because nothing gave me greater or more immediate pleasure than reading literature, writing about literature, talking about literature. That might never have happened except that in high school I had an English teacher who made it possible for me to experience pleasures in reading more profound and more consciousness-altering than anything my wildest friends ever smoked or drank or swallowed back in our wild youth. Yes, consciousness-altering. I see the world differently because of what I have read and studied; when people refer blandly to "the real world," it's not the same as my real world. It just plain isn't. I blame some of this upon Mr. James Ryan, that high school English teacher I mentioned, who modeled for us how a person might learn to respond fully and richly to works of literature and art. It was coming in contact with James Ryan that showed me how such works and the pleasures they provide can shape a person's thinking—tastes, interests, values, and goals. And he didn't just effuse in front of us; he took the trouble to teach us how to read and write. He taught us how to read closely, and perhaps most importantly, he taught us how language works, poetic language especially. It is obvious to me now that he had been corrupted in his youth by exposure to the old New Critics; he taught us about certain formal principles of literary works, in such a way that some or all of us became capable of feeling pleasure as a result of apprehending some formal relationship. My God, we were experiencing aesthetic emotions and acne and all the hormonal storm systems all at once; there was a war going on, and it was glorious.

At some point, I decided I wanted to do for others what that man did for me, for selfish reasons, I think, because it was obvious he took passionate pleasure in his teaching. As far as fulfilling my moral/social/political responsibilities was concerned, I thought to myself that if I ever got a job, and I did my job well, I might perhaps prevent one bad teacher, and they far outnumber the good, from taking up valuable space, in schools and in students' heads. My vocation would be to invite students out onto the page, as readers and writers, a sort of playground I sometimes imagined it, or a rich deep pool, which I'd help supervise or act as lifeguard, and if I did my job right, my students would never want to stop playing; they would never want to come out of that pool. Nor would I ever stop playing, or come out of that pool myself.

These metaphors may not express anything to you that would sound like morally, socially, politically responsible motives, and if they did, I'd begin to distrust them. Yet here I am to say that's what I do, that's why I'm here. The poet William Stafford, who died just recently, was once asked in an interview why he decided to become a writer. Do you know his response? He asked the interviewer, "Why did everyone else quit?" Do you know, do you wonder, why it is that everyone enters school eager to learn to read and write, and the longer people stay in school, the fewer and fewer the survivors? "Survivors of what?" you may wonder, or "Of whom?" Perhaps, sadly, they are the hardy few who have survived us. We're the ones who bring them out onto the page, as readers and writers; if they acquire fears of writing, and a loathing of reading, we're kidding ourselves if we don't acknowledge it's partially or even largely our doing.

Someone reading this is thinking to himself or herself—'hey, it's not my fault. I teach in the university, I teach at the college; it's the fault of the elementary, the middle school teachers, the high school teachers.' Sure, and guess who teaches them? Or did once. Perhaps once and for all. If I get to change the world, starting salary for elementary school teachers will be put on a par with the starting salaries of pediatricians; boy, would some things change in a hurry. But I'm digressing.

Because all of this is beginning to sound a bit smarmy, let me shift my metaphor. Not unlike your neighborhood pusher, I support myself attempting to get people addicted to certain pleasures I take it upon myself to dispense. Perhaps there should be warning labels on the texts I teach: beware, this book could prove hazardous to your health. Upon reading this book, you may decide not to go to medical school; you may decide not to follow in the family business; you may decide all the goals you previously held were shallow and meaningless, that your life is on the stage or nowhere, that the girl you always wanted to marry will disappoint you, and you her, because since last evening, after reading such and such, you want different things in life. When I give writing assignments, perhaps I should provide similar warning labels: self-reflection may put your life under strange lights, reveal desires and motives you never knew you had, give you urges to say things and do things you have never before indulged. Expression is intoxicating; thinking may be habit forming. Certainly there are books that can impair one's ability to see straight, to drive safely, and perhaps they should be labeled as such.

Of course, I say these things, knowing full well that

much of the time we, and the texts we teach, for all practical purposes, for most of our students, are irrelevant. Even as I say that, however, I realize that one of the moral/social/political responsibilities I do accept and even embrace as a teacher of literature and writing, and furthermore, feel most compelled to act upon, is to fight that irrelevance tooth and nail. But again, the issue for me is how to make it possible for my students to become most engaged by their reading and in their writing, and in both areas, I am convinced that the level of their engagement depends to what extent they find these activities richly pleasurable and meaningful. And in a certain light, the issue becomes very clear: do I bring students out on to the page, as readers and writers, in a way that optimizes the chances that the encounter will be fruitful and lifelong; do I do it in such a way that honors the student as well as the text she is reading or writing? Do I do for my students what was generously done for me?

What I'm trying to say is so straightforward and obvious I'm probably embarrassing myself and all of you by pointing it out: but I think maybe we forget and need to remind ourselves that at some level we got into this activity, call it a profession, call it a vocation, call it a business, partially because of the pleasures texts provide us, and because we put a high value on what desires those pleasure inculcate in others. Does this sound true? I hope so. Are the pleasures, the desires harmless? Not at all. Can they be, will they be subversive? Very possibly. Can they bring about more social justice, a more equitable distribution of wealth, can they save the planet? I don't know.

Haroun and the Sea of Stories is about saving a planet, sort of. The question in the title of this talk is asked twice in the novel. On the first occasion, very early in the book, it is put to Soraya, wife of the storyteller, Rashid Khalifa, by a "mingy . . . sticky-thin and whiny voiced" clerk named Mr. Sengupta:

> 'That husband of yours, excuse me if I mention,' he would start in his thin whiny voice. 'He's got his head stuck in the air and his feet off the ground. What are all these stories? Life is not a storybook or a jokeshop. All this fun will come to no good. What's the use of stories that aren't even true?'

The question is overheard by Haroun, the only son of Soraya and the storyteller, and it sticks in his head. At first, the only people who seem to think Rashid's stories are useful are politicians, who hire him to tell his stories at their rallies. No one believes the politicians, though they swear they are telling the truth. Everyone has utmost faith in Rashid, because he tells them flat-out that he's only telling stories. However, as he is in constant demand, he neglects his family; Soraya, his loving wife, stops singing; and then trouble erupts.

One day she is gone, and we find she has left this note addressed to Rashid:

> 'You are only interested in pleasure, but a proper man would know that life is a serious business. Your brain is full of make-believe, so there is no room in it for facts. Mr Sengupta has no imagination at all. This is okay by me.' There was a postscript. 'Tell Haroun I love him, but I can't help it, I have to do this now.'

Haroun, finding his mother gone, in his despair repeats Mr. Sengupta's question to his father. The next time Rashid tries to tell a story, the only word that comes out of his mouth is "ark" and Haroun blames himself, and his asking of this question, for his father's "storyteller's block." I don't think I ruin the story, which I urge you to read, when I tell you that Haroun takes it upon himself to restore his father's storytelling capacities, and that he succeeds, which in the end restores his parents' marriage, saves the Sea of Stories, changes the orbit of a moon we haven't yet discovered, meets some unforgettable characters named Iff and Butt, and makes it possible for his very sad home town to remember its name. And Rushdie provides many important insights along the way about the "use of stories that aren't even true."

I don't think I ruin the story when I tell you it's partially about a monstrous attempt to ruin stories by an arch villain named Khattam Shud, which means "the end." Khattam Shud is the archetypal sniveling clerk-type who's just the kind of person to ask the question "what's the use of stories that aren't even true?" In fact, he so much resembles Mr. Sengupta that Haroun mistakes him for that person. We meet Khattam Shud, the leader of the Chupwalla people, on the planet of Kahani. We go to Kahani (the word means "story") because in a process too complicated to explain, Rashid Khalifa's story water subscription has been canceled and the pipe disconnected, and for Haroun to have this reversed, he has to travel to Kahani to meet with the Walrus and the Eggheads (ring a bell? It's an allusion to an old Beatle song). Upon arriving in Kahani, on the back of a mechanical hoopoe bird named Butt, in the company of a storywater plumber and pipe fitter named Iff, Haroun finds himself skimming across the Sea of Stories, which is in a dangerous state of pollution. It turns out that Khattam Shud, Cultmaster of the Zipped Lips, has initiated a deadly plot to plug the source of the Sea of Stories, and is poisoning the Sea of Stories by pouring into the sea deadly anti-stories. I don't

mean to join forces with Khattam Shud and ruin this story—I'm telling you just barely enough so you'll understand where this goes. Anyhow, in an important encounter Haroun has with Khattam Shud, we overhear a dialogue between them in which Khattam Shud is explaining to the captive Haroun how he is poisoning the Sea of Stories, which provokes Haroun to ask:

> 'Why do you hate stories so much?' Haroun blurted, feeling stunned. 'Stories are fun . . .'
>
> 'The World, however, is not for fun,' Khattam Shud replied. The World is for controlling.'
>
> 'Which world?' Haroun made himself ask.
>
> 'Your world, my world, all worlds,' came the reply. 'They are all there to be ruled. And inside every single story, inside every stream in the Ocean, there lies a world, a story world, that I cannot rule at all. And that is the reason why.'

