The Christendom Review

A Journal of the Philosophia Perennis

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This is a Voice from Your Past was originally published in *The Chattahoochee Review*, Summer 1997, reprinted in *The Best American Mystery Stories*, 1998, and included in Merrill Joan Gerber's book *Gut Feelings: A Writer's Truths and Minute Inventions*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2003. Reprinted with permission.

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About the Christendom Review

The Christendom Review is a literary journal dedicated to the Diaspora of Christendom, that remnant of people who either deliberately or intuitively subscribe to the Judeo-Christian and ancient Greek traditions of the West and to a particular vision of humanity, a vision explored by many of our finest writers: that man is an ensouled creature made in the image of God, "born to trouble" (Walker Percy) because of original sin, and in need of a rescue that cannot be delivered by Specialists. As Andrew Lytle's character in *The Velvet Horn*, Jack Cropleigh, reflects, "Travel as he will, a man is only circling his predicament."

We also subscribe to the philosophia perennis, the view of the artist inherent among all traditional societies, from Neolithic man to Christendom: that the artist is one who "makes" rather than one who "creates." Poet, sculptor, architect, and painter, indeed the practitioner of any craft, "works with givens, the stuff of creation" (Darius Lecesne). Such an artist recognizes the givenness of his or her own being as "intellectual soul incarnate" (Marion Montgomery) and is aware that he or she imitates the Creator in a very indicative way: that is, he or she "manufactures," in the old sense of the word, things (e.g. poems, paintings, wood carvings, furniture, tapestries). "If the work is beautiful, then God is praised, for phenomenal beauty invariably points to transcendent beauty, and hence to beauty's source, God Himself" (Darius Lecesne). As Jacques Maritain observed, when we "experience beauty" it leaves us with the residue of both our ancient stain and our hope, "a longing for a more perfect Beauty" (Darius Lecesne).

The Christendom Review is available online at:
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The editors of *The Christendom Review* welcome letters and comments from readers.

Send your missives to letters@christendomreview.com.

For submissions or questions about submitting an article, please see the Submission Guidelines at the end of this issue.

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Editors' Note

The inaugural issue of *The Christendom Review* is dedicated to the memory of Smith Kirkpatrick, writer, teacher, and friend. He was born outside Paris, Arkansas on November 28, 1922 in the same bed in which he passed away on June 6, 2008 at his home in Gainesville, Florida. A former merchant seaman and United States Naval Aviator, he flew torpedo planes and served in both World War II and Korea. Smith, known to some of his students as "Kirk," attended the University of Florida in the mid-1950s and entered The Writing Program, where he studied under novelist and critic Andrew Lytle, who established it in 1948. Smith taught fiction writing at The University of Florida beginning in the early 1960s, eventually becoming Director of The Florida Writing Program in the 1970s. Among Smith's accomplishments at UF was founding The Florida Writers' Conference. The annual week-long symposium attracted participants from across the country and brought to campus such noted literary figures as John Crowe Ransom, Peter Taylor, Andrew Lytle, Madison Jones, Ken Kesey, Chaim Potok, John Knowles, John Ciardi, Richard Eberhart, and others. In addition, book editors and literary agents were invited so that students who were ready to publish might find notice. Smith's published work includes a novel, *The Sun's Gold*, an essay on Eudora Welty's "Powerhouse," and several stories, including his finest, "Silence," which was included in the Winter 1968 issue of *The Southern Review*, edited by Lewis P. Simpson, and reprinted here with permission. Several of Smith's former students have contributed essays and articles on their personal memories of him in a special feature of this issue of *The Christendom Review*. Smith Kirkpatrick is survived by his two daughters, Anna Marie and Katie Kirkpatrick, and by two grandchildren.

* * *

The editors would like to extend their thanks to all the contributors who made this first issue possible, especially to those former students and colleagues of Smith whose memories will keep his alive. Many, perhaps most, readers did not know him, but we believe that if you give the reminiscences here collected a fair chance, you might wish that you had. They come from many different individual perspectives, but in the end from only one: our gratitude for his guidance, and our love for the man.

All the writers found herein vary greatly in age, experience, areas of interest, and public recognition. We have prize-winning novelist and short story writer Merrill Joan Gerber, who studied with Smith in the fifties and sixties, and whose memory of him could not be printed here because it will be appearing in the Spring issue of *The Sewanee Review*. But she has kindly tendered one of those prize-winning stories much, we hope, to your enjoyment. On the other hand, we offer a cultural essay by Paul Cella, who has published widely both online and in print, but who has not yet managed to climb out of his twenties. Another young emerging voice is poet Olivia Bustion. We have poet, storyteller and Hollywood screenwriter William Mickelberry, who also happens to be a painter. Lydia McGrew is a philosopher and homeschooling mom. Rumor has it that she's about five feet tall with a brain the size of Alaska. Her husband's also a philosopher, so we'd like not to be in the room when an argument breaks out. They write books with titles like *Internalism and Epistemology: The Architecture of Reason*.

But if you'd like to argue about the resurrection of Christ, they can do that too. Marion Montgomery, should need no introduction. Professor Emeritus of English at The University of Georgia, he has published three novels, *The Wandering of Desire*, *Darrell*, and *Fugitive*, along with many books on the central error of modernity, anthropocentrism, using the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, Joseph Pieper, Etienne Gilson, Eric Voegelin, and others. His most famous is his trilogy, *Why Hawthorne was Melancholy*, *Why Poe Drank Liquor*, and *Why Flannery O'Connor Stayed Home*. Sterling Watson is an accomplished novelist and director of the Creative Writing Program at Eckerd College. Ashley Mace Havird is a short story writer, poet, and *Pushcart Prize Anthology* nominee. One of John Morefield 's stories appeared in *Story* magazine's volume of Prize College Stories of 1964. Thomas DeFreitas is an obscure New England poet who (astoundingly) wants to keep it that way. We even have an ex-Anglican priest, who would no doubt see the appeal in Thomas' humility.

The list goes on, of course (see the contributors' page). We simply wish for all readers that they find somewhere in these pages a place of rest, a point of insight or exhilaration, a sign of hope and grace, some encouragement that the life of letters, and of all art, still has a message to bear in the bloodstream of our society; and that, in the hands of good men and women, it might yet remain one of the higher gestures of love for our fellows.

Most of all, at this moment, we want to express our gratitude to Anna Marie and Katie, Smith's daughters, for granting us permission to publish his little masterpiece of a story, "Silence," in *The Christendom Review*.

FICTION

Silence

Smith Kirkpatrick

After so many years things ought to come to rest, but nothing does, not even this old house. It's been settling through all the nights of my life, and now the days. How many people have heard a house settling in the daytime? It's that quiet. There's a beam been moving around in that south corner again, but I can't feel any other sounds. Before, when the silence was first growing in my ears, I thought I'd never hear anything again, and I strained to every sound: the well pulley, the voices of the farm animals, little things, things to hold in my head. It was a long time after the sounds blurred, almost forgotten, that I began to hear the voices of people dead too long ago to think about it. Those old voices are as plain to me now as the day they spoke.

Listen, my father said on the edge of the cornfield that dead, still night. I stood over my head in darkness and couldn't hear a thing.

Keep listening.

I heard all the inside of my head.

Then I heard the corn growing in the night. We stood at the end of the neat rows, drowned in silence, listening to the leaves uncoiling. I moved closer to the muffled form beside me. Child as I was, I knew I'd never heard anything more frightening, but I didn't know why. Now I know violence doesn't have to lash out on a mule's hooves—*Hup Jake, breaking harness*. That poor damned mule.

When the grandchildren are in the house the noise comes from every direction. Caroline is a ripple, have to be still to hear her. More than once I've moved my feet and found her sitting there. Big Jimmy takes a close listen too. I don't see how a man his size can touch a board so lightly. He can be two steps from laying his hand on my arm before I know he's about. Lucy's best though. She sets the whole house going with her housework.

I feel good today, only a red sliver in my off shoulder. If I could get at those bones with a rasp and some grease, I'd show that whippy doctor a thing or two. He doesn't have to come buzzing in here every time I take to bed, "Mister Wilson, you've got to expect some arthritis at your age."

What am I supposed to do, pray? That's not for arthritis. He's so young he can't realize that two nights before my wedding, for the pure joyous hell of it, I fought a carnival man in a ring with my bare fists.

Only the very young have an understanding with the old.

I guess her sewing rocker is still up in the attic with the needles and spools all neatly arranged in the little swingout drawer under the seat. And the walking stick. She would punch it at the isinglass squares in the living room stove.

How can a body warm without flame?

She kept the isinglass pretty well punched out and me giggling. She hadn't seen the sun for fifteen years she was so blind.

All those years sitting in a sewing rocker, with night in her eyes and never complaining except to slap her palms against the chair arms. Her wide gold wedding band would rap the wood and startle me so I'd feel just my skin was left. The ring always rapped when the room was quietest, and every time it did she said to the ceiling, *Lordy,*

Lordy, Lordy.

You know, I didn't even know she was blind. It took a friend of mine on the next farm.

How's your blind grandma?

I was as surprised as he was when I hit him. I hit him square on the nose, and my knuckles came back slick with blood. Moment he put the name to it, I realized that once she could see. I'd never thought of that.

To me there was only the feel of that first stone step racing up the porch after school, the flung door, and where is everybody, Grandma? Her skin was so loose and so thin to be almost transparent. Her veins were like fat worms.

I'd show her off to disbelieving friends.

What time is it, Grandma?

The rocker stopped as she listened to something inside.

About three twenty-five, Son.

I'd gleefully point to the kitchen clock in my hand: 3:27.

And the date, Grandma?

It's August thirty-first. You in some hurry, Boy?

Mother said Grandma kept track of time because she was afraid of getting senile like her aunt had been, said Grandma talked about it to her, hoped that if she ever got to nodding around and smelling like Great Aunt Meacom did that someone would have the good sense to shoot her. She just smelled like Grandma to me, and with her sitting there looking straight ahead, who needed clocks and calendars?

rap rap rap

That's the only complaint she ever made except to mumble when she was alone. Like the time in the back bedroom when I broke her belt. I was on the bed when I heard her in the room. She was tugging open the top drawer of the old marble top washstand where she kept my grandfather's things: shaving brush and mug, wallet, pocket knife and such. Opening that drawer was like opening a box of time. It didn't smell of dust or anything like that, but there was my grandfather in the curve of the wallet and in the soap-caked cracks of the golden name across the rose colored shaving mug. John Wilson, the gold said.

I could imagine the smell of time she was getting as her blind hands started patting in the drawer. She wasn't in any hurry to find what she was looking for, usually it was his knife to cut her toenails with, but that day it didn't seem to be the knife because she would have remembered where it was. Her hands would pat, then pause.

With both hands moving, she started mumbling. Only this time it was like she was talking. For just that long, I thought it was to me. But as I watched her milky eyes looking at nothing towards an old waterstain in the ceiling I knew it wasn't me. It was not until she said his name that I realized who she was talking to. I wanted to jump up and yell at her to stop, but all I did was breathe as she went on talking over her hands.