"Aha!" as A.A. Milne's Rabbit would say, something in the story that won't be ruled. When I read this passage, I am reminded of a passage in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-glass*, just before Humpty Dumpty tried and clearly failed to "solve" "The Jabberwocky," when he and Alice are talking about un-birthday presents and language. Alice says to him "I don't know what you mean by 'glory'," to which he answers, smiling contemptuously,

> "Of course you don't—till I tell you I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you.'"
>
> "But glory doesn't mean a nice knockdown argument," Alice objected.
>
> "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean, nothing more and nothing less."
>
> "The question is," said Alice, "whether one can make words mean so many things."
>
> "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be the master—that's all."

You follow where this is leading I'm sure. Khattam Shud is right: there is something at the heart of a story, even as there is something at the heart of language itself, that can't be controlled, whatever Humpty Dumpty says, something that cannot be mastered. It is the shy animal or animus that won't be named, that won't be tamed, that won't reproduce in captivity. I think this quality exists in all great literary works—call it a life principle if you want—the active ingredient if you will. I think there exists in many readers something in the spirit that can attune itself to that principle. I know that now I'm starting to sound rather mystical, and I don't care. I think it's the right impulse against attitudes towards works that treat them merely as words on a page, as prosey or lyrical accompaniments to this theory or that.

I haven't really answered, or begun to answer my own question. But I have indicated what quarter it comes from, which we probably already know. The impulse towards mastery and control that Rushdie locates in Khattam Shud, that Carroll locates in Humpty Dumpty, it's in all of us to some degree or another. I think it is our moral/social/political responsibility to resist such impulses as much as is possible. In *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, it's not just the bad guys who mess things up trying to control everything; the Walrus and the Eggheads are also implicated. I fear we may in these times be too eager to treat literature as some breed of domesticated animal we can hitch up to whatever wagon we're interested in sending down the road. My sense is this does not serve us or our students at all well. The greatest literature will survive us; that active principle that I was speaking about before, that divine force of anarchy that resists taming and naming, somehow will insure that. But it will be so much less a pleasure for all of us. ❑

Most of us who write for varied audience generally choose to give that to children which is too difficult for the grown-up audience to comprehend. All children are born theologians, willing to grapple with the most difficult and cosmic questions. On the other hand, when one has grown up enough to pay one's own fuel oil bill, one has less time for the unanswerable. Children often ask me—and in them I honor the question: If God is good, why is there so much pain? And when grown-ups ask me in what field the best literature is being published today, I say, That which is written, and well-written, for children.

Madeleine l'Engle
Writer

Memories of Storie

Six distinguished peopl
early memories of r

My parents enrolled me in Sunday School when I was four. Several months later the following event took place, an event I vividly remember almost fifty years later. It is morning, I am lying in bed. The sun is streaming in the east window falling across the foot of my bed. I am mentally recounting the story of the angel Gabriel's appearance to the Virgin Mary. When I get to the angel's announcement "Fear not, Mary. . ." and my teacher's emphatic explanation that Mary did not need to be, nor should she have been, afraid of the angel, I silently vow, "If God sends an angel to me, I won't be afraid!"
I believe I fully expected Gabriel to appear in my bedroom. Since that experience I have heard the story of the Annunciation told countless times. The sun, the bedroom, the confident "I won't be afraid. . .," the expectation returns with each hearing.

Priscilla Lawin
Director of Elementary Education, Concordia College, Seward

I was a child growing up in the 30s and 40s, and we were very poor—financially. My father worked at a gas station, and my mother did the the laundry for a hotel not far from our house. My older sister and I always had responsibilities around the house—and we always had books! Our mother, who had been a school teacher and would have preferred to be doing that, said that your education is one thing that nobody can ever take away from you, and you can get a lot of education from good books. Some of our greatest treasures were our 12-volume set of My Book House for Children, *which cost $60—a lot of money for poor people in the '40s. Mother paid for them $2.00 per month—and we read classic literature!*

Our other treasured book was our huge (so it seemed to a pair of small girls) Egermeier's Bible Story Book. *Our part of the laundry job, besides carrying the water, was to iron the sheets and pillowcases on the big mangle that the hotel provided. My sister and I would take turns: one would mangle while the other read aloud from the Bible story book, and then we would reverse roles. We mangled our way through creation and the flood, across the wilderness with Abraham and into Egypt with Jacob's family. We were delighted when God's people obeyed his will, and dismayed when they failed. I will never forget how we cried when Moses walked out of the camp for the last time and died. I think we found it almost as hard to go on as the people of Israel did after that!*

Leah Serck
Professor, Concordia College, Seward

My earliest, distinct memories of hearing the scriptures read are of my pastor father reading the appointed lessons in the Epistles and Holy Gospels from the lectern of the old St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Most vividly I remember him reading the portions of the Passion story during Wednesday evening Lenten services. The drama of the somber music, the dim lighting, the sacred smells of the pews and hymnals, and that deadly serious story is with me still. The first story I remember reading myself was in a Sunday School leaflet which contained part of the story of Joseph and his brothers. On the cover was a picture of the brothers handing Joseph over to the Ishmaelites. I had (and still have) a sister a year younger than me who was smarter than me and we both knew it. I understood that Joseph story perfectly well.

Frederick A. Niedner, Jr.
Professor of Theology, VU

nd Faith

faith share their
ng and stories...

I remember my mother reading to me from the both the Old Testament and the New Testament. I remember the stories to which she connected the Biblical stories—efforts on her part to show my brother and me that what the Hebrew prophets said, what Christ said (and did!) have their contemporary echo in our lived lives. For her, Biblical stories were meant to be a moral inspiration, a help in coming to terms with our daily struggles. For her, the parables Jesus told have their counterparts in all of our lives, and she shared with us, therefore, moments from her own life, her stories as they linked her to those of Jesus and his predecessors, the great Jewish prophets.

Robert Coles
Professor of Medicine, Harvard University

My memories of childhood reading focus not on a single story or book as much as they do on a place that housed untold numbers of both: the public library. In the center of the main floor stood the imposing, highly polished wooden counter behind which library workers checked out books. Long before I was tall enough to peer over the counter's edge, my parents made sure I participated in the process. Standing on a stool, I recited our family's library number, the key to taking home our weekly pile of books. that a string of numbers carried such power seemed wonderful, providing me with a free, unlimited supply of books that lined the walls of the children's room.

The wall I remember best held biographies, arranged by the subjects' last names. When I was about 11, I decided to read my way through the collection from A to Z. Although I can't recall if I reached the end, I know I made it as far as T, the section that contained the fantastic account of Tobias. He journeyed with the angel Raphael to seek a cure for his father's blindness. Meanwhile, seven would-be husbands of a woman named Sarah died by the powers of a demon. Raphael saved Tobias from a huge fish, which held the solution to both problems. I checked out the book again and again. Only years later did I discover that the story came from the Apocrypha. I still marvel that the tale was ever produced for children.

Kathy Piehl
Librarian, Mankato State University

Shutting Out the Lights

Jennifer Voigt

The movie theater. In the light it has all the charm of the inside of a vacuum cleaner bag. The floors are sticky with spilled pop, used chewing gum, and decaying raisinettes. And there is an all-encompassing, penetrating silence that longs to end. That's the worst, the most uncomfortable, part of the entire waiting experience. Those of us who like to watch previews and the opening credits must endure it. It may be the acoustics of the place, unaccustomed to the absence of Dolby sound and the general movie noise, but I don't think so. Even when the theater is full of noisy, waiting people munching pop corn, the silence is still there, and it is waiting, as well.

In a movie theater, the silence ends when the pre-film crowd noise dims with the lights and darkness for a brief moment seems to rush into the room. The darkness ends the uncomfortable silence. We never feel a sensation of being out of the darkness until the end of the movie, when the lights are once again raised and the crowd files out, and the silence returns.

It is in this darkness that the whole world happens when we watch a movie, and it is this darkness we learn to welcome as children. We fear it at first because we know the power of the imagination to create dimensions that cross over into our own in which witches hide under beds, cruel spirits make their presence known through cracks in walls, and monsters threaten to break out of the closet and gobble us up. We knew the darkness best during the day when it surrounded us, helping us concentrate on our play-work. In these created worlds, we as children learn to willingly suspend our disbelief. We do it as adults, often in the theater. Though lately it's been taking us a goodly number of special effects to help us release our sense of reality. In the darkness, we find everything.

In learning to suspend our disbelief we begin to learn about belief, and thus form the basis of our own religious understanding. As children, we lack the language skills to learn solely from the printed word. But we do possess the skills of visual observation that enable us to learn most of what we will in our lifetimes before we enter kindergarten. Because of this, the image—especially the moving image, which mimics our world the way a child mimics an adult—takes an important role in development. As children, we know we are choosing to believe what is not real. Suspending our disbelief allows us to let the imagined exist alongside the real. As we grow in our understanding about the nature of belief, we learn to synthesize the symbolic and the concrete, giving them a symbiotic relationship in our lives. We voluntarily create—make real from what we have imagined—a faith.

But confusion arrests development. In a state of confusion, the real and the imagined fail to maintain an equilibrium. What may have been a rich, flexible faith might degenerate into a rigid and boring superstition in which belief and fact have no division, or result in an atheism which attempts to disprove belief. Writer Salman Rushdie, who is as famous for the death sentence imposed on him by the late Ayatollah Khomeni as he is for his writing, addresses the problem and the power of fear generated by the confusion between the real and the imagined in his novel for children, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories.* In it, he asks a question meant to explore the imagination's relationship to the real in a world where a storyteller's creations bring him political and religious persecution: "What's the use of stories that aren't even true?" Rushdie exposes the thinking of the adults of this world who read the Bible literally "on faith," or prevent their children from trick-or-treating for fear that such activity will lead them to become worshipers of Satan. Adults like these don't understand stories, he says. They don't understand the flexibility of creations, or how toask questions of imagination. They live in an imaginary world themselves, he

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says, because they live with "truth," and without stories.

This message to children—that they can overcome their parents' blindness—that they somehow save the future from an imperfect present, that because of their desire for a unity between mundane life and the excitement of dreams, they represent the growing, evolving nature of faith—runs throughout Frances Hodgson Burnett's book, *The Secret Garden.* In it, she defines child abuse as a neglect of the spirit as well as of the body. The adults may be lost, she says to children, but you, though small and overlooked, are the hope, and you have voices.

Agnieszka Holland's film version of *The Secret Garden,* though secularized, still retains the forms of Burnett's original themes. In it, the children continually define the boundaries of existence by exercising curiosity as if it were an atrophied muscle. In their search for the seductive Secret Garden, they consciously ask life the reason for their existence. At ten, they have already found their meaninglessness in parental rejection. Mary has been forgotten by her parents and left to die in a fire following an earthquake, and later shipped off to a foreign land to live with people who consider her an inconvenience. In the scene in which she arrives in London, she could be a character out of Dickens, one of a million orphans destined to have to find her own way.

Colin's existence resembles an experiment. Holland illustrates his condition in contemporary terms, augmenting Burnett's descriptions of his treatment by subjecting him to a daily ordeal with a machine designed to keep his circulation consistent by use of electric shocks—the 19th century equivalent of a life-support system. His servants play the part of human i.v. bottles. They bury him in a tomb of a room whose atmosphere acts like morphine, depressing his faculties, shutting him off from contact with even the most benign of germs.

In *The Secret Garden,* man and woman return to Eden. There they succeed in their second chance, aided by their knowledge of good and evil. Having experienced hostile exile, they choose to live in a state of grace. As they reclaim the garden, the garden resurrects them from death. In *The Secret Garden,* vivacity and health mean roughly the same thing. Bodily growth is equivalent with spiritual growth. Health has a triple meaning. Body and spirit combine to create secure, happy children. Children are like flowers and plants, the movie tells us. Given the correct care, they flourish. They are capable of having intense, complete religious experiences.

Holland's film asks children to create a dialogue between the imaginary and the real as a way of fostering spiritual curiosity. The film is itself a secret garden, a medium with which children physically interact in order to answer their questions. They ask questions of the film the way Mary and Colin asked questions of their garden. The film responds in much the same way the garden does, and the children interpret it by suspending their disbelief.

This conversation between another reality and our own occurs on a collective level. The film speaks, and the audience behaves as if it were one being. In the movie theater, we react to the film with our bodies. We act with it, and therefore become a part of it. The noises and movements we make while still in our seats—the laughing or sobbing or screaming—reflect the unconscious relationship between the film and the individual, the individual and the audience, and the audience and the film. Indeed, the film-watching/film-living experience expects us to participate with the audience as in a worship experience. The film's reality creates the reality in which the audience exists for the length of the film. The camera acts as our eye and introduces us, as one person, to one perspective of all of life.

The film watches back. The camera of *Cinema Paradiso,* a film by Giuseppe Tornatore, records the life that flourishes within the darkness of the movie theater—love, sex, birth, death, blindness, illiteracy, passion—from the movie's viewpoint. It chronicles the story of a town and its movie theater through the life of one of the town's children, Salvatore, whose love of the Paradiso prompts him to search for its religious magic. *Cinema Paradiso* explains the connections between childhood, film, and religious development by subjecting Salvatore to the discovery of belief and its loss, and of images and the life they mimic, and the life that mimics them.

Salvatore's uncovering of the secrets of the Cinema Paradiso—that mysterious place where sound and image emanate from the mouth of a lion mounted on the wall—has the look of an altar boy disrobing the priest. As a boy, Salvatore sneaks into the Cinema Paradiso to watch Alfredo, the projectionist, cut the "pornographic" bits of film (in reality passionate or harmless kisses between characters on screen) from the movies under the orders of the town priest who, blinded by a rigid moral understanding to the joy the images on the screen produce in the audience, fails to realize that he is not the town's spiritual or religious guide.

But Alfredo is also a blind priest. His contempt for his occupation equals his Roman Catholic counterpart's zeal for his. Unconscious of the real power he holds, he imagines himself a captive of the projection booth rather than the man who brings meaning to the people of the town. He similarly ignores the power he and his films hold over Salvatore, whom he attempts to discourage from a life bound by celluloid and lived in a cage whose only other occupants are movie stars' voices. Fittingly, fate blinds him with the light from film that catches fire.

Alfredo's blindness captures Salvatore, however. Salvatore takes

over the projection, but the shortsightedness of his teacher separates him from the mysteries that originally seduced him. He follows Alfredo's lead, mistaking the imaginary for the real, and falls in love with an image—a girl he films arriving at the train station. She leaves him, and the Paradiso no longer seduces him.

Throughout the film, Alfredo and Salvatore engage in debate about the nature of the real and the imaginary. Both worship what they argue for, but both misread the stories that are not true. Alfredo's final gift to Salvatore, the bits of film edited by the town priest reappear, spliced together, as cinematic biography of Salvatore's life. The images attest to the power of film to not only enhance life, but to speak to it.

The darkness we learn about as children allows us as adults to stand in the darkness, respecting it, no longer fearing it. This darkness that surrounds us in the movies prepares us to later read Dinesen or see a Bergman film and, like their characters, ask deeper, more curious questions about the boundaries of our existence. At the moment when the darkness rushes in to the movie theater, we are satisfied. We know we are about to get what we need—a story that isn't true. In a movie theater, wonderful things happen in the dark. It shatters the uncomfortable silence. It prepares us to carry on religious dialogues, to believe what we see in art is true though we can't recognize it from our experience of reality. It helps us to challenge and inquire with courage and not surrender to confusion. Illuminating the darkness distorts the picture, and ultimately, the world created for us by the image on the screen. We understand the mystery then, we don't expose it. ❑

The Worlds of Generation X

James Combs

Most everyone who is an older American—past fifty, let us say—can remember some of the charms of childhood play. Many of these folkways were of Anglo-Saxon origin, but they were widely practiced across ethnic and racial lines. Most of them were simple games—hopscotch, jacks, hide-and-go-seek, Simon says, marbles. Other activities involved the use of the proud acquisitions of childhood, most notably the Radio Flyer little red wagon, the "two-wheeler" bicycle, roller skates, and baseball gloves. In all cases, there was the exercise of that remarkable childhood ability, fantasy-making. Child psychologists tell us that such fantasy-making is a healthy and normal activity, developing the ability of children to use their imaginations. Childhood play, either the singular play of private fantasy or reverie or the group play of shared fantasy, "transports" children beyond their own immediate and palpable existence. And adults have always helped, with stories, fairy tales, role modeling, "dressing up like Mommy", and attitudes and actions which are "picked up" and emulated by the child, including unsavory adoptive behavior such as racism or violence. At its best, however, childhood is characterized by wonderful flights of fantasy, enjoying the light fantastic of mental dance into created worlds of marvels and frights and triumphs. If, as comedian Shelly Berman used to joke, "we all want to go back", it is likely not to the comforts of the womb but rather to the joys of childhood play "inside" the castles in the air we were capable of building and occupying. A collection of cardboard boxes could become a fortress, a barn could become a palace, a blanket could become a princess's royal wedding gown, a broomstick the instrument with which one hit mighty home runs.

But, alas, as General Patton remarked, the world grew up. The twentieth century was characterized by innovations which transformed, some would say ended, childhood. The "cultural economy" of countries such as the United States commodified everything from religion to school, making every social activity something that could be legitimately marketed and sold. The mass media proliferated and diversified into astonishing technological powers to reach and affect people, including children. Thus a market existed for the structuring of play, seizing the initiative of play away from the players. The success of Disney studios, of Warner Brothers cartoons, of toy manufacturers, of radio and then television programming to develop playthings and play-toys and play-stories was, and is, remarkable. The world of the American child was expanded beyond the wildest fantasies of, say, nineteenth-century children.

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A whole new mythology was created, with friendly or funny animals, Mickey Mouse, Daffy Duck; royalty, Cinderella, Prince Charming; delightful villains, Boris and Natasha Badenov on *Bullwinkle*, Cruella De Ville of *101 Dalmatians*; and a new batch of heroes, Superman, Wonder Woman, the Justice League of America, and now the environmental activists of Ted Turner's *Captain Planet.* Children became a market for fantastic entertainment, as well as the target of toys and games advertising and marketing. Christmas and birthdays became occasions of expected acquisition of the latest fun things, and childhood deprivation became a matter of not having the most fashionable toy or game. Parents had to take their kids to the latest Disney movie, and acquire for them the latest fad. Children learned quickly the status associated with fashion: "You haven't seen *Jurassic Park* yet?" and with possessions: "My Daddy gave me a CD-ROM for my room." A successful childhood was measured, at least in part, in terms of acquisition. Envy among children often involved not achievement in school but rather the display of what one did or had for leisure time.