—and I've done all I promised you, John. They'll get along without me now. I don't know why it took so long for me to make up my mind.

I jumped off the bed and started pulling on her belt and yelling until the buckle came off. But all I did was scare her so much she couldn't hear a thing I was saying. Her hands tangled in the drawer and the fright was in her face as she tried to see what was happening out of those milky eyes. Then my mother came running in with biscuit

dough on her fingers and put her hand over my mouth. With the other hand mashing dough on the back of my neck she said in a quiet voice, He's saying he loves you, Grandma.

She heard right off. Only she heard the wrong thing because that's not what I was yelling. I was shouting loud enough to wake the dead that she could do for us some more. You only need sit, I kept yelling. You only need sit.

But all I did was scare her, and when I got the biscuit dough shoved down my throat I knew I'd done more than break her belt buckle. What I didn't know was where the wrong lay; so later I was afraid to tell grandma that we needed her because I thought it was something grownups didn't want said.

So I didn't try to say it again. I tried to show it. I never passed her chair without touching her arm—she could always tell touches as well as voices—and saying, Hi. But after that day in the bedroom, the rocker seemed to get slower. And I started going by even when I wasn't passing. I poked so many sticks of wood in the stove that my father said I was going to burn the house down. But mother shushed him. So I kept the fire hot for her and checked by to see if she didn't need grandfather's knife or something. But it seemed like the more I hurried around the slower the rocker got.

She could never understand that as long as she was sitting there I knew the house would never be empty. I guess I looked on that old woman like The First Man. I figured she had set in that rocker so long before even I was born that she was the center post holding the whole place up, and if she fell, nothing was safe.

And I was right.

I was helping my father harness the mule. He always said Jake didn't like working unless he could lean two feet lower than he stood. He especially enjoyed it when he had Jake on a busting plow. He'd push the plow deep and when he had that poor damned mule leaning low and digging, he'd grin and shout at him, *Hup Jake, breaking harness. Hup Jake, breaking harness.*

They were a sight to see and my father laughed at anyone saying he ought to get rid of Jake. Get rid of the strongest mule in the country. The boy and I can handle him, can't we, Son?

The real trouble with Jake was the harnessing. He steadied to work after the harnessing, but he was a terror to get in it, so that's where I helped. He could sure rattle those boards with his heels, and they'd warned me time out of mind to stay clear of his stall, so I always stood in the barn holding his head through the feed window while my father did the harnessing.

It was hardly past day that morning, a white morning, still with cold, and frost crunching as the dead grass bent under our shoes. I had a good hold on one of Jake's ears and a couple of turns around his nose with the halter rope, keeping his head up and his teeth hid. Lights flickered on his rolling eyes, and our white breaths mingled when we heard mother calling from the house. It was her running voice, and my father was gone before I could even turn loose.

By the time I got there the living room was empty. They'd already carried her to the bed. She'd dozed back to sleep or something and pitched out on the stove I'd stoked red hot. I couldn't help but feel responsible and stayed with her. My father did my chores because mother told him to let the boy be if it makes him feel better. So I sat there watching her sink lower in the feather tick she slept on winter and summer. Every

little while I'd push down the feathers to try and raise her some.

At first her cheek and neck were covered with soda and amp cloths to ease the burn. But by the end of the week the cloths were gone and she was raw red and lower than ever. Then some of the neighbor women started sitting with me.

There were two of those neighbor women with me the day mother came to the bedroom door and stood in its frame. She was still holding her apron full of chicken feed and had a wild look. Those two women jumped up.

Caroline, what on earth?

Even grandma stirred at their excitement. I can't say I was surprised or frightened or anything else. It's like I knew anything could happen now with the rocker empty. Mother didn't even see us. Still clutching the apron full of chicken feed, she turned from the door and took my father's pistol from the desk.

Mother went out the back door with the pistol in one hand and her apron in the other. One of the neighbors was running along sidewise. What on earth, Caroline? What on earth? I just followed. I only started getting scared when mother headed for Jake's stall, for the first time not because I'd been there but because I hadn't. Before I could get close enough to see over the stall door, mother said, *Jake, turn around here*. Jake stepped in the straw, and as his head come over the door with his ears pricking forward, mother shot him between the eyes and Mrs. Cora Grayson screamed.

When the stall was opened, Jake was lying across my father's legs. I saw that much before Mrs. Cora spun me around and started pushing mother and me both towards the house. She pushed us into the living room, and I stood beside mother's chair while Mrs. Cora ran into the bedroom then out the front door. Her dresstails were disappearing down the road when mother's head dropped onto her hands and yellow corn spilled form her apron and bounced out over the floor. While the golden corn was spilling, she rubbed her face in her hands. *I told him not to without help.*

I don't know how long I stood holding mother's chair arm, shaking, and crying too, I guess, before the other women came to the door calling Caroline in hushed voices. I started to go along, but they pushed me back. Through the door I could see mother's feet hanging off grandma's bed. I went back to the chair.

Then mother called me and when I got there she wasn't crying anymore. The other woman was saying, Somehow grandma knew when Cora ran in and told me. She just said flat and strong, That mule killed him alone didn't it.

Then mother said, Go to your grandma, Son.

She was so low in the ticking I could hardly see her. Only her nose and some hair stuck out. As I got closer, her hand, the one with the gold band, twitched on the covers and the twitch carried back into her body going down its full length. I knew she wanted me to take her hand. I was surprised how strong it was. As soon as our hands met, it was like she tried to raise up off the bed and pull me on it all at the same time. Her lips were working, but I couldn't hear what she was trying to say. I was up half on the bed trying to hear, when her milky eyes started glittering like they were burning behind. I could smell her sachet that I liked and something else that I didn't like.

Then her lips got out what she was trying to tell me. Her voice was high and it cracked at the end. She said just one word. Pa.

This time there wasn't anybody to hit and never would be again.

The night after we buried them the house was still full of people I went outside

to sit on the steps and look at the stars. It had rained all day, but mother said that was good because people always go to heaven if it rains. By then the rain had stopped. The air was washed, one of those cold clear nights when you can see the wind moving through the stars. For just a moment I could almost hear ticking out there.

Almost.

I wanted to yell up into the night, but I didn't. I was as still and silent as the answer I knew would come ringing back to me.

This story first appeared in the Winter 1968 issue of *The Southern Review*.

This is a Voice from Your Past

Merrill Joan Gerber

Every woman gets a call like this sooner or later. The phone rings, a man says: "This is a voice from your past." If you're in the mood and the caller doesn't find you in a room where other people are (particularly your husband), and if you have some time to spare, you might enjoy playing the game.

"Who is this?" I said, when my call came.

"Don't you recognize my voice?"

"Not exactly."

"Alvord's class? Florida? Your senior year?"

I paused. There had been a number of young men in my life in college, in Florida, in my senior year—and most of them were in Alvord's class.

This call—the first from Ricky—came just after I had given birth to my second daughter; I was living in California. When the phone rang I was in the kitchen cutting a hot dog into little greasy pieces for my two-year-old's lunch and at the same time I felt my milk coming down, that sharp burning pain in both nipples, like an ooze of fire.

"Janet?" His voice was husky, or he was whispering. "This is a serious voice from your past. You know who I am. I think of you all the time. And I work at the phone company, I get free calls, so don't worry about this long-distance shit, I can talk to you all night if I want to."

"Tell me who you are," I said, just stalling for time, but suddenly I knew and was truly astounded. I had thought of Ricky often in the kind of reveries in which we all engage in when we count the lives that never were meant to be for us.

"You must know. I know you know."

" Well, it must be you, Ricky, isn't it? But I don't have all night. I have two babies now, and I'm feeding them right this minute."

"Is your old man there?"

"No."

"Good, get the kids settled down and I'll hold on. And don't worry, I'm not going to complicate your life. I can't even get to you. I'm in Pennsylvania—and out of money."

"Hang on." I did some things I had to do for the children and then talked to him with my big girl eating in her high chair a foot away from the frayed green couch where I reclined on a pillow, letting the baby suck from my breast. Ricky told me then that he couldn't write a word anymore, it was killing him, he was drinking all the time, he had six kids, his wife was running around with someone else, and could I believe it, he, he, was working for the fucking phone company.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I'm really sorry, Ricky."

It occurred to me that anything else I said would sound trite, like: "We all have to make compromises," or "Maybe at some point we have to give up our dreams." The fact was, I hadn't given up mine but pursued it with a kind of dauntless energy. I didn't count the dream that he might have been my true love because I knew even then, all those years ago, that it was impossible. When he read his brilliant stories in class, he was married and living with his wife in a trailer on the outskirts of the campus. He'd already written his prize-winning story that had brought our writing-class to its knees,

the one that was chosen later for an O. Henry Award.

Alvord, our professor, a famous and esteemed novelist himself, had informed us in class, in front of Ricky, that the boy had been touched by the wand of the muse—he spoke of Ricky as if a halo gleamed over his head. He made it clear that none of us would ever reach the heights (and should not hope to) for which this golden boy was destined. "A talent like his," he told us once, "is like a comet. It appears only once every hundred years or so."

I clung to my own modest talent and I was working on it; I couldn't envy Ricky his, based as it was in Catholic guilt to which I had no access (his stories were all about sin and redemption); what I envied during that hungry, virginal senior year of college was his wife, the woman he held in his arms each night, the one whose face was caressed by the gaze of his deep-seeing, supernaturally wise marble-blue eyes.

The day he called me in California as I sat nursing my baby girl, feeling the electric suck of her pulsing lips sizzle in a lightning rod strike from nipple to womb, I remembered an image of Ricky that rose up like an illumination—we were in the university library. Ricky had come in alone and had chosen to sit across from me at one of the long, mahogany tables where I was studying. He had his magic pencil in his long fingers and was bent over his lined notebook paper to create whatever piece of brilliant, remorse-filled prose he was writing. A long lock of his dirty-blond hair fell across his forehead, and his fingers scribbled, bent like crab pincers racing over the lined notebook page, wrote words that according to Alvord would turn out to be second only to James Joyce's.

Ricky had told me that his wife worked in some office, typing business documents. He explained, in his breathy east-coast accent, that she was ordinary and dull and he had too young been seduced by her beauty, her astonishing breasts, and his own fierce desire. He assured me I knew him in a way that she never could. We had long earnest discussions after Alvord's class, and in the cafeteria over coffee, and on benches in front of the library—debates about literature and genius (who knows now if their content held anything more remarkable than youth and idealism cooked up in a predictable collegiate stew?)

Still, that night in the library, he stopped his work to stare intensely at me across the table time after time—but didn't smile. We were like conspirators, we knew we shared a plan, an ingenious plot to outfox time, mortality, death—we were both going to be famous writers, and we would—by our words alone—live forever.

At some point that evening—in his frenzy of writing—Ricky's cramped fingers relaxed, his head dropped sideways onto his arm on the table-top, and he fell asleep in the library. He remained there, vulnerable and naked in my gaze, breathing as I knew he must breathe as he slept beside his wife in that trailer, his mouth slightly open, his blue-veined eyelids closed over his blue eyes, his nostrils flaring slightly with each breath.