In retrospect, the "industrialization of play" seems to have had some important social effects. Childhood play was deemed too important a thing to be left to the children, so play-objects were provided by Hollywood, toy companies, book companies, and so on. Much of this was either beneficial or harmless fun: kids learned to read through books sold to their parents by the book industry, and picked up on various fads, from hula hoops to baseball cards to iron-ons. But some of it wasn't.

A lot of fantasy-play was simulated violence, playing cowboys and Indians, cops and robbers, Yanks and Japs, and so on, armed with a vast array of plastic guns, tanks, airplanes, and other military, police, or frontier paraphernalia. It may have been the case that this play-acting taught us a propensity toward violent solutions, although relatively few committed illegitimate acts of violence. But it may have urged upon us the idea that violent solutions, in war, crimefighting, or even social disputes or criminal threats, had some kind of mythic sanction since we had enacted them in play. Perhaps our disillusionment with Korea and Vietnam stemmed from their radical variance from the cultural story acted out in primary play, both in playing war and watching World War II vintage war movies. Children in chronic war zones, such as Belfast and Beirut, are well known to play-act the war as their side wishes it to come out.

In the contemporary world, children and young people spend a great deal of time playing in commercialized fantasy worlds. There is no other way quite to say it: when one becomes absorbed in *Dungeons and Dragons,* various other video and computer games, the absorption level seems astonishingly high. One can walk through a game arcade at the mall and note the amused intensity, and skill, with which the games are played. And new games, ever more sophisticated, clever, and controversial, are constantly being marketed. The many "Nintendo families" have seen crudities such as Pac-Man replaced with amazingly complicated games. The most recent flap was over a game called *Mortal Kombat,* replete with bloody violence, including decapitations and mutilations. The kids love them: like the horror movies they attend, the gorier the games they play, the better. If behavior at the game arcades is any guide, they could play them endlessly if there were no other distractions, such as family and school. We used to worry that a previous generation would be lost to drugs; now we may worry if this generation will be lost to gaming.

On the horizon is virtual reality, wherein one may escape into a world of pure fantasy, but which displays a remarkable level of reality, or rather perhaps meta-reality, being more real, and interesting and challenging, than our quotidian lives. The mechanisms of virtual reality will soon be available cheaply, so those accustomed to the intense play of computer games may be able to delve deeper into subjective and alternative realities virtually at will. One can conjure up a manufactured fantasy of idiosyncratic and creative dimensions, to the point of becoming uncomfortably close to simulating actual events and sensations. As it develops, virtual reality will become more vivid, and for the frustrated and bored, more lurid. One can imagine it putting the pornographers out of business.

Another fantasy-laden development, projected hologrammic "plays," involve the projection of moving figures in your living room, with which you may interact: the play of *Hamlet* will project and proceed with the part of Hamlet missing, which you may then play in relation to the other figures, "killing" the king and "dying" at the end.

As responsible adults charged with the rearing of children and the education of young people in order to make them into people like us, we may decry the dangerous subjectivity such play-activity implies. There are, however, larger dangers in the preoccupation of youth with video games. We may wonder if these activities are symptomatic of a fundamental shift in values and habits, loosely defined as an orientation towards work to an orientation towards play. Karl Marx wrote about "the work day," how the capitalist order organized time for people in order to accomplish organizational goals in production; we now might write about "the play day," how the "post-industrial" world organizes time for people in order to accomplish organizational goals in consumption.

In the process, individuals are drawn increasingly into the lures of play, of fun, of vicarious and

sensational experience that is preferable to work. Our civilization has organized social life around the value and necessity of work; we may now wonder if our children and young people share that assumption. If we think them inordinately bored by school, unable to understand punctuality, attendance, and behavioral rules, unwilling to see the relationship between work and subsequent reward, reluctant to delay gratification, and quite uninterested in intellectual subjects or questions, then it may be that their minds are just elsewhere, in the vast world of play they have mastered. To use their term, play is "where they live." Life begins in the interstices of school, in soap operas at lunchtime, Walkman music between classes, blasting stereos in the afternoon, all-weekend game marathons, "cocooning" to watch a series of their favorite movies on tape, road trips, watching MTV all night. School has become a daily choice, not a vocation or a job or a learning experience; rather it is one of the myriad of things children can do today, if they choose it and think it might be fun. If this is so, this may explain why there is so much effort to make school less painful, more playful, and to make learning somehow work-free and effortless, since the clientele of school dictates the rules of engagement. A professor who taught a large film class at a big midwestern state univerity once related that if he showed a foreign film in another language with subtitles, about half the class would get up and walk out.

But we cannot blame merely the availability of play for the decline of interest in school. In its current state, the United States has become a "carnival culture" that is increasingly oriented towards play. A few years ago, the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped U.S. Steel (USX) and added Disney; the largest growth industries in the country are the building of resorts and golf courses; a futurist has seriously proposed that in the future, with permanent high unemployment, the out-of-work should be subsidized, with vouchers like food stamps, for use in the play-industry movies, theme parks, concerts. Rather than keeping people busy with subsidized work, we will divert them through subsidized play. Such a culture is something new in the world, although it smacks of late Roman imperial decadence, with "bread and circuses," a civilization that exalted not *homo politicus* nor *homo faber* but rather *homo ludens.* Ludenic men and women would find meaning not in civic action or economic effort but rather in the pleasures of funning. They would act not out of civic virtue or moral rectitude, nor out of rational self-interest or plain old greed, but out of the pursuit of cultural desires, the pure form of the pursuit of happiness. In the first instance, the central institutions were the State and the Church; in the second, the School and the Company; and in the third, the Theme Park and the Mall.

We may doubt that such a civilization would "work," the very word we use may date us in the past: things are supposed to work; people are supposed to work; societies are supposed to work. What we may see is a great deal of disorientation and conflict among our offspring about what they are supposed to do with their lives, and solemn debate over why so many of them have chosen to reject school. Surely this propensity to prefer play to work is not merely youthful laziness. After all, these kids now grow up in an atmosphere of cultural pessimism, wherein they are constantly told that their "life-chances" are reduced, that the country is going to hell, that the government is gridlocked or unhelpful, that the economy generates wealth at the top, but that they will see none of it. The generation under thirty is told that they are star-crossed, Generation X, the 13th Generation, the babybusters, who will not enjoy the same kind of generational progress their predecessors experienced. It is no wonder they listen to the anti-intellectual ravings of the Rush Limbaughs and Howard Sterns, enjoy the sociopathic acts of Beavis and Butthead, and like the discordant sounds of heavy metal and rap music. Left with no sense of permanence or hope, a youth may conclude that investment in an education is a waste of time, which could be better spent having fun. With no future, the only timeframe is now, and the only activity that makes any sense is play—"fooling around." There is some evidence that this pessimism among today's youth begins early, that the general loss of optimism among the populace "trickles down" to children, who are no longer protected from the adult world; that television has become their primary learning source; that they learn from TV that society is a bleak place and getting worse; that people, including authority figures, are badly flawed and that the social world is chaotic; that human nature cannot be trusted; but that most of all, children want someone to control things.

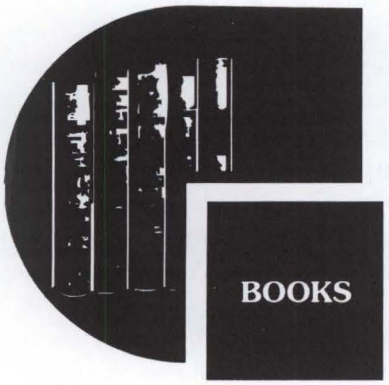
In such an atmosphere, school and other institutions become objects of "dis," something to disrespect. Alternative realities and activities become a way to amuse oneself and to express one's disrespect. Fantasy games and other fun activities allow a disaffected young person to enter worlds wherein he or she can exercise a degree of power over what happens, perhaps even winning the game, a prospect that seems remote in the "zero-sum" society they do not wish to face. It has often been remarked that American democratic capitalism has survived not for the few gold medals the winners get, but rather the many consolation prizes given the losers; but what happens when there are fewer and fewer consolation prizes? If one's prospects are "less than zero," then the contemplation of the world as a dark place leads one into becoming a voyeur of mass-mediated life, a grazer across the multiplicity of realities on

cable or VCR, and an adventurer in the confines of manufactured fantasylands wherein one's heroics can occasionally triumph. If it is the case that young people and children yearn for control, the fantasy-makers have given it to them: in many such created worlds, heroism is still possible, the good guys can win, evil is embodied in clearly defined villains, and ambiguities and frustrations are overcome with final triumphs. By the dint of the effort of the player, one can master the universe. For the disaffected, these "virtual" or pseudo-worlds must seem a satisfying alternative, places where the dramatic logic of cultural stories still obtain.

The historical context of all this seems clear enough, even to the dimmest kids who pay little attention to the processes of change. Both Edward Luttwak and Charles Murray, intellectual factotums in the Reagan days, now speak alarmingly of "argentinization," with the U.S. becoming a declining power saddled with huge debt, political stalemate, and social decay, the world that today's emerging generation will inherit. It may be the case that the ever-more sophisticated manufactured fantasy worlds will become all the more attractive to young people convinced of the uselessness of reversing historical entropy.

Fatalism endured by funning is not the only course of action. We now assume that liberal democracy and capitalism have triumphed, that history has ended, that the great struggle has been won, that now our problems are merely technical. That confident conclusion commits the fallacies of the single alternative and historical conclusiveness. More immediately, that conclusion also ignores the crisis of the spirit that seems most evident in the coming generation who feel they are stuck with a world they never made, and a real sense that they are after the fact of the previous century, the twentieth. They flounder and retreat and deny, but they will no doubt make their own history. I fear for them: their contempt for school, their confusion about what is important and real, their devotion to play all makes them vulnerable in many ways—economic exploitation in a country of dead-end jobs with low pay and no benefits or retirement; cultural fragmentation caused by clashes over whose values should absolutely prevail, and political mobilization. In this latter instance, there is the potential, I fear, of many who are disaffected finding someone outside their well-developed fantasy worlds who offers them popular authority, heroic satisfactions, and a new "tribe" with which to identify that resembles the drama of the fantasy game. Those who study the twentieth century are acutely aware of the role of disaffected youth in social movements, in which private fantasies and hopes become translated into political fanaticism, abandoned young people striking back at the world with a vengeance. In a world of doubt and drift, the quest for certainty could lead people into a mass-mediated fantasy world outside the arcade, by promising the fantasy of social control, individual identification with a group and mission, and the "altercasting" of new demons, foreign villains from other civilizations, or domestic villains such as feminists, homosexuals, and academicians. Just because we think that today's students are passive and unmotivated, cynical and bored, distracted and preoccupied, does not mean that they could not become part of major social upheaval. Fantasyworld learning may make people more receptive to the appeal of a popular movement, especially if the leaders of that movement understand and use popular culture, one of the great communicative connections with the young. Fantasy figures able to use television, popular music, celebrity, indeed the logic of popular games, including violent solutions, as a mode of making people feel part of a larger fantasy have a dynamic resource at their command. The movements of the twenty-first century will be "wired," but they will also be informed by the common language of popular discourse. Such discourse mobilizes individual fantasies into a collective fantasy directed at change.

If all of this sounds fearsome, it is. But we cannot exclude the potential for change wrought by the young against the old and deadlocked. The assumptions and values of the twentieth century fade quickly, and an apocalyptic sensibility is upon us. Even the possibility of an American Caesar, a kind of native "casual fascism," cannot be discounted. It may seem a long way from the game arcades at the mall to young lions in the streets, but we have to remind ourselves that youthful change stems from visions of hope, however misguided or destructive, that emerge among those who are deemed to have a dismal future. Change is often embraced by those thought the most unlikely to act, perhaps for no other reason than those labeled losers conclude that they have nothing to lose. Such an unlikely development might also remind us that the exercise of imagination, however artificially stimulated, has consequences, and that marketed fantasies of heroism and conquest for private consumption can become a collective fantasy energizing a movement in the very real world. In such a case, it will be the older and pragmatic generations who will long to retreat into comforting or exciting private fantasies, and wish that the world outside their door would just go away. ❑



Walter Wangerin's *Branta*

Virginia Stem Owens

From Aesop to Disney, human beings have made up stories about animals who can talk. Our childhoods' imaginations are "peopled" with a menagerie of verbal vertebrates, including Mickey Mouse, Br'er Rabbit, Peter Rabbit, Winnie-the-Pooh, Toad and Mole, not to mention C. S. Lewis's Aslan. Although as a child the question never occurred to me, adult critics often speculate about what attracts us to talking animals. Is it a vestigial animism surviving in the primitive souls of children? Or simply cultural sentimentality? Those who ask the question seldom find positive answers to the question. (One writer I know even questions whether talking animal stories can be adequately orthodox—this despite the fact that the Bible includes at least two—the wily Serpent and Balaam's ass.)

Another theory says the attraction of talking animals lies in our self-disgust, that we prefer animals because they are more "natural." Walt Whitman, for instance, declared he might like to become an animal since "they are so placid and self-contained." Also, they do not "sweat and whine about their condition." Despite certain zoological inaccuracies in Whitman's observations, many of us retain a similar admiration for some quality in animals that we find difficult to define. Robinson Jeffers, a poet even more respectful of animals than Whitman, claimed, "I'd sooner, except the penalties, kill a man than a hawk."

Others have surmised that we use talking animals as alter egos of ourselves, or at least of some identifiable aspect of human character. This, they say, accounts for bears being dressed in cunning little rain slickers or mice in lederhosen and skirts, though *clothed* talking animals are a relatively late nineteenth-century invention. At any rate, it's easy enough to see how animals—dressed or undressed—are sometimes used to mirror human behavior. From Aesop's patient tortoise to Beatrix Potter's curious Peter, beasts have served as exemplars of human conduct, either to command or to caution.

Walter Wangerin's first venture into the Kingdom Animalia followed this path. In 1978 Wangerin added more characters to our stable of talking animals with his award-winning work, *The Book of the Dun Cow.* Borrowing types used by Chaucer in the Middle Ages, he gave us Chauntecleer the rooster and his faithful hen-wife Pertelote, though he shaped them to fit the complex form of extended prose narrative we now call the novel. His protagonist, Chauntecleer, is, as a proud, high-hearted rooster-ruler, as solicitous of his barnyard creatures as King Arthur was for the citizens of Camelot. And, like Chaucer's fowl of the same name, Chauntecleer's besetting sin is vanity. Mundo Cani, a mournful-looking doormat of a dog whose nose is a particular offense to Chauntecleer, is the actual hero of the piece and the epitome, the living embodiment, of humanity.

But more than Aesop's animals, who only represent morals for us (and are consequently limited in either character or appeal), Wangerin's beasts of the field are full embodiments. Their animal society is just foreign enough to capture our human attention—and thus to catch it off guard. Since it does not immediately confront us with our own image in the mirror, this story about sacrifice is able to sneak past our defenses. Whereas it might prove fruitless to ask us to believe in a story about a shambling doormat of a human being successfully taking on a Juggernaut of cosmic evil, it is nevertheless the story we most want to hear. And the one we most want to be true. Our starveling imagination, its guard against disappointment momentarily let down, can believe in Mundo Cani and Chauntecleer even when it hasn't the strength to believe in Adam and Jesus.

However, Wangerin's latest work for children, *Branta and the Golden Stone,* takes a new and unusual turn in the genre of talking-animal stories.

Virginia Stem Owens *is currently Director of the Milton Center at Kansas Newman College in Wichita, Kansas. Her most recent book is a suspense novel,* A Multitude of Sins.

And the reversal is a very interesting one indeed. This book, shorter and thus more properly a "tale" than a novel, has for its heroine a girl who lives alone "on the northernmost island in all the world." How she came to be there is told using the rather sophisticated narrative technique of flashback. The audience is gently repositioned in time in order to view the deathbed scene where Branta's father reveals the story of her mother's death at her birth and—sinking to an even earlier stratum of the past—his own part in that death.

Branta's father, it emerges, was the wiseman who came to Christ's cradle bearing not spices but gold. A crucial difference, since his fellow Magi found it easy to lay their gifts on the ground at the Baby King's feet while he never let go of his gold nugget but only lifted it up to the child who reached and touched it, leaving on the stone a deep baby's fingerprint. At that moment, the Magus felt the stone beginning to glow with heat as power poured into it.

The wiseman found then that he could not turn loose of the gold, could not actually give it up to the Baby King, a fact he justified to himself and to his wife when he returned home by claiming, as Judas did when he had protested against the holy waste of perfume on Jesus's feet, that it could be sold to "do good for many people." And indeed, he discovered that the stone now had the power to change people—to change them into whatever *they* wanted to be, including healthy, wealthy, famous, avenged, and, finally, in the case of his accusing wife, silent.

It had taken her death to shock her husband into repentance and exiled him to this northernmost island. Now his daughter must suffer this inherited exile in loneliness, the one possession bequeathed to her, the golden stone still glowing among the flames in her fireplace.

It is at this point, a year after her father's death when the spring thaw began, that a pair of geese appear—Canada geese—judging by their description in the text. And it is here that the reversal in the usual talking-animal motif occurs. The geese, being *only* geese, can only speak Goose. Although it is clear to Branta that they are communicating between themselves, laughing at the jokes they tell one another, to her their noises are only gabbling. "'*Gaba-gaba-gaba,*' they said—no language Branta could understand, no joke that she could laugh at. For geese are geese and people are people."

Thus, though elements of the supernatural have already entered the story, when it comes to this matter—the gulf between animals and people—the world remains as we experience it every day. Animals, the sentient creatures closest to ourselves on this planet, are an earlier Babel for us, calling out, often in beautiful burbles and wonderful whistles, but always in a language beyond our boundaries of understanding.