I watched him till the library closed, watched his face and memorized every line of his fair cheek, the angle of his chin, watched fascinated as a thin thread of drool spooled from his slightly parted lips to the tabletop. I looked around me to be sure no one was near or watching. Then, before he woke, I very slowly moved my hand across the table and anointed the tip of my pencil with his silver spit.

*

The second time Ricky called me my husband was in the room. It was thirty years later, a day in late August. I—with a slow but certain fortitude—had written and published a number of novels by then. My three daughters were grown. The baby who had been at my breast at the time of his first call was in graduate school, and older than I had been when Ricky slept opposite my gaze in the library.

"Janet? This is a voice from your past."

A warning bell rang in my chest. At that moment I was busy talking to my husband about some family troubles (my mother had had a stroke and we were about to put her in a nursing home) and I felt rudely interrupted. I wasn't ready to engage in the game he wanted to play."

"Which past?" I said. "I have many."

"It's Ricky, your old buddy."

"Ricky! How are you?" I said his name with some enthusiasm because he expected it, but I felt my heart sink because I knew I would have to listen to his troubles and I had no patience just then. The game of "remember what we meant to each other" had lost its appeal since by this time everyone I loved filled up my life completely. I had not even a small chink of space left for a latecomer. "Are you still living in Pennsylvania?"

"No, I'm right here!"

"Right here?" I looked down into my lap as if I might find him there.

"In sunny California. In your very city. And I'm here for good."

"How did you know where to reach me? My number isn't even listed!"

"I found one of your books back east and on the cover it said what city you lived in. So when I got here—and I want you to know I picked this city to settle in because of you—I went to the library and asked the librarian. I knew a librarian was bound to know where the city's most famous writer lived. I told her I was your old buddy and she gave me your phone number."

"I'm not famous, Ricky."

"Me neither," he said. "How about that?"

*

I told him I would call him back in a half hour—and in that time I explained to my husband, more or less, who he was. An old college friend. A used-to-be-writer. A drunk. I don't know why I dismissed Ricky so unfairly. Something in his voice had put me on guard. And I could see that this tag with time was a game there was no sense in playing. I had settled into my ordained life like concrete setting in a mold, and I no longer trifled with the idea that I might want to change it. At least not by trailing after romantic visions. With a sense of duty, though, I phoned him back...and braced myself.

"You won't believe the stuff that's happened to me," he said. He laughed—he almost cackled—and I shivered. "Can we get together?"

When I hesitated, he said, "I've been through AA, I'm a new person. I'm going to join up here, too, of course. The pity is that before I turned myself around I lost every

friend I ever had."

"How come?"

"How come? Because an alcoholic will steal from his best friend if he has to, he'll lie with an innocent face like a newborn baby. There's nothing I haven't stooped to, Janet. I've been to the bottom, that's where you have to be before you can come back. I've rented a little room in town here, and I'm hoping...well, I'm hoping that we can be friends again."

"Well, why not," I said. I had the sense my house had become a tunnel and I was getting lost in the dark.

"But mainly—I'm hoping you'll let me come to your class. I want to get started writing again."

"How did you know I teach a class?"

"It says on your book, Janet. That you teach writing at some university or other."

"Well, you certainly are a detective, aren't you?"

"I'm sly as a fox."

"I guess you could visit my class when it begins again after Labor Day. I'll tell my students that you studied with me in Alvord's class. Since most of my old students will be coming back to take the advanced class, they already know about Alvord. In fact, I quote him all the time. We use all his old terms—'action proper, 'enveloping action'—his dedication to point of view. Maybe we can even get a copy of your old prize story and discuss it."

"Great. So when can we get this friendship on the road again?"

"Look—I'm having a Labor Day barbecue for my family and some friends on Sunday—why don't you come? Do you have a car?"

"I can borrow one."

"Do you need directions? I'll have my husband give them to you."

I called Danny to the phone and handed him the receiver. "Tell my friend Ricky the best way to get here." I wanted Ricky to hear Danny's voice, to know unequivocally that I was taken, connected, committed...that I wasn't under any circumstances available.

*

A stranger rang the doorbell, a man eighty years old, skin jaundiced, skeletal bones shaping his face. The golden hair was thin and gray. Only his voice, with an accent on his tongue like the young Frank Sinatra, convinced me he was the same Ricky. When I shook his hand, I felt his skin to be leathery, dry. When I looked down, the nails were bitten to the quick.

He came inside. I felt him take in the living room in one practiced glance—the art work, the decorations, the furniture—and then we passed out the screen door to the backyard where the party was in progress.

Danny was on the patio, grilling hamburgers and hot dogs over the coals. My three daughters, one already married, and two home from their respective graduate schools, looked beautiful in their summer blouses and white shorts. I saw the backyard as Ricky must have seen it—alive with summer beauty, the plum tree heavy with purple fruit, the jasmine in bloom, the huge cactus plants in Mexican painted bowls

growing new little shoots, fierce with baby spines.

My other guests included my sister and her sons, my eldest daughter's husband, a few of my students, several women I had been in a book club with for the last fifteen years. Ricky looked around; I could feel him adding up my life and registering it in his bloodshot eyes.

I took him over to meet Danny and then said: "Let's go sit on the swings and talk." We tramped across the brilliant green of the grass to the old swingset where my daughters used to play. Ricky was wearing a formal gray wool suit, his bony frame almost lost inside its wide shoulders. He swung slowly back and forth, sitting on the splintery wood seat, his hands clutching the rusty chains. He talked looking forward, into air.

"My son Bobby is the one who invited me out to California. He made it big-time," Ricky said, and laughed.

"Is he in movies?" I asked.

"Not exactly. He dove into a city pool in Philly and broke his spine. Now he's in a wheelchair for life. I got him a sharp lawyer who brought a deep pockets lawsuit against the city. Bobby was awarded a million and a half bucks, enough to take care of him the rest of his life and, if I play it right, take care of me, too! My other kids don't talk to me, so Bobby is my only salvation."

"But why is he in California?"

"He's living in a fantastic halfway house out here—the best in the world for paraplegics; Bobby gets all kinds of services, I even can bring my laundry over there and he'll get it done for me free. And he's got enough extra pocket money to help me pay my rent for a while till I get a job."

"What a terrible thing to happen to him."

"No, just the opposite. He was a beach bum, a loser. Now he's got it all together, the whole future taken care of. I think he's relieved. He can use his arms—he plays wheelchair basketball. He lifts weights. He gets counseling, he gets his meals served. Sometimes I wish I could change places with him. But no, I'm back at square one, looking for a job again."

"No more phone company?"

Ricky made a strangling noise in his throat. "I'm going to write my novel, Janet. Finally. I'm going to get it together before I die. If I can sit in on your class, I figure it will start my motor again. You probably teach something like the way Alvord taught us. That old magic. Maybe I can feel that excitement again. I'm counting on it, it's my last hope."

"Do you ever hear from Alvord? Did you stay in touch?"

"In touch! I lived with him for a year in Florida when I was really down and out. He took me in, told me he loved me like a son. The trouble was he didn't feed me, Janet. He offered me a place to stay on this farm of his, and then all I could find to eat in the house was Campbell's soup. I think one day he actually hid the bacon from me so I couldn't get my hands on it. So I had to take his truck into town with some money of his to get some food, but I'd been drinking again and I totaled it. He told me I had to leave. He gave me fifty bucks and bought me a train ticket back to Philly. But he was a pain, anyway, preaching to me all the time about being a man, taking responsibility for my kids. I swear, the man was a genius but he's losing it, Janet. He's in his eighties

now. He used to think I walked on water."

"We all did."

"That's why I came to live near you. You're the only one on earth who really knows my genius."

*

I didn't actually count, but I had the sense Ricky ate at least five hamburgers, and as many hot dogs. He hung around the food table, his mouth going, not talking to anyone, but looking at my women friends, their faces, their forms. He looked my daughters up and down—there was no way to stop him. At one point he came to me and said, "Your daughters are really beautiful. All three of them. They have your soul in their eyes." I wanted to distract him. I asked him how often he saw his son; he said, "As often as I can, he gives me CARE packages. I don't have much food in the new place."

*

After our guests left, I packed up all the leftovers for Ricky: potato chips, lukewarm baked beans, the remaining coleslaw, a package of raw hot dogs and buns to go with them, a quarter of a watermelon, lettuce and sliced tomatoes, even pickles, even mustard and ketchup.

"Listen, thanks," he said. "You're a lifesaver. You don't know how lucky I feel to have found you again. Could I ask you one more favor, though? Would you mind if I came back tomorrow and used your typewriter? I need to write a letter to apply for a job. Someone gave me a tip about a job being night watchman in a truck yard. All I would have to do is sit in a little shed and watch for thieves. I figure I could write all night if I get it."

My reaction was instinctive; I knew I didn't want him back in my house again. "Why don't you let me lend you my electric typewriter? I use a computer now, so I won't need it for a while. I do love it, though—it's the typewriter I wrote my first novel on."

"Then maybe it will be lucky for me. I'll guard it with my life."

"Okay, give me a minute, I'll go put it in its case." I left him standing in the living room with my husband, but I heard no conversation at all—not even ordinary chatter. I could see why Danny was unable to think of a single thing to say to him.

Ricky finally left, laden like an immigrant—bags of food, paper, carbon paper, envelopes, stamps, my typewriter. He stuffed it all into the trunk of an old red car.

Danny and I watched him drive away. He didn't wave—he tore from the curb like one possessed.

"Funny guy," Danny said.

"I don't think we know the half of it," I told him.

*

I found Ricky's O. Henry prize story in a book and had thirty photocopies made

for my students. At the start of class I distributed the copies and told my students that at 7:30 a guest was arriving, a writer of unique skill and vision, a man we were honored to have visit our class. I warned them about the pitfalls of the writer's life, how one could not count on it to earn a living, how so many talented writers fell by the wayside due to pressures of ordinary life. This visitor, I said, a very close friend of mine from the past who had missed what you might call "his window of opportunity", hoped to join our class and work as hard as anyone in it. "He had a whole life in between of doing something else he had to do. All of you are young, at the start of your first life, and if you really want this, this is the time to do it."

When Ricky arrived at my classroom, it was already almost nine PM. He apologized, saying the bus had been late. He was wearing a red V-necked sweater, and looked less cadaverous than at the barbecue, but still much older than his years. He seemed elated to find that a copy of his story was on every desk, and when one of the students asked him how he got the idea for it, he said, simply, "I had thought many times of murdering my brother."

By then, we were already in the midst of having another student read his story; I told the class that next week we would discuss Ricky's story.

I nodded for Harold to go on reading; his story was about a day in the cotton fields of Arkansas, and how the men, women and children picking cotton on a burning hot day reacted when the truck that delivered them failed to leave off drinking water. When the last line had been read, Ricky spoke out in the exact tones of our teacher, Alvord.

"It comes alive on the last page, finally, you see, because it uses all the senses. Since a crying baby can seduce a reader from the very death of Hamlet himself, the writer must bring everything to life. And you do, young man! You do!"