Still, Branta makes the most of her visitors to the island, eavesdropping on the goose-talk, observing the hatching of their six handsome goslings, watching them as they grow. Then, at the point when the geese must leave and fly south again, a crisis occurs in the form of a storm. Branta tries desperately to herd the eight geese into her cottage to keep them from freezing. She only succeeds in frightening them. After repeated failures, it becomes clear that the only way she can save them is by speaking their language. And the only way she can do that is to become one of them. Thus, the stone is used one final time.

The truth of Wangerin's tale lies in the fact that Branta's change is not modelled on that of the Greek gods who took on mortal bodies for certain ends and then assumed their divine forms again at their convenience. Branta's change will be permanent, and she knows it. The choice is not a matter of whimsy or curiosity then, but a true sacrifice. And though I have explicated in my summary a number of points left embedded and implicit in the narrative, this is the one message frankly spelled out at the end of the story: "the length of love and the fullness of sacrifice." Branta's story then is a way of refracting that mystery central to human identity—the baffling link between gain and loss, end and means, in our lives.

Even the jewel-like illustrations of artist Deborah Healy, who also provided visual depictions of Wangerin's earlier *Elizabeth and the Water Troll*, underscores this mixture. The Fauve-like color reproductions use vivid colors that pulse along the dark outlines of contoured shapes, making the contrast of the story's paradoxes visibly urgent.

In this last story of Wangerin's, unlike *The Book of the Dun Cow* and its sequel *The Book of Sorrows*, the animals do not talk a language we can understand, but the human Branta must do whatever is necessary to talk animal-language. This change makes me wonder if Wangerin has not mapped out in his head a topography of the mythological world with which he so faithfully works. In revisiting *The Dun Cow* for this review, for instance, I noticed that the action is set "when the sun still travelled around the moored earth, so that days and nights belonged to the earth and to the creatures thereon, not to a ball of silent fire." No mention is made of human beings, only the many tens of thousands of animals who "were there for a purpose"—though at that point they are ignorant of their mission as Keepers of the evil Wyrm, the one creature God had damned. Despite their mighty mission, God "did not choose to force knowledge upon the animals." And indeed, it is in that story, set "in those days when the animals could both speak and understand speech," that their purpose is revealed to them.

In placing *Branta* in a later age—let's not be too precise but simply point out the brief appearance of the

Baby King as a chronological reference—does Wangerin posit a reverse necessity, that of humans descending the ladder of creation to rescue animals? And will speech somehow play a major role in that sacrificial descent? If the Holy Spirit interprets our own sighs too deep for words, will we someday be asked to speak for an inarticulate, groaning creation as it awaits its deliverance? These are questions I would like to ask the author, knowing both his predilection for whirling words to headlong heights and his spacious skill in achieving such elevated language—a feat few even attempt in this day of minimalist prose.

For the time being, however, as a mockingbird sings me awake every morning, I can only intuit on some wordless level the joy pouring from her throat. But I can believe, like Branta, that there are things worth becoming a mockingbird for. ❑

In the Hall of the Pharaohs

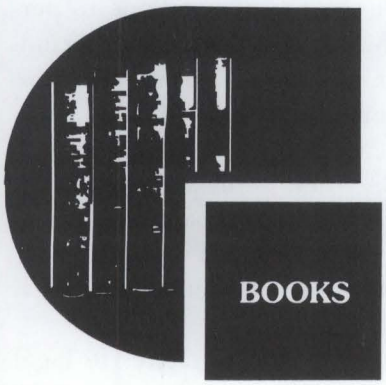
I spent a museum morning
plundering Egypt's gold with my eyes,
a dozen limestone statues carved exactly the same.
I looked in vain for a mother lode of bones,
for bowls Pharaoh tasted from, a stone headrest

with signs swearing Ramses' neck lay there,
right there. I wandered forty years,
following Charlton Heston's voice on tape,
hoping to glimpse a great king weeping by the Nile.
The tape implied this Ramses might be the shaved,

Yul Brenner Pharaoh who raged at Moses,
though it never said so. I saw gold bracelets
bartered by his court, pearls from the Orient.
I found four stone baboons Pharaoh believed
God's favorites, cold as ordinary marble.

I saw the cubit rod and sarcophagus
of a royal architect, but not one royal bone,
only a photo of a corpse in a coffin,
shriveled like dark, beef jerky.
A sign claimed it was Ramses.

Walter McDonald



Thomas L. Shaffer with Mary L. Shaffer, *American Lawyers and Their Communities: Ethics in the Legal Profession.* Notre Dame, 1991.

When lawyers get into deep trouble politically, legal educators are often asked to bear the brunt of the catastrophe. Think, for example, of J. Danforth Quayle's famous "too many lawyers" speech at the ABA meeting in the summer of 1991. At the time I thought Mr. Quayle's speech was quite unfocused, omitting any consideration of the maldistribution of lawyers in our society that causes many real needs for legal services to go unmet. Shortly after the speech, Quayle's statistics were repudiated as wildly inaccurate. Yet we legal educators are still being told off by underwhelming folks in the media and in state bar associations who cite the Quayle speech not for the proposition that we need to improve our efforts to turn out lawyers who will be truly helpful in society, but for the conclusion that we should be cutting our enrollment in half.

If that were the limit of the inane, my role as a law dean would be a lot easier. Far more intrusive, however, was the ABA's response to the national scandal of Watergate: requiring all accredited law schools to offer mandatory instruction in what the ABA is pleased to call "professional responsibility." Why would anyone object to that? After all, the VU School of Law was offering instruction on the ethics of being a good lawyer long before Watergate. My objection is not to the teaching of such courses, but to their content, or, more to the point, their lack of serious discussion of any of the major themes in contemporary ethics.

Shaffer notes that at its best, the elaborate effort of the ABA to focus on professionalism—with a "national office, a logo, a motto, its own journal (called *The Professional Lawyer*), and a budget" (65) and worse still, a newsletter—evades but does not avoid the problem of elitism. This is because the new emphasis on professionalism calls not for lawyers in the tradition of Harper Lee's Atticus Finch and William Faulkner's Gavin Stevens, but only for "s*pecialist[s]* in the administration of justice" (68). At its worst, this effort is a pathetic attempt to make the profession look good through slick PR gimmickry, rather than through genuine reform of bad habits (66-68). As Karl Barth used to say, there might be something of good in all this, but it is not easy to discern. In any event, neither the curricular requirement imposed by the accrediting agency after Watergate nor the recent turn towards professionalism has exactly produced a sea change in the behavior of American lawyers.

It is not easy to account for the ongoing malaise about the ethics of lawyers, but I suspect that one of the major problems underlying this difficulty is that few of my colleagues who teach legal ethics in American law schools do very much to motivate an attitude of service that is at the heart of the calling of lawyers. As Shaffer observes, few of those who teach the "professional responsibility" courses in American law schools have had any training in ethics, either philosophical or theological (9). Like "medical ethics" and bio-ethics, "legal ethics" abounds with people who teach their courses dutifully, and I regret to say authoritatively, but who literally cannot see forests for trees.

Another reason for the malaise is that an awful lot of writing about the ethics of professionals is pretty bad stuff. For example, the new ABA Rules for Professional Conduct (1983)—which stripped away all the ethical considerations from the 1969 ABA Model Code for Professional Responsibility (7-8)—amounts to minimalist rule-keeping. Observing the norms that are necessary to avoid getting bounced out of the club falls far short of what Lon Fuller used to call "aspirational ethics."

On another occasion Tom Shaffer wrote: "There is more to legal ethics than rules. Ethics is beyond the rules and around and under the rules. This, more than in legal ethics, is not alternative, not secondary, but is so elementary in our lives that without it what we say about rules would be incoherent. What is beyond and around and under the rules are the morals we learn from our families, our towns, our religious congregations, and our clients." In this book Shaffer again does battle with the premise that all there is to legal ethics is a bunch of rules.

Shaffer stands out among a strong and growing band of scholars who have ventured a very different approach to the teaching of legal ethics. He is probably the most prolific and truly original of these ethicists. Shaffer mentions his colleague at Notre Dame, Bob Rodes, with gratitude, and dedicates this book to him. Among other male scholars who are soul brothers of Shaffer, but who are unnamed in this volume, I would include John Noonan, Steve Pepper, and James Boyd White.

Shaffer now has many female colleagues contributing a different voice to this conversation. He mentions Emily Fowler Hartigan, Susan Martyn, Mari Matsuda, Judith Maute, Nancy Moore, Carrie Menkel-Meadow, and Deborah Rhode as examples of scholars who "read philosophy and theology, novels, anthropology, and humanistic social science" (9). He also asked his daughter Mary to join him in the writing of this volume. The web of collaboration with his daughter is not entirely seamless; Mary is expressly identified as the co-author of chapters 5-7, and is acknowledged elsewhere (19, 27, 44, 84). But it is not always clear that the first person plural refers to both authors. Acknowledging Mary's collaboration in this volume, I will for the sake of simplicity refer to this work as "his," except when discussing below the chapters on the Italo-Americans that Mary worked on more closely.

The effect of these female influences on Shaffer is subtle. We still hear mainly from male fiction writers like Anthony Trollope and William Faulkner, and from male ethicists like Stanley Hauerwas and the Niebuhr brothers. But we also catch glimpses of Carol Gilligan (59) in a section that argues that the ethic of the gentleman-lawyer has greater possibilities for the subversion of patriarchy than the ABA's model of professionalism (58-63). Shaffer accepts the radical challenge of feminist theologians like Rosemary Radford Ruether and Sally Purvis to the sort of stories about gentlemen that he has been relying upon to construct his ethics for lawyers, acknowledging both the need to collect new stories about women and to construct a "new feminine narrative [that] will, like the parables [of Jesus], break down conventional meanings, look at reality upside down, challenge notions of what is important, and undermine arrangements of power" (64).

Barbara Babcock's work on Clara Shortridge Foltz, the first woman lawyer in California, and Jane Friedman's account of the life of Myra Bradwell, the first woman lawyer in Illinois, are classics instances of the material that Shaffer has been yearning for. Bradwell is best known for being excluded from the Illinois bar because of her gender in 1872. Only Chief Justice Chase — a distant cousin — dissented from the decision of the Supreme Court sustaining this exclusion. Justice Bradley thought the exclusion reasonable on the ground that "the Law of the Creator [had decreed that] the paramount destiny and mission of woman are to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother." Bradwell was ultimately admitted to the Bar in 1890, four years before her death, but Shaffer notes that even before that, she "led campaigns for law reform and civic improvement, most of which had to do with making the legal profession more accountable" (62).

Because Shaffer desires the coming of a non-patriarchal order that will be "more relational and communal," he is at pains in this volume to persuade his readers that elitism, including sexism, is not essential to the gentleman's legal ethic (65). This effort leads him to break sharply with the ABA's new ethic of professionalism, which he states baldly is "not in continuity with the gentleman's ethic" (68) and cannot be connected with it (72).

The fresh approaches to legal ethics that I have sketched here illustrate why Shaffer has emerged as a preeminent leader of the counter-cultural bunch I mentioned above. Shaffer describes his company as a "curious fraternity ... and sorority" whose members have "one leg shorter than the other," who live "in the Tower of Babel," and who "are prepared to hear that they belong somewhere else" (9).

In my view, this volume is Shaffer's best contribution yet to legal

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❑ **Douglas Schuurman** teaches in the Department of Philosophy at St. Olaf College.

❑ **Judith Peters** teaches Spanish in the Department of Foreign Languages at VU, and has travelled extensively in Latin America at the request of the ELCA Division for Missions.

ethics. To say this is high praise, for he has already contributed dozens of penetrating essays and several superlative books. His book-length studies include *American Legal Ethics* (1985), which is easily the most challenging presentation of the subject available for classroom use. In this casebook Shaffer interweaves the stories about the great characters of the American bar for which he is justly famous—Shaffer has made a cottage industry out of his commentaries on the character and virtues of Atticus Finch—with deftly chosen provisions of the ABA rules and their ethical considerations. For the very reason that Shaffer avoids the easy mistake of confusing the law governing lawyers with the ethics of professional lawyers, his casebook remains undervalued and underutilized in today's consumerist law schools, where most profs cater to the majority of the students who just want to get "the basics" down for their Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam and then get about the rest of their career.

This volume follows the high standards of crisp, multi-layered writing that Shaffer set for himself in two earlier collections on this subject, *On Being a Christian and a Lawyer* (1980), and *Faith and the Professions* (1987). The principal focus of this volume is the profound connection between community and character. Shaffer is thoroughly familiar with the Aristotelian understanding of character and virtue, and with the writings of Jewish and Christian ethicists who have argued that character is the fundamental category for defining the Hebraic way of life (39). He does not make the Liberal assumption that virtue can simply be equated with the choices or preferences of good individuals, but understands that we are shaped both in our awareness of the good and in our ability to appropriate it in and through the communities in which we grow up and are nurtured (13-28). He explores astutely the ways in which the gentleman's community enabled the virtues of the gentleman lawyer to flourish (30-46). He does not, however, pay much attention in this volume to the ways in which dysfunctional communities can stifle growth and cause people to wither.

The particular community that Tom and Mary Shaffer explore in greatest detail is the Italo-American community (chapters 5-7). Through two interesting case studies (108-26), the Shaffers explore the roles of the immigrant lawyer as an assimilator (John Mariano) and as a preserver of community values (Salvatore Cotillo). They note the fundamental role of the family as a source of great strength in the Italian immigrant community. And they offer a fresh perspective on the virtue of *rispetto*—"a good habit, through which the person learns, practices, teaches, and remembers her membership in the family" (135 — within this community, linking it to Aristotle's *via media*, with the skills of truthful description seen not only as necessary for understanding, but also as a moral art (166). Once again, this study is upbeat, omitting any reference to the pathologies of the Italian family, such as the oppressive character of patriarchal dominance. *The Godfather* and the favors owed to the don lurk at the perimeter of the story of Cotillo, who confronts a mobster in Little Italy (123-24), but are never foregrounded in this narrative.

As in his previous work, Shaffer's exploration of fiction and films about lawyers is superlative. I found his observations about Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors* particularly insightful (17-20). As might be expected, he turns to Atticus Finch at several points in the argument, with penetrating comments about his favorite Southern gentleman (28, 45-46, 93). Crisp and graceful, Shaffer's writing is always challenging. Not just legal educators, but anthropologists, historians, philosophers, sociologists, and theologians—indeed, anyone who cares about the good life—will profit greatly from this superb essay.

Edward McGlynn Gaffney

Ted Peters. *God—The World's Future: Systematic Theology for a Postmodern Era.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

Ted Peters offers this book to "those students of Christian mysteries hwo seek a better understanding of the symbols of our faith and who wish to pursue the loving life as a response to God's gracious love for us" (xiv). He wants an understanding of the Christian faith that is both relevant to our "postmodern" situation and faithful to classic Christian symbols and claims. The central aspect of our postmodern consciousness that concerns Peters is the brokenness and fragmentation "left in the wake of modern objectivism, mechanicalism, technologism, and individualism" (14). We separated reason from emotion, individual from society, humans from nature, and fact from value. Global movements (feminists, futurists, new agers) and theoretical developments (revisionist physicists, process metaphysics) converge to give evidence of a new yearning for wholeness and a deep recognition of the interdependence of all things. This future-oriented yearning, says Peters, finds its true form and fulfillment in the Christian Gospel.

The central theme of the book is "prolepsis, whereby the gospel is understood as announcing the preactualization of the future consummation of all things in Jesus Christ" (xi). As a balmy day in February is a "foretaste" of the coming summer, so too the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is a "proleptic preactualization" of that total renovation of all creation expected at the end of history. The

course of development in history and nature are not to be interpreted as the genetic outworking of an original potentiality traced, theologically, to creation; it is the "epigenetic" creation of new forms drawn toward the future and not reducible to preexisting materials.

The image of God in humanity is at heart a "call forward. . . the divine draw toward future reality;" sin and evil retard the process of becoming (140). The Church is "an electric arc between two terminals . . . called to bear the light between Easter and the consummation" (305). The eucharistic celebration is a proleptic participation in the "future consummation of all God's purposes" (285). The Holy Spirit is the One who makes the future a present reality in Christian experience of faith, hope, and love. Through these and many other areas of theology, Peters unfolds meanings in light of their relation to God's future.

Part of the considerable achievement of this book is its treatment of Christian hope (eschatology) not as a mere appendix, but as the integrative center for all the classic areas of theology. In working this approach out, Peters sheds much light on many ancient and modern symbols and claims. Peters acknowledges his debt to Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfart Pannenberg, German theologians who have been developing this approach to theology since the mid 1960s. The systematic comprehension, clarity and brevity (given its ambitious scope) arguably make *God—the World's Future* the best introduction to this kind of theology available.

Peters combines bold affirmation of central Christian beliefs with serious attention to contemporary concerns. He treats feminist claims about such important issues as the nature of God and God-language, the maleness of Christ, anthropology, and the role of self-sacrifice in Christian love. Sometimes he misrepresents Christian feminism. His claim, for example, that feminist liberation began with the egalitarianism of the Enlightenment (118) ignores the pervasive critique of "liberal feminism" by radical and postmodern feminists. Another view—held by many evangelical and "mainline" Christian feminists—is that feminist liberation is rooted in the Reformers' understanding of the priesthood of all believers, and in the New Testament understanding of the Gospel, baptism and discipleship. On the whole, however, Peters' treatment of feminist positions enriches his book.

His chapter on "Ecumenical Pluralism" is a superb example of the way Peters squarely faces the difficult issues, learns from positions he finally rejects, and argues for a version of classic Christianity. Peters' theology is amenable with the postmodern respect for the integrity of varied cultures and their traditions, and accordingly he calls for interreligious dialogue. But unlike others whose respect for "other" religions and cultures slides into an ideological relativism that requires the interlocutor to reject the truth of one's own faith, Peters argues that Jesus Christ is THE savior or he is no savior at all, and that holding this Christian confession is a requirement for serious dialogue. This also leads Peters to criticize people like John Hick and Joseph Campbell, who exchange the Christian confession for a meta-religion that synthesizes aspects of particular religions into a universal set of beliefs. Peters' treatment of this issue is as challenging as it is discerning.