The class was silent, and then a few students applauded Harold and then everyone did—till his embarrassed smile lit up the room. I announced that we would take our usual ten minute break. When the class had filed out, I thought I would find Ricky waiting to talk to me about my students, to tell me how the class had seemed to him, if it would suit his purposes. But he left the room without a glance in my direction, and when I looked out into the hall, I saw him in deep conversation with one of my students, a young woman. When the class reconvened, neither one of them returned for the second half.

*

At seven the next morning, my student phoned me. "This is Alice Miller. I'm so sorry to disturb you," she said, "but your friend, the famous writer, borrowed my car last night. We went out for coffee and afterward he said he had an urgent errand to go on, he practically got on his knees to beg to borrow the car. He said that although he knew I didn't know him very well, you could vouch for him, and he promised he would have my car back in my carport by midnight. He borrowed ten dollars, too. He never came back. And I can't get to work without it!"

"I'll see if I can reach him at the number I have for him," I told her. "I'm so sorry. I'll call you right back."

But his landlady did not find him in his room. I called Alice back and told her I

could only imagine that there was some emergency with his son who was a paraplegic. I reassured her that he would surely have the car back to her very shortly but in the meantime to take a taxi to work, that I would pay for it.

I learned later that when finally Ricky did return the car to Alice, he never even rang her bell. He left the car at the curb. She found the inside of it littered with cigarette butts, racing forms, empty paper cups, and the greasy wrappers from MacDonald's hamburgers. The gas tank was totally empty. There was not even enough gas left in the tank for Alice to get to a gas station to fill it up.

*

Toward the end of September, I was about to apply for a fellowship and realized that I needed my typewriter to fill out the application form. My anger overcame my revulsion, and I dialed the number Ricky had originally given me. His landlady answered and informed me that he'd moved out bag and baggage—that "he shipped out to sea."

"To sea!" I imagined him on a whaling ship, thinking he was Melville, or more likely that he was one of the sailors in Stephen Crane's story about men doomed at sea, "The Open Boat," a piece of work whose first line Alvord had often quoted: "None of them knew the color of the sky."

But my typewriter! I wanted it, it was mine. I felt as if Ricky had kidnapped one of my children.

"Let it go," my husband said. "It's an old typewriter, I'll get you a new one, it doesn't matter. Write it off as a business loss. Write him off—your old friend—if you can as one of those mistakes we all make in life."

In the days following, I had trouble sleeping. I held imaginary conversations with Ricky, by turns furious, accusatory, damning, murderous. "I trusted you!" I cried out, and in return I heard his laugh...his cackle. Alvord had often talked about evil in his class; the reality of it, how it existed, how it was as real as the spinning globe to which we clung.

Days later, in a frenzy, I began calling hospitals, halfway houses, rehab clinics, trying to find the place where Ricky's son lived—if indeed he had a son.

"Don't do this to yourself," Danny said. He saw me on the phone, sweating, asking questions, shaking with anger, trembling with outrage.

But one day I actually located the boy. He was in a hospital in a city only a half hour's drive from my house. I named his name, Bobby, with Ricky's last name, and someone asked me to wait, they would call him to the phone. And a man picked up the phone and said "Yes? This is Bobby."

I told him I was a friend of his father, that his father had my typewriter.

"Oh sure, I know about that. You're his old friend. He left the typewriter here with me. You can come and get it." His voice had the same tones as Ricky's voice. The same seductive sound—the "Oh sure" a kind of promise, the "come and get it" the serpent's invitation.

"His landlady said he went to sea...?" I felt I must have another piece of the puzzle, at least one more piece.

"Yeah—he got a job teaching English on a Navy ship. I told him he better take it,

he wasn't going to freeload off me the rest of his life."

"I'm sorry," I said to the boy. "I'm sorry about your accident...and about your troubles with your father."

"Hey, don't worry about it. It's nothing new. But if you want his address on the ship I could give it to you."

"No—thank you," I said. "I don't want it. I think your father and I have come to a parting of the ways. Good-bye, Bobby, I wish you good luck."

"You, too," Bobby said. "Anyone who knows my father needs it."

*

Then, two years after I talked to his son, I got the third phone call. "This is a voice out of your fucking past."

"Hello, Ricky." My heart was banging so hard I had to sit down.

"I heard from my son you want your goddamned typewriter back."

"No, no—"

"You'll have it back. It's in little pieces. I'll be on your doorstep with it in twenty minutes."

"I don't want it, Ricky. Don't come here! Keep it."

"I said you'll have it back. I always keep my word, you fucking..."

"Please, keep it. I don't need it! Keep it and write your book on it!"

"Just expect me," Ricky said. "I'll be there, you can count on it. Watch out your window for me."

And so I did. For a week. For a month. I keep watching and sometimes, when the phone rings, I let it ring and don't answer it.

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POETRY

Pavane for a Dead Princess

Darius Lecesne

"...suicides do not form, as might be thought, a wholly
distinct group, an isolated class of monstrous phenomena."
—Emile Durkheim

They will find her near the seventh green,
The early morning golfers, awake now—
Her knees close enough to stand if she'd
Had a mind to—and I wonder if the last thought
Of the suicide is about being found—a consideration
Of backdrop and color, of a drained face framed
By pines at first light? No, I don't think
The suicide bothers with the strutting artist's need
To make beauty a first instinct, nor with the ass—backwards
Theorist's substitution of a fixed and smiling intelligible image
For any dirty and complex transitoriness.
She hangs heavily and the greens are damp—
The traps gape and the hazy water threatens the score.

My son, not yet five, sees no reason why
Squirrels have to die—and pities them into
Everlasting consolation: "They awake in heaven,"
He tells me. Somehow he knows already that some deaths
Cannot be fixed except by imaginary fiat—
He is unaware of the fracture of pity and imagination—
I shrug gamely at the forces which are,
He subjects all to a tender wish—
Lays all heaven's gold beneath the feet of a bloody, furry mess.

Perhaps some suicides want us to imagine what's wrong—
Stop the idiot game, and startle us into pity.
That is the only way poetry and suicide are alike—
Suicide is not collectible art, nor is it a proposition.
It holds in abeyance the aesthetic and rational mind—
It demands the surprise of pity.
We are all golfers on the seventh green,
About to chip seriously something somewhere—
What will we make of this kneeling girl,
Too love-famished to stand up, whose bruised
Throat grew too tired of un-tenderness?

The Boy Agee at St. Andrews

Darius Lecesne

(Palm Sunday 1919)
"Located on the site of an old farm, the grounds covered two hundred acres. Tall pines sheltered the tiny campus and perfumed the air with their clean fragrance... the school consisted of a few simple structures, the most impressive of which was the chapel, and a small monastery to house the monks who taught the hundred or so students."
—Laurence Bergreen, James Agee: A Life

Its roof a polite Florentine red,
Skirted in stucco, ivyed and Norman,
The Cumberland daybreak jars the chapel's quiet tread
Of English probity among the tangled pines,
And icy waterholes like white saharas
Cloud the dirt walks while the patient Angelus
Chases the artful sparrows into hogback arcs,
And reverberates along the poplar and spruce crowded gorges.

The farmer said he knew livestock like cornbread,
And yet couldn't believe the mule lived
With his four legs "burned clean and pink"
When the horses choked and died, flailing
And hollering like cats in a water barrel.
"No sir," the farmer said, "this here mule
Is special, your horse is too much like an angel,
But this critter showed he could walk on death
And keep his nerve, the goddamn sire of none."

The boy, barely ten, can see the unusual mule
Tied, and salved shiny in the sunlight,
His singed mane and tail still roached for the harness,
With laid back ears, more dunce than heretic.
"What you say, farmer John, can I ride
That mule? And my momma don't have to know."
"Boy, they'll be no riding till all that hurt hide's
Well, but you might could pet him,
And ask him out of what kind of barrenness the heart grows."

Palm Sunday is a yellow exhalation of forsythia,
And the dappled rind of sunlight cast upon the ice beaten earth.
The boy, lately out of the green Mass which points to death,
Searches for the shade tree where the heroic beguiles
The regnant notion that pretty is the form of our benediction.
And there he finds farmer John, shod for meeting,

His hands slick with the copper hued ointment,
“Boy, so you come to ask him about carrying glory,
Ain’t you?” “No,” he answers, “I came to see if he had a cross
On his legs like Father says the ass has on his back.”
“Well, I’ve heard it now, what you mean boy?”

“But hold on,” he says waving his arms, “them flies black the hurt
Thick like the devil’s lies, that’s why he can’t stamp good,”
And tears start in the boy: “I mean if God marks things for Himself
That’s hurt, that’s all,” The old man’s hard forehead line retreats,
And the crackling voice spills like the April-shaking pine’s chant:
“Son you’re right, I believe He does, and that it’s
That he can be sorry for this here burned up barren mule,
And me and you the same time is that reason for the
Cross you’re looking for marking things you touch and see.”

“Only remember, boy, when you touch the mule’s face,
Put your hands up high, and always go as far up as his eyes.”
And the boy is left alone in the shade of a sign that recalls
How heavy and awful is nature’s dereliction,
Like a man in death, arms cracking and breaking
Under the weight of an obstinate sterility,
And the delicate forlornness of a fatherless child.

The Gnostic Seminar

Darius Lecesne

> "From this (Revelation) we learn that the forma Dei consists in the grace in which God himself assumes and makes his own the forma servi. We have to hold fast to this without being disturbed or confused by any pictures of false gods. It is this that we have to see and honor and worship as the mystery of the deity of Christ."
> —Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics

The harmless, homespun checkered tweed
With piped lines as thin as cross-hairs,
The call to order, and democratic beads—
The faithful have no more need to fear
Mystery's sharp, untutored ills;
The scandal is on the velvet,
And the scholars mean to kill
Every horrid accretion and lunatic tenet,
Passing for the gospel taught by Jesus.
The naked Christ is after all a hungry democrat,
No welkin child, but injuria comprehensus,
Who alone saves us from the fist and boondoggle of the tyrant.
Into the valley of appalling social sins,
He delivers bread by the anarchist's hammer blow
To the stingy hoarding what's everyone's in bins,
And to the blameless and anti-mythological thrall he shows
The ethical life re-discovered by Kant.
So harlotry ends with disinfectant and conscience,
With no further need for the ludicrous slant
That grown men will sit on a fence
Until challenged to own their selfish justice,
And quietly put down their stones.
But memory fades in the bullring of academic practice,
Bottled water clinks, Epistles
Are redacted, and the Good Revolutionary
Given up to howling pariah dogs for food.
And that Cross which the superstitious carry
Up the dolorous way, is no rood
For God, they say, while the pipe smoke curls,
But merely history's opprobrium
Reserved for every forward looking, egalitarian churl.
A full moon westers, and the Holy Ghost
Is tabled for the following Monday;
Laughter rises along a gloomy Euclidian colonnade,
As reporters wrangle a line or two

To contrast with their readers' biblicist views—
The doors are shut, the lights are dimmed,
Easter is tomorrow, and a dirty wind blows
Blood of the martyrs and their King
'Round the scruffy, scholar championed proles,
Who in their cramped, candlelit incense vigil,
Solemnly for the miracle of "Aneste Christos" sing.

The Watergun and the Butterfly

Olivia Bustion

[for S—]

After you turned away –
when you would not return,
and I knew the turning
was final, the silence
was final, the failure
of my struggle to call
your mind back to my mind
was final – when I saw

that you turned according
to an unpicked logic
not fragile but rigid,
the inexorable
spiral of your brain down
unreal world after world,
tightening inward toward
its broken invention –

after you turned away
and after I saw why,
I paced and paced around
the backyard pool, my head
shock-swaddled, and I fought
against my hurt and hate
without logic, without
a language for the fight.

While an August locust
evensong blared from oaks
that encircled the pool,
I filled a watergun
and shot a hollyhock
till the four-foot column
of the bloom fell under
the force of the water.

A butterfly settled
in the wet hollyhock.
The weak arch of its wings
twitched, delphinium-blue.
It rested in the wrecked
bowl of the hollyhock
for a remarkable
time, beating its bright wings.

I filled the watergun
again and aimed it toward
the butterfly and shot,
and the wings shut and split
against my killing, so
I shot until their small
struggle broke, and the wings
stuck to the hollyhock.

I saw that pain travels
from person to person
to person: each broken
man brings his hurt to break
another man, again
and again and again –
an inexorable
spiral of injury.

Detaching butterfly
from bloom, I thought: beauty
could exist in the world
only if one Man bore
all of the injury
in His body, stilling
the whole spiral, taking
all pain into Himself.

Firstborn

William Luse

When the cardinal outside our window lifted its wings
With a cry to embrace the air and escape the cat -
Knowing as I did all worldly things,
Replete with knowledge, on wisdom grown fat -
I'd not have troubled to turn my head,
For experience had quelled all unseemly fires
Of outrage, as the heart in increments acquires
The bloat and ballast of the dead.

But "Oh!" you cry, "Look!" you point, and so I do
To where the stretching cat embeds its claws
In pine bark below the branch the red bird flew.
Laugh now, as the kitty-cat sits to clean its paws,
Lick its lips, patient promise of tomorrow's fray:
One day, my child, you'll question, my answer ill-wed
To your delight in the game they play, the feline's flay
At the crying cardinal's fleeting red.

While your mother slept from the surgeon's blade
I beheld you, in universal babe's apparel
Wrapped: placid, curious, with no malice made,
No memory of the downward journey's peril
Through the gloom, nor of how your mother's belly bled
To bring you to the light. The panther stalks
This whitened hall
Panting his survivor's tale of straining claw
And feathery fall,
The pitch and pallor of the dead.

Beast and man, embrace them while you can, restrain
The lion, free the lamb, balance to matter and mind
Restore. For love and lust wax and wane
Like moon and stars, severing sacred ties that bind.
Trust no somnolent rhythm; be not compelled nor led -
For the lion by design devours its young,
But your voice must never be among
The praises sung,
The tone and tenor of the dead.

In longing we sang through the wall of the womb,
Our green gowns a shield (as if by water blessed)
Against Nature's stain: to the cold touch of this room
You would not yield without a cry of protest
That only a child may enter. You will hear it said
That we live a while and are no more known -
But, oh, flesh of ours and bone of our bone,
In your mother's passion creation groaned
To call us to recall the dead.

When you are grown to a woman remember this:
That your mother, like you, has forgotten the pain,
For she held you when still too clean for a kiss,
That in no arms but hers have I ever lain
Since the promise was given, by which love is fed,
That we pray your beauty ever serve no disguise,
As the world was made new again through eyes
That raise the living from the dead.

Emily Dickinson
1830-1886

Thomas DeFreitas

Between these years — a Life —
Of unobtrusive Fame —
Of nameless Notoriety —
Anonymous — Renown —

Gathering gemlike Accidents
Of primness and panache —
A coruscating heaven's-worth
Of Treasures — in the Mesh —

A canticle of Lazarus
That makes a poor soul rich —
A Wealth of Sound — a golden Trove —
That hallows Avarice —

A talent for the Sparrow —
A farthing for the King —
Such prodigal Economies
And saintly Reasoning!

Your ardent Chill — engenders —
A realm of Light beyond
The World we know — of Task and Tears —
Of Thorn and Scorn — and Wound

Your cloistered Ecstasies possess
A foretaste of the Next
Illimitable brilliancy
Undimmed — and unsurpassed –

Steady as He Goes

Rick Barnett

One hand for the ship and one for yourself.
-A seaman's proverb.

[For Smith Kirkpatrick]

She demanded it,
Then stood afoul all morning
As we two young men
Carried what she allowed
Out the door
Of the second house you lost
On Mill Pond Road.

And you, past sixty, alongside,
Steering even again
Your flotsam past corners and doorjambs,
You, windward again,
Amazed us with your calm eye
And steady gait:
One hand for yourself and
One --where?
Even the buckling porch
Seemed to pitch.

When it was done
And we listed
Unsteadily against the truck,
Slack with wonder,
It came to us like a mirage at sea
--Strange-winded,
Glimpsed through Antarctic spray:

You,
Chin jammed into the weather,
Hoisting a simple seaman's chest.
Wind-scarred,
Its draft on your shoulder
The eternal shape of departure.

On the back of the truck
Riding aloft its lashed hollow,
We wished to close our eyes
And press our bland ears
To its wooden mouth
And be instructed
How to walk a gale.

ESSAYS

The Crisis of Anomie

Paul Cella

It is a particularly distressing feature of our age that even thoughtful men do not perceive the crisis into which they have been thrown. They profess ignorance of its depredations; and they even grow annoyed when pressed with its evidences. Say to them, "It is an extraordinary fact that for some decades now high culture in this country has nurtured an open detestation of the social order which gave it life and resources"; or "It is a marvel that American artists and men of letters concern themselves most passionately with disparagement and falsification of their inherited tradition" — and your tale will return void. Its accuracy will not be overtly denied, but it will be somehow disregarded. Or inquire of such men whether they think it noteworthy that though we are among the richest of all societies, we are very far from being the happiest: the puzzle will induce a blank stare or a blanker shrug. To resist or avoid reflection upon this bespeaks of a psychological numbness of some depth.

It is very easy, I think, to underestimate the strangeness of this state of things, this languor combined with bafflement. Even its prominent specimens no longer shock. It is certainly arresting to observe a society afflicted by, for instance, increasingly frequent, demonic acts of murder-suicide perpetrated by and against schoolchildren, or by disgruntled ex-employees against their former co-workers. What shall we call those whom it fails to disturb beyond the fleeting moment?

One word for this condition is *anomie*. A derivative from Greek, it points to a lack of order and may be translated as "lawlessness." But that is an insufficient synonym. Richard Weaver, a writer who had a touch of the prophet in him, once defined it as the absence or privation of custom and order.* A creature characterized by anomie is bereft of a moral ordering principle. Uprooted from that ancient moral tradition, which in its fullness would not merely show how our spate of school-shootings and the like is evidence of calamity, but would tell us *why*, and even suggest methods of reformation, our people cannot advance past rudimentary shock and horror. They cannot call upon a living tradition for explication and recommendation, because a living tradition of moral thought is not among their readily-available resources. It is has been taken from them.

Americans are forever shocked by the indications of their own degradation. But their anomie precludes progress from this state. After it was revealed that a military-run prison in the American protectorate in Iraq was the setting for systematic sexual humiliation and abuse, the airwaves (where not besotted with mere partisanship) were filled with cries of "this is not America!" But the painful and obvious truth is that it was very much America. Not only has pornography been normalized and industrialized in our country, and the mark of obloquy that once attended it removed; but indeed it is generally thought to be but a trivial and even humorous detail that our own domestic prisons are rife with the same infamy of sexual torment. Abu Ghraib, I am sad to say, was an authentic American import; and those who hate sexual torture abroad ought to be prepared to hate it at home, even when it comes bearing the gift of Profit and wearing the cloak of Consent. Those filled with outrage at the degradation of prisoners in Iraq, might consider stifling the chuckle at the late-night comics joking about the same

degradation in American prisons. These things are easily verifiable, and the reflective man can only overlook them according to a privation of custom and moral order — something which in healthier societies it has been the business of education to instill.

What is commonly instilled by American education today is alienation. The educated American emerges from his instruction alienated from his natural environment, which he has been taught to view in a mercenary fashion (environmentalists have sought to resist this, but they are tilting at windmills, for they share and advance the same philosophical materialism that emancipates the mercenary impulse); from his historic culture, of which he has been taught mostly its faults rather than its glories; and from his existing home, which, to the extent it retains some distinctive character, he has come to regard as provincial and embarrassing. So he runs off to the cities. As each of these attitudes, each of these alienations, is at opposition with the natural way of man, is it very likely that many of the specifics of them will be thrown off as our educated American matures; but this liberation or recovery will usually be piecemeal, haltingly achieved, and at any rate philosophically ungrounded or fragmented. He will naturally move back toward sanity, but it is unlikely that he will have a thorough philosophic sense of the distinction between sanity and madness; and as a consequence of this lack of integrative principle, his reactions will be crude and feckless. He will perceive, and perceive rightly, that much of the art and literature of his country is decidedly unpatriotic, and that this is blameworthy; but his reaction to this will not be to stand on real patriotism, an assertion of the goodness of the particular, but to race off in grandiose theory, forgetting the very thing (his home) whose dishonor moved him to action. Even his reaction, in short, will flow from his *anomie*.

It may be useful to dwell for a moment on this subject of patriotism, for it serves well as a signal of our crisis. Patriotism, in the language of Michael Oakeshott, is an appreciative attitude: it is warm toward enjoyment and cool toward change.† Some measure of contemplative leisure is its prerequisite: a man must have the opportunity to discover the texture and character of his home, to sit in silence before it and absorb its complexity and be humbled by it. Moreover, in his capacity as a patriot, a man is decidedly hostile toward what is called "progress." He loves what is, and wants to keep it and pass it on intact to his children. The preservation of the object of his love cannot be left continually open to the possibility of transformation on some principle of progression. According to John Crowe Ransom, "the concept of Progress is the concept of man's increasing command, and eventual perfect command, over the forces of nature."‡ This is a principle antithetical to patriotism. A patriot has made *peace* with this natural environment, feels in his bones its unutterable uniqueness and incommensurability; it is not command that he desires but tranquility, appreciation, and preservation. Progress, with its striving for ever-greater mastery, is at war with the patriotic disposition.

A patriot reared in a living tradition, whose spirit is not alienated from the social order that made him, will likely prove an obstinate foe of Progress. He may be open to progress in other fields of human endeavor; but as regards the object of his love, the *patria* — the sine qua non of which is the land, though it is not limited to that — progress will be viewed with suspicion. He may sneer at it, resist it tenaciously, or merely mock it, but he will decidedly be aroused against it. Under the influence of anomie, however, we see this simple sanity breaking down. Men come to fancy that antitheti-

cal principles can be brought into union. The appreciation that is the indelible mark of patriotism is forced to contend with the native discontent of the doctrine of Progress. Home must vie with restlessness, stability with "creative destruction," quiet with the din of upheaval. Of course there are tensions of this kind in life, standing as impassive facts as it were; but a theory which embraces brute contradiction into its compass is not a good theory. And it is a brute contradiction to posit a patriotism of creative destruction. It is an equally brute contradiction to posit a patriotism of universalism: Universal Man is not a patriot but the very opposite. In fine the patriot is Particular Man. It is a peculiar curse of modern rationalism that we must construct theories of patriotism at all; but if we must do this thing, let us at least avoid the madness of a theory in which a man loves the very home which casts him from it.