From his confessional center, Peters calls for openness to truth and goodness wherever it is found. "When others in the secular realm or others in the non-Christian religions seem to be humming in harmony [in their call for world peace, justice, ecological balance], Christians should not scramble to rewrite the notes so that their own song sounds exclusive or unique. There is no virtue in the solo, per se. Rather, people of faith should join the chorus" (375). His joint appointments as professor of systematic theology at both Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the confessionally diverse Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, CA) symbolize the ecumenical tenor of this book. In it one is as likely to read citations from Augustine, Calvin or Wesley as from Luther (Calvin is the theologian most frequently cited). Though he favors the Latin West, Peters includes Eastern Orthodox perspectives at pivotal areas.

A central problem for Peters (and for Moltmann and Pannenberg) is explaining how the future, and God understood as essentially future, "causes" anything. He rejects what he calls the "bowling ball" theory of creation, in which the present state of affairs is the result of past causes, traced ultimately to the patterns and possibilities planted by God's originating act of creation, and governed by the Creator's providence until the Final Day. He argues instead for a "proleptic" view of creation where "God creates from the future, not the past" (134). The true cause of any present state of affairs is "God's creative activity as a pull from the future" (136). God is drawing all of creation into a harmonious whole. Peters says that the "bowling ball" approach leads to mechanistic determinism, but that the "proleptic" approach sees the future as a genuinely new possibility and thus the basis for freedom.

It is hard to see, however, how this conception of divine agency is superior to conceptions Peters opposes. Peters says that traditional "bowling ball" views of God's agency imply that the future is not open to novel developments and lead to determinism. But theologians who develop versions of the conception Peters opposes (notably Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Edwards) take pains to avoid "mecha-

nistic determinism" and account for relatively (as opposed to absolutely) "novel" developments in history. Is a person any less free or determined, after all, if God is "pulling" her from the future than if God is "pushing" him from the past? Explaining how God "causes" or influences actions or occurrences is an exceedingly large problem for any theology. Though Peters is more circumspect than many others, he fails to avoid the tendency common to the vast majority of "process" and "hope" theologians: Begin with a misleadingly simple caricature of traditional views of God's agency, and then overlook problems in the enthusiastically-embraced alternative model.

Peters strives for high aspiration. "In our time theological thinking must be engaging. It must confront the world in and around the church and interpret the fundamental symbols of our faith in light of the contemporary context" (376). Peters' remarkable ability to draw analogies which illumine the meaning of an ancient claim or symbol, and to simplify complex issues in short pithy statements, make this an excellent choice as well as an introductory textbook. Even if one disagrees with Peters, one's understanding will be enriched with surprising new insights into Christian mysteries explored in this book.

Douglas J. Schuurman

Luis N. Rivera. *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.

Last year's commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas brought into the open the deeply conflicting views of this event. Should the "Conquest" be "celebrated"? Should the "Encounter" be "acknowledged"? Should the "Invasion" be "mourned"? For most North Americans who had not gone too far beyond "In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue" in their reflection on this historical moment and had considered the arrival of the Pilgrims the "real" beginning of life in the New World, the virulence of the accusations and condemnations flying between Indigenists and Hispanics came as a surprise. Those closer to Native American communities have been more aware of the strong emotions regarding the various actors in the drama of Spanish colonization. (There are, after all, no statues to Cortez in Mexico, whereas monuments to Moctezuma and Cuatemoc abound.)

Not surprisingly, the polarization of views characterizes the great volume of research surrounding Columbus' voyages and their aftermath, and publications issuing from Spain and Latin America are the most partisan of all. *A Violent Evangelism*, an investigation and amassing of documentation concerning the motives shaping the conquest, by Luis N. Rivera, a professor of humanities at the University of Puerto Rico at Rio Piedras is a fine example of the sometimes curious juxtaposition of respectable research and passionate convictions.

Rivera's premise, which is not new, is that the political aspects of the Spanish conquest and colonization were consistently interpreted in theological terms, and that the religious evangelization was profoundly influenced by political considerations. Rivera offers as one example the sacramental act of baptism. The spiritual conversion of the natives (in itself questionable) culminating in baptism marked not only their transformation into Christians, but also converted them into spiritual subjects of the Pope. As a consequence, according to the preeminent sixteenth-century theologian—jurist Francisco de Vitoria—when a goodly number of "barbarians" had become Christians, the Pope was entirely justified in giving them a Christian prince to replace their pagan rulers (231).

What is particularly important in this work is not its premise, but the very focused documentation that Rivera has presented for each issue. He has scrutinized the writings of the age of Columbus, and also the interpretation of those writings by historians and theologians of this century. Papal bulls, letters from missionaries, from officials and from travellers, royal edicts, judicial proceedings, records of debates, laws, directives, treatises, chronicles of the discoverers, all yield insights into the motivation of religious and political figures on both sides of the ocean.

Rivera, whose organizing principles are never totally apparent, has divided his work into three parts. The first deals with the actual events surrounding the discovery. The second details the famous decades-long series of debates over fundamental human and political issues that ultimately formed the basis for modern international law. Questions over the right of Europeans to take possession of the discovered lands and their inhabitants; over the humanness or bestiality of the natives and their right to freedom; over the reasons that might justify war; over the right to mineral resources, are examined through the records and writings of those who debated and their partisans. Rivera concludes this section noting that the debates themselves were always between the two factions of the conquerors, never between conqueror and conquered. He states, "In general, it would not be untrue to assert that the promoters of the human rights of the American natives win at the level of theory but are defeated in the historical practice of conquest" (202).

It is that gap between theory and practice that occupies the third part of

Rivera's study. As he points out, the inability of just laws to maintain their compelling force over three thousand miles of ocean results in the almost formalized precept of *Acato pero no cumplo,* "I obey, but I do not comply" (9206), that allowed administrators of the Spanish crown to satisfy the letter, but not the spirit of the law. Rivera again brings thorough documentation to bear for the natives of the Americas.

The disquieting aspect of Rivera's work for the reader is not only its proofs of cruelties and abuses, but also the dual voice with which Rivera speaks. We are inclined to accept his reasoned documentation, but to waver in our credence of the validity of impassioned diatribes. In the introduction to this English version of his work, Rivera says it is "an attempt to rethink the discovery and conquest by Spain of the Americas in their own ideological context, within the horizons of the theoretical debates that accompanied the event, without imposing arbitrary and forign patterns of interpretation" (xv). But in the next breath the measured voice of the objective investigator changes as he asserts that his work is not "a morally 'neutral' deliberation." One is disturbed by the word "morally" more than by his declaration of lack of neutrality, particularly since he continues: "[The work] is a tribute of honor and respect to the native people of the Americas, militarily defeated and culturally opressed, offered in sacrifice to ambitions and cupidity of the epoch" (xv). No, he certainly will not be neutral, and his judgments promise to be tinged with the zeal of his convictions.

This dual voice is evident throughout the work—a strange antiphony of balanced presentation as he elucidates historical documents as a researcher, and bursts of judgmental prose in transitions and summaries. The latter voice begins quietly, but becomes more strident as the work progresses. This split vision is all the more unfortunate because Rivera, as a researcher, painstakingly and convincingly proves his points. And it is on the basis of his work as investigator that the study is worth reading. For the theologian, the historian, the political scientist, or for whomever has an interest in cutting through the pomp and acrimony of last year's quincentenary commemoration, *A Violent Evangelism* can be read for Rivera's thorough compilation of citations from documents that speak with the voice of the participants in the original event.

Judith G. Peters

Notes on Poets:

Gary Fincke teaches writing and coaches tennis at Susquehanna University. Author of several books of poetry, he publishes frequently in The Cresset.

Walter McDonald is a widely published poet who teaches at Texas Tech in Lubbock.

David Rogner teaches in the Department of English at Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois.

DRAWN BY MASTERS' HANDS

In Caravaggio's canvases I find Christ
pointing,
Reaching out and drawing figures
through and into darkened spaces in which dances
brilliant light,
Index finger limply yet commandingly extended
in a painted gesture of benign, divine coercion,
Pregnant with authoritative invitations
(gently forceful calls to life).

Drawn into the tomb of Lazarus,
I follow the invisible arc
implied by Christ's extended finger,
tracing the descending line that gains
momentum as it rushes toward the form
of Lazarus.

At which point he trembles into life, his
rigid, outstretched fingers bathed in light, his
ashen, putrid flesh belying
the infused, regenerating spark
which quickens rotting clay and threatens to extend
its power beyond the edges of the picture plane,
Where I stand looking on—outside the canvas, yes—but
One more clamoring, astonished spectator,
Stirring, quickened, and compelled
(Almost) to waken from some fetid, private death—

Or feeling called, at least, into a different life,

Like when the finger points
across a darkened room in which
a shaft of angling light reveals
a tax collector poised upon his bench,
mindful of the pointed finger and the
weight of the descending arc that falls
on Levi.

At which point he gestures quizzically,
(sensing the absurdity inherent in the scene)
hoping he might challenge or deflect the call
which Christ makes indisputably to him,
(yet I cast furtive glances both directions)
Certain that there must be some mistake but knowing
That there isn't,
Seeing in an instant that one lives
As one is drawn by the extended hand.

David W. Rogner

SECOND
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