Anomic modern man has been driven from his home in more ways than one. He is a spiritual wanderer — and a heavy-laden one. He carries terrible burdens of which he is not even aware; and his soothsayers, having cut themselves off from their moral inheritance, have not the wherewithal to discover them, much less teach him how to lay them aside. The preponderance of these soothsayers, for some time now, be they nominally men of the Right or of the Left, have been animated by a single nostrum, before the bar of which they drag all other ideas for cross-examination. Their nostrum is materialism, the denial or radical denigration of all things not perceptible and quantifiable by the senses. We are familiar enough with the overt materialists whose rebellion is against God: who answer the mysterious creation narratives of the peoples of the world with stale negation narratives. We are less familiar with the more insidious materialism that enters through our economics.

But this economic materialism is as native to the modern project in politics, to political modernity, as the rebellion against God. In a sense they are one. The liberation of the acquisitive impulse, as the very ground of human political life, is a common thread that binds theorists as different as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, though the former is hailed as expositor of classical liberalism and the former condemned as proto-totalitarian. Locke gave us Capitalism and Rousseau Socialism; but the Englishman no less than the Swiss gave us something more: the emancipation of the *libido dominandi*, the passion to possess, to dominate, to conquer, to command. Rousseau, it is true, was much more radical: he said the first owner was a thief or robber, where Locke said rather that the first owner was the first free man. But they share the view that man is a creature of things alone. This is their truest legacy: they unleashed the very thing which the Classical mind and the Christian mind both (and the great synthesis which made them one mind) had sought to fetter. Let man be an animal, they said; let us posit him made real by his desires, his passions, his instincts, his ambition. The engine of Progress was the overthrow of the older discipline and the emancipation of the baser side of man. It was the revolution of the great Liberals.

Here was the decisive *political* blow at that "custom and order" which made the West what it was. It makes little difference whether we pursue the materialism toward the basically sane order of Capitalism, or toward the essentially mad order of Socialism: we still have begun down a dark new path, away from our home. For custom and order, a living tradition, a democracy of the dead, however natural to man, must be an unreal thing to the philosopher who has posited materialism; and his posited man in the end will be bereft of it, and perish.

Well many a modern man has perished at the hands of dead-end doctrines derived from modern political philosophy. Many an evil war has been fought. The modern philosophy has succeeded to some degree in its promised liberation of enterprise, and where virtue has reigned in discipline, human enterprise has indeed shown its power and greatness. But has this philosophy, for example, discharged the purposes set out in the Preamble to the Constitution? Has it yielded "a more perfect Union"? Perhaps — but at a cost measured in the blood of a terrible civil war. Has it "establish[ed] Justice"? This may be a question beyond our capacity to judge, but there is some pregnant irony in the fact that Justice is one of those very things, being unreal in the materialist cosmos, that modern doctrine has abjured even considering. Has it "insure[d] domestic Tranquility"? Hardly. The more modern and mercenary we have become, the more our country, for good or ill, has been thrown into fitful action and tumult. Has it provided "Defence"? A mixed record: from internal subversion the record is good; from foreign depredation good, though this is failing with an appalling rapidly, particularly in the Southwest; but from *its own* encroachment, the record is very bad, with intervention from the State into private life on a rather steady trend upward from the very beginning. Has it "promoted the general Welfare"? Materially it has, quite magnificently; and of course it is the conceit of modern doctrine that there is no more to life than that, but this is a transparent conceit. Has it "secure[d] the Blessings of Liberty for ourselves and our posterity"? A category like "our posterity" can hardly exist for the materialist, and so an actual *obligation* to them can have little meaning.

So here in America, the modern doctrine has done passably well on its own terms, but the inadequacies of its form have encumbered it; and most of the real achievements of our people have come in defiance of it, or at least independent of it. It was not the *libido dominandi* that sought to extirpate the institution of Atlantic slavery; that great emancipation was grounded in the spirit of the Living God. It was not a pursuit of mere interest that inspired our soldiers on the Normandy beach, or steeled us against the fashionable madness of Communism. In the Dedication of his *A History of the American People*, the English historian Paul Johnson generously says of Americans that we possess "a passion for justice no nation has ever matched." Now I do not know what American can fail to be moved by such praise, but I do know that modern doctrine (that is, Liberalism) has no place for such passions, or such praises. To Liberalism it is nonsense to talk of a "passion" for the transcendent order of justice; what passions man has are exclusively of the world, and cannot transcend it.

What we have called "custom and order" does — that is, what it is purposed toward doing — is provide an approach to this transcendent order. It integrates what we have learned by reflection and revelation into what we know by instinct; it gives force to understanding and wisdom. It sets the animal nature of man, his *libido*, in subjection to his spiritual nature, but it does this without emasculating his enterprise by the total renunciation of the material, as in some heresies of old. It respects that man is a dualistic creature, in the world but not of it, passionate but capable of reflection and choice, encumbered by sin but gifted with the possibility of redemption. Custom and order do not, as Liberalism does, begin with the amputation of one of these aspects. A living tradition is innocent of such violence. It does what Liberalism cannot: it takes man as he is, and does not posit him as something less.

This is why I say that Liberalism must be assigned a very considerable share

of the blame for the crisis of anomie in which we find ourselves. We are a great and wealthy nation full of unhappy people, or at any rate one full of people bewildered by the failure of materialism to bring happiness. Our crisis is in many ways the crisis of Liberalism. But here we can find solace in the fact that some of the purposes of the Preamble have gone unfulfilled and others only very meagerly fulfilled: For this suggests to us that our political tradition is broader and deeper than the narrow vision of Liberalism. Let Liberalism never emerge from this crisis, let it fail in the face of this challenge; let it be ruined and wrecked and defeated by the storm it dared to embrace; let all its bewildered apostles wail in despair, and still our American political science will yet remain. Liberalism does not exhaust our options, because our tradition was not the product of an exhausted Liberalism. In short, the American political tradition is wide enough to free us from it. Though at times it seems that a dark catastrophe looms before us, man is larger than any ideology of the moment. We can yet repudiate it and set it aside. This crisis of anomie, this fatal privation of custom and order, may yet prove the crack of doom for Liberalism.

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* Weaver, *In Defense of Tradition*.

† Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics*.

‡ Twelve Southerners, *I'll Take My Stand*.

The Irrational Faith of the Naked Public Square

Lydia McGrew

There is a peculiar separation of religion and public policy that many, including some Christians, believe we are required to maintain. And such a separation can be made to sound speciously plausible. The reasoning runs something like this: "You wouldn't want to be ruled by someone else's religious beliefs, so you shouldn't try to rule other people by your own religious beliefs. You should try instead to make all your public policy recommendations in such a way that even non-religious people or people from other religious backgrounds can see that they are reasonable." Such intuitions can be made into fairly strong restrictions on virtuous public action. Consider, for example, the following principle, which we may call a Generic Naked Public Square (GNPS) principle:

> GNPS: The promotion (by vote or other means) of a given public policy is civically virtuous only if the policy in question is sufficiently supported by non-religious reasons.

Before we say more about what is wrong with this principle, we should find the most plausible version of it. And in order to do that, we shall have to define its most important term—'religious'. For it is obvious that a great deal turns on that. There could easily be invidious or overly-broad definitions of 'religious' that would make the principle ludicrously false, and we should set these aside before we go any further.

Robert Audi, for example, says that a reason or argument is "historically religious" if the cognitive causal chain that lies behind one's holding it involves belief in some proposition that has obviously religious content (Audi, 2000, 74). The causal chain need not be a chain of reasons; Audi also includes beliefs and associations. But this is obviously wrong. Suppose that a drug addict hears a stirring proclamation of the Christian gospel and feels guilty about his drug abuse as a result. He worries that there may be a God who disapproves, and he goes out, gets his life together, and begins to research arguments against drug legalization. He becomes convinced that hard drugs should be illegal because of all the misery they cause, and he begins to advocate stiffer penalties for drug dealers. But he would not be making these arguments were it not for a causal chain that began with a religious sermon. Still, the arguments he is making are entirely secular, and there is no reason to think of them as anything else. This purely causal sense of 'religious' is a non-starter.

Another attempt to define 'religious' in such a way as to cut out arguments without reference to their content or cogency might be to point out that in some cases an audience would not find a given argument persuasive if they did not hold some religious beliefs (Audi, p. 75); hence, the speaker may be counting on the audience's religious beliefs to help make his presentation rhetorically convincing. In those circumstances one might argue that the argument—meaning not a set of propositions supporting a conclusion but an argument as made at a particular time--is religious. But again, this sense of 'religious' appears to involve an obvious error. Suppose, by analogy, a young

man is explaining to his rather unintellectual girlfriend, using impeccably good arguments, the scientific point that simultaneity is relative to one's frame of reference. He may know that the conclusion is counterintuitive and that his girlfriend would dismiss it as nonsense if she were not romantically attracted to him, but this does not make it sensible or useful to call his scientific argument "romantic."

Yet again, it might be proposed that one's argument should be deemed religious if one's motive in making it is religious—say, to promote the spread of Christianity—regardless of the nature, cogency, or content of the argument (p. 73). But this, too, seems completely wrong. If a man makes a knock-down argument in physics in order to win a bet which, if won, will garner him a free dinner, his argument should not on those grounds be called "gastronomic." And since Christians are supposed to do everything they do to the glory of God, this motivistic definition of 'religious' would make all their activities religious. While such a designation may well be right in a devotional sense, it is hardly useful in the present context, especially if we are concerned (as Audi is) with proposals that our fellow citizens may resent as religious impositions. A non-religious citizen has no more right to resent one's policy proposals solely because one's motives are religious than a student has a right to resent his Christian professor's teaching him the Pythagorean Theorem in order to glorify God.

Having set aside these attempts to define arguments as religious without reference to content, we should consider one somewhat more interesting but still misguided attempt to define a policy argument as religious, this time with reference to its content. Someone might argue, or at least imply, that a policy proposal is religious if it depends crucially upon a deontological moral prohibition rather than upon consequentialist or utilitarian considerations.1 This concept of what count as secular and religious reasons is rarely stated explicitly but often seems implicit in policy discussions, sometimes even on the side where one might most expect to see it challenged. For example, when political conservatives discuss comprehensive sex education, they focus almost entirely on its bad consequences. Undoubtedly, such indoctrination of the young has devastating consequences—physical, psychological, and social—and there is nothing wrong with emphasizing them in presenting the conservative side of the issue. But often it seems that conservatives are assuming (partly because they are sure that their opponents will assume) that such arguments from consequences are the only ones they are allowed to make, that they are not allowed to bring up, for example, the simple point that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is morally wrong.

One particularly unfortunate application of the idea that we must always argue from consequences is the use of slippery-slope arguments against actions that are in themselves gravely immoral. When scientists propose that we abandon the dead donor rule and take vital organs from undeniably living human beings, with safeguards to guarantee that only willing donors are involved, our first cry should not be, "How can we know that the safeguards will be applied?" To make that our first line of response is tacitly to give up on fighting the initial proposal on its own ground, to imply that it is bad chiefly insofar as it leads to something worse, a hypothetical bottom of the ethical barrel that day by day recedes before us. But if nothing is bad in itself, then there is no point in arguing that some policy is bad because it will lead to some worse evil. By never saying, "This itself is wrong and must be opposed whether it does or does not lead to worse," we guarantee that our fighting line is always shifting.2

There may be more than one reason for avoiding bare statements that certain acts are intrinsically wrong in policy debates.3 But if the worry is that absolute moral pronouncements are tacitly religious, it should be discarded. To say that something is wrong aside from its consequences does not amount to and need not depend epistemically upon a religious proposition. Absolute statements of moral wrong can be seen to be true in and of themselves. Indeed, secularists are likely to have some things which they themselves consider wrong apart from consequences—e.g., rape, lynching, or slavery—so the attempt to force consequentialism upon religious citizens would represent a double standard.

If we are to have an interesting discussion about religious reasons in the public square, much less about the possibility that their role should be a limited one, there is really only one definition of 'religious' that has any plausibility or potential relevance, and it is one that goes approximately like this:

> An argument for a policy is religious if and only if it depends for its cogency either explicitly or implicitly upon at least one proposition about God, gods, life after death, or supernatural beings or forces.

On this definition of 'religious', the GNPS principle is saying that virtuous citizens must have sufficient support for their policy proposals from arguments which do not rely on religious considerations, where 'religious' is understood in more or less the ordinary sense of the term.

Why would anyone think that this principle is true? The rough sketch of an argument I gave for it at the outset appears to rely on the Golden Rule: If you would not want someone else to impose his religious standards on you, you should not try to impose your religious standards on someone else. But this argument is open to an immediate objection. A major reason, perhaps the only reason, why many of us would not want other people to impose their religious standards on us is that we think their religions *false*, not that there is something special about religion.4 The argument cannot get any traction at all if we do not assume that we are talking about standards that differ from one religion to another. For example, Muslims believe that they are obligated to fast during Ramadan; Christians do not. But if we are simply talking about differences of opinion about what is true and false, then the principle becomes trivial: "You would not want other people to impose their unnecessary codes of conduct, which they falsely take to be obligatory, upon you; therefore you should not impose your unnecessary code of conduct, which you falsely believe to be obligatory, upon others." But if we believed our own religion to be false, we would not be making an argument from it to some policy proposal. And almost any policy proposal, regardless of the reasons that support it, will find some dissenters who believe that others' false standards are being imposed upon them. So the Golden Rule argument turns out to have very little to tell us about religion, specifically.

Robert Audi lays out a number of considerations that he regards as reasons for treating religion specially in its influence upon public policy (2000, 100-105), but they are all exceedingly unsatisfying as justifications for even a relatively weak naked public square thesis, much less Audi's much stronger version.5 Almost all of them rely on generalizations about what religious people tend to be like, combined with the asser-

tion that these characteristics mark differences between religious people and secular people. Audi lists the danger of fanaticism, the willingness to coerce even the virtuous to conform, condemnatory tendencies, the dangers of an inflated sense of self-importance among their leaders, passionate concern with making others act in accordance with their religious norms, and anger with children who leave or do not fully conform with the faith in adulthood.

It is sadly amusing to read this list and to consider how well its negative aspects apply to secular people and movements. Communism, for example, is as fanatical as any conventional religion and demands group-think on an unrivaled scale. Contemporary feminism aspires to control worldview, language, and behavior. The New Atheists are exceedingly passionate about making people behave in accordance with their own beliefs (making sure children are taught Darwinism as unquestioned fact, for example), and Richard Dawkins and P.Z. Myers have an inflated sense of self-importance that would make many a Christian megachurch pastor look modest by comparison. Dawkins is infamous for having repeatedly and insistently called a religious upbringing "child abuse," and while Dawkins has shied away from the obvious legal implications of this accusation, not everyone who thinks as he does is so cautious. Other secularists, self-styled "comprehensive liberals," have expressly advocated the use of the power of the state to monitor and limit parents' ability to transmit their religion to their children (see Hitchcock, 2004). As for the vicious condemnation of children who do not fully conform to their parents' secular ideology, a good example of this phenomenon is the strange story* of Rebecca Walker, daughter of feminist icon Alice Walker. And, on the other hand, there are plenty of religious people who do not display such negative characteristics. It simply does not appear to be true that we reduce fanaticism, self-important leadership, attempts at thought control, and the like in society by reducing the role of religion in public life.

Audi's two remaining reasons are that religious liberty is an important and delicate thing and that permitting religious reasons for public policy would plausibly lead to coercing expressly religious behavior—prayer, for example—on the part of people who do not accept a particular religion. As for the second of these, it would certainly be undesirable if people were being coerced to pray to any God, even the true God. But then, secular ideology can and sometimes does demand that we do homage to itself—in the form of changing our language to make it politically correct, for example, or treating two men or two women as "married" in all of our business activities. The problem with forcing people to pray to the true God is that the true God is not truly worshiped in that fashion. The problem with forcing people to pray to false gods and to pledge allegiance to false ideologies is that they are false. You will not avoid the problem of the coercion of conscience by limiting the role of religion in public life. You will only shift that problem so that the unreasonable coercion comes from some quarters rather than others.

But when we come to Audi's brief discussion of the delicacy and deep importance of religious liberty, we find a rather interesting statement:

> Citizens in [a democracy] are naturally and permissibly resentful about coercion by religious factors…in a way in which they are not permissibly resentful concerning co-

* http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/books/article3866798.ece

> ercion by, for instance, considerations of public health. Even the moral errors of others are, for many, easier to abide as supports of coercion than religious convictions having the same result. Perhaps the thought is that one can argue with others concerning their moral or economic or philosophical views in a way one cannot argue with them about their religious convictions.

The first part of this paragraph is simply false, and it is enlightening to see that Audi apparently considers policy based even on true religious premises to be more objectionable than policy based on secular moral errors. A slave owner would not be permissibly resentful of the emancipation of his slaves on the grounds that their emancipation had come about as a result of religious arguments. A parent, on the other hand, would be permissibly resentful of the forcible administration to his perfectly healthy child of mind-altering drugs even if such a policy was argued for from secular premises. How permissible (if one means, as Audi must mean, something like "understandable" or "reasonable") one's resentment of some law is depends on how reasonable the law is. It does not depend upon the origin of the considerations that brought about the law but rather upon whether the law is good or bad, merely annoying or outrageous, and so forth.

But the more interesting statement comes in the latter part of the paragraph and points us to what is, I suspect, the real reason that many support something like the GNPS thesis: They think that religion is intrinsically irrational or arational. And here we come to what is really the only remotely plausible argument for anything like the GNPS principle, which we can see in the form of a simple syllogism:

1. People should not be ruled by irrational beliefs.
2. Religious beliefs are irrational.

Therefore:

3. People should not be ruled by religious beliefs.

And one can extend this reasoning to the role of religion in public life:

1. It is worse to force others to act upon your own irrational beliefs than merely to act upon them yourself.

Therefore,

2. It is worse to force others to act upon your own religious beliefs than merely to act upon them yourself.

Audi says nothing like this. He attributes the thought that religious people cannot be reasoned with to his hypothetical secularists who are filled, he says, with a permissible resentment of laws based on religious considerations. But given the weakness of the stereotype-based considerations Audi brings up to argue for limiting the role

of religion in public life, this argument seems at least interesting by comparison. It is especially interesting if we consider the possibility, which no doubt is something many secular people think, that religious beliefs *must be* irrational, that they are simply not the sort of thing for which rational argument can be given. If that were true, it would at least make religious beliefs as a class different from non-religious beliefs.

But are religious believers bound to admit such a premise? No doubt some of them do. There are plenty of fideistic believers in many different world religions. But as Audi well knows (and this is doubtless why he does not make the above argument in his own voice), Christianity, at least, has a long and illustrious history of apologetic arguments, of which natural theology arguments for theism and for God as the creator of the world and of man are a subset. And even when it comes to the more particular claims of Christianity, historical apologetics defending Christianity by way of arguments for the resurrection of Jesus has yielded enough excellent works to fill a library. It would be highly invidious, not to mention uninformed, simply to state as obvious that religious belief *per se* is not susceptible of rational support.

What if a citizen's religious beliefs are well-supported rationally, and what if they do tend to support some public policy? Why should he not advocate and seek to enact that policy on those grounds? Audi considers this possibility and dismisses it on the basis of another weak argument about what people might resent or not wish to do:

> This pathway to moral truths, however impeccable logically, still runs through religious territory, and some rational non-religious citizens in a liberal democracy might be permissibly unwilling to follow it as an essential path to those moral truths....[N]early all of them would resent being forced to take [this path] or to occupy the position it leads to if they see no other route to that position (p. 127).

Audi's point is that, if we cannot induce others to believe that the policy is a good one without their going through "religious territory," and if they don't want to go through that territory, then we cannot advocate the policy on the basis of that argument, even if it is "logically impeccable." This must be wrong. Audi's theory implies that, in order to be virtuous, citizens may be obligated not to act on the basis of a whole class of rationally well-supported beliefs which support some civic action—that is, unless they can find an entirely different type of reason for the action that does not fall into the suspect class. But it should be axiomatic that public policy should be informed by all the evidence at hand. Arbitrary causal neutering of good evidence on the grounds that it is religiously tainted is unacceptable from the perspective of trying to discover the best public policies.

But a question does arise for someone who believes, as I do in fact believe, that the important moral precepts needed for a just public order are accessible by way of the natural light. Why, then, should religious reasons—reasons that make reference to God expressly, for example—be important? Why isn't my disagreement with Audi largely a moot point? The answer is that it is often easier for people to deceive themselves about moral truth when their views on moral issues are not informed by an acknowledgement of religious truth. Audi's own evident position on abortion is a case

in point. Not only is he unconvinced by all secular arguments for the personhood of the unborn child, he also says that it is "religious or philosophical or both" to call the fetus a child, since being a child entails being a person. Why a claim's being "philosophical" should be a problem even on his own principles he does not say, but his point in the context is that to call the fetus a child is not *scientific*, that people think that this claim is supported by scientific evidence only because they are tacitly influenced by their religious beliefs, and that their arguments therefore are "religious" in the sense that the arguments would not be convincing absent religious considerations (Audi, 1997, 60-61, note 35). On the other hand, with a rather charming lack of self-consciousness, he states that the wrongness of enslavement can be directly intuited as a foundational proposition (p. 174).

Our perception of ethical truths is often highly colored by our own time and culture, and it therefore behooves us to use all the sources available to us, including those insights we gain from religion, especially when our religious beliefs are themselves rationally defensible. It may indeed be possible to see directly that it is wrong for one man to enslave and sell another, but historically far more people have thought with Aristotle that it is natural that some should be masters and others slaves, and it was only when the notion that all men are *created* equal was applied to the question that progress towards abolition was made.

Audi considers, rather chillingly, the question of arguments against mutilation from function. In discussing the argument against foot-binding (2000, 73) from the fact that it makes the foot badly suited to its function of walking, he raises the possibility, while leaving the question open in the end, that we may not be able to give a secular defense of a standard of proper physical function. In the movie *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, Gladys Aylward expressly relates proper function to a theological argument, as she examines the feet of little Chinese girls to make sure they are not bound: "If God had wanted little girls' feet to be stumpy and horrid, he would have made them that way, wouldn't he?" While it is often rather easy to see that a particular organ of the body has a particular function by the natural light, there is also the question of why we should care what the function of our organs is. The importance of not behaving in a way contrary to nature is, again, accessible to the secular man, but the secular man does not always want to hear the message, whereas the man who believes that God created mankind in a certain way for a purpose will find it harder to ignore that divine plan. Obviously, the issue of natural function has ramifications beyond the issue of mutilating young girls' feet, and most especially in sexual matters. But in our own day and age, with the coming of Muslim immigrants and the issue of female genital mutilation arising in the West, it may even be necessary expressly to hold a line against horrific child abuse on the basis of a concept of natural function. If Audi has any real doubts as to whether permanent, severe, physical mutilation of children can be ruled out by secular reason, he should perhaps be willing to consider that religious reasons are important, after all, to the right ordering of public policy.

Just as religiously-routed reasons can bolster and prompt our understanding of moral truths, so too our direct perception of moral truths can be originally prompted by a religious upbringing but take on independent status once we see reality clearly. A person might have been raised by his parents to have abolitionist leanings on religious grounds but, once he sees the wrong of enslaving humans, understand that wrong in a

way that has epistemic force independent of those religious considerations. Something similar is doubtless true of present-day life issues. While a person might be raised Catholic and hence pro-life, once he realizes that the unborn child is his fellow human being, he will have shaken off the culture's pervasive and irrational prejudice against the unborn, and he will then understand the wrongness of killing the unborn child just as he would understand it for a born child, in a direct way that does not rely crucially upon premises with religious content. Religious people may think that they believe some moral proposition solely for religious reasons when in fact this is not the case.

This is one reason for not counting the history or origin of a moral intuition against it. An entire social group can be brought by the work of religiously-motivated people to see a moral truth, but it does not follow that any individual in such a culture who holds that truth as a result of their work would be unjustified in believing it absent the religious premises that began the process. Thus direct intuition of the moral law and religious training are mutually reinforcing, and it would be a mistake to try to make a radical cut between them in practice.

Even granting that some religious people are explicit fideists, and even granting, further, that it is not good to urge public policy on the basis of premises for which one has no good reason, it does not follow that such religious fideists have a special duty immediately to abandon their work to bring about public policies that, they believe, are based on their religious beliefs. It would be perfectly legitimate for them to reexamine their beliefs about public action, especially if the public actions in question have strong independent reasons against them. For example, if one thinks that one's religion requires suicide bombings, this is a strong argument against either that religion or one's interpretation of it. If one's religion requires one, in the name of ritual purity, greatly to inconvenience the helpless in one's line of work—as, for example, when Muslim taxi drivers refuse to accept blind customers with guide dogs considered unclean—the very fact that one is doing harm to an innocent third party who, not being a member of one's religion, is not even covered by the ritual rule in question, should make one ask whether the regulation is being interpreted too strictly or is simply silly or incorrect.

But it would be a mistake for a religious believer, even one who believes that he lacks good reasons for his religion, simply to abandon his work towards public policies supported by that religion. One problem with doing so is the point made above—he might have multiple forms of access to the relevant moral truth and hence might be mistaken in thinking that his inclination in a certain direction is just a matter of his "personal religious belief." And he might be able fairly easily either to make explicit or to acquire non-religious reasons for the policies in question.

Second, in many of the most controversial cases, such as abortion, euthanasia, suicide, and embryo-killing research, we are talking about very serious issues, about what is, according to the conservative position, the direct killing of innocent persons. These are not cases of ritual religious rules such as keeping kosher or avoiding the saliva of dogs. The actions in question are gravely evil for everyone, if they are wrong at all. It is therefore a matter of sheer prudence for a religious believer to be cautious in abandoning his public policy recommendations, even if he thinks both that they are based on his religious beliefs and that his religious beliefs are not well-grounded. It would be better for him both to try to make his religious beliefs better grounded and to consider more carefully his actual understanding of the moral wrongness of an act

such as abortion.

And that brings us to the third and most important reason for religious people to refuse to accept the easy out of fideistic belief combined with a naked public square to avoid pushing their merely personal beliefs upon others. This approach encourages a lazy and debilitating contentment with irrationality. The believer who takes the "personally opposed, but..." line is acquiescing in the notion that it is perfectly all right for him to hold beliefs that are silly and irrational so long as he keeps them to himself. But not only is it not all right to believe irrational things, it is also not all right to keep our beliefs about vital questions to ourselves. Murder is not a private matter, and if you think your reasons for considering an act to be murder are so poor and subjective as to make your conclusion merely private, then you would do well to start thinking hard and to decide, on more carefully considered grounds, whether we are talking about murder or not. The issue is too important for woolly thinking. In proposing a naked public square, the secularist patronizes the believer and tells him that he may keep his strange views so long as he keeps them locked up in a box marked "religious," so that no matter how important his conclusions are, *prima facie*, to his public actions, they do not actually guide his public actions. But no one should be thus complacent in irrationality, and no one should acquiesce in such a blatantly artificial separation between the sacred and the secular. Religion speaks not only to strictly religious observance but also to matters of justice and right doing between men. If, then, we hold our religion irrationally, we should try to do better, for the guidance of all our actions, both public and private. But we should not rest content to keep our religion childish, unreasonable, and private, while letting the world go to hell unhindered. Rather than cherishing a subjective and poorly-grounded set of religious beliefs and abandoning the body politic to its own devices, we should stand up like men and follow after truth with all our might.

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Notes

1. Audi does not make this argument. He accepts that some moral prohibitions can be directly intuited (1997, 173-4).

2. Sometimes this strategy—or its anticipation--becomes darkly ludicrous. When Dutch doctors put forward the Grögen Protocol for the active termination of sick newborn babies, they tried to forestall criticism by saying, "This is not the slippery slope." To which their critics might well have responded, "No, it isn't. It's the bottom of the slippery slope."

3. Perhaps one reason for avoiding such absolute claims is an awareness that not everything that is wrong should be illegal. But while this is true, the fact that something is wrong is *relevant* to the question of whether it should be illegal. If we thought that wife-beating were permissible, we would probably have very different laws about wife-beating.

4. An adherent of a religion might have arguments against the legal enforcement of all the injunctions even of his own religion; for example, a Catholic might understandably think it a bad idea if fasting on Fridays in Lent were required by law. But the force of the Golden Rule objection seems to lie in the imposition of religious injunctions on those who do not belong to the religion in question. The Golden Rule objection does not appear to be about distinctions among different religiously-supported injunctions, some of which are more appropriate matters for public policy than others, but rather about objections to the imposition of religiously-supported policies because they are come from someone else's religion.

5. For example, Audi argues (2000, 96-100, 163-5) that a citizen is not truly civically virtuous, even if he has an adequate secular reason for the policy he proposes (where "secular" means "not religious" in any of Audi's senses already discussed), unless he would be *motivated* to promote the public policy by his secular reason alone in the absence of additional religious reasons.

An excerpt from **Reflections and Meditations on the Truth of Things**

Marion Montgomery

> "Man is not a mind that thinks, but a being who knows other beings as true, who loves them as good, and who enjoys them as beautiful. For all that which is, down to the humblest form of existence, exhibits the inseparable privileges of being, which is truth, goodness and beauty."
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> —Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience: The MedievalExperiment: The Cartesian Experiment; The Modern Experiment*

> "Ideology is the name for that kind of disorder which consists in substituting for philosophical questions about what is given a set of assertions about what is not given. What is not given includes the historical future, particularly when one 'inquires' about it in order to control the 'destiny of mankind.' What is given but not accessible to the type of knowing suitable for *things* in this world is the divine reality, above and beyond that of the cosmos and of human history. When speculation of the mind begins to criticize being as such, when it aims not at understanding the 'constitution of being' but at its control by the human will, the result is not philosophy but ideology."
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> —Gerhart Niemeyer, *Within and Above Ourselves: Essays in Political Analysis*

I

> "The world is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized Non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization and save the world from suicide."
>
> —T. S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society*

Eliot as a young intellectual progressive, even something of a dandy as suggested in his "Mr. Apollinax,: studies philosophy at Harvard, where his distant cousin Charles W. Eliot has been long President there, attempting reformulation of higher education in service to what he calls "The Religion of the Future." But young Eliot will soon

begin to have some misgivings about his journey up to that point, unable to maintain a "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" in such intellectual environs. There fades for him, he laments, "a lunar synthesis, summoned by his "Whispering lunar incantations" that only dissolve "the floors of memory." In the issue, his "memory throws up high and dry/ A crowd of twisted things," perhaps a "twisted branch" sand-washed on a sterile beach, or a sea shell, each signal of a once living creature. Or perhaps in memory an image of a "broken spring in a factory yard."

On that beach one might summon a Prufrock who may fancy now that he has once heard (in an almost forgotten past) mermaids singing each to each, though never directly to him—then or now. There lies yet for Eliot (after *Prufrock and Other Observations*) a long journey yet to make, before discovering memory's true use to the "self." The "use of memory" is "For liberation—not less of love but expanding/ Of love beyond desire, and so liberation/ From the future as well as the past." Such recognition is spoken in the last of his *Quartets, Little Gidding*, recognizing the possible expanding beyond self-love as arrested by fancy of mermaids calling in a world quite other than the one in which Prufrock finds himself. In *Little Gidding*, the voices of children are heard "in the apple-tree," at last "half-heard, in the stillness/ Between two waves of the sea" —the *past* and the *future*. Such is Eliot's personal counterpoint to his Prufrock when he has become at last enabled to see "place" truly "for the first time." He at last understands, but does not comprehend, having journeyed from Prufrock's *now* to his own *now* as recovered in *Little Gidding* (1942, with World War II underway and he fire warden in bombed London).

As for Eliot's *here* and *now* as always under siege, he has begun along the way to hear voices of companionable pilgrims, in a manner of hearing quite other than as heard long ago at Harvard or in Boston and London cultures. One of those companionable voices presently will be Josef Pieper, himself under fire in Nazi Germany from "allied" assaults as Eliot walks the burning night streets of London. Pieper is reading St. Thomas, as had Eliot in the mid- and late 1920s after his *Waste Land* and "Hollow Men." Both are maturing spiritually, the one through philosophy out of St. Thomas in Nazi Germany, the other largely through poetry in secular London. Both decry, and will decry to their ends in what each believes a new beginning, the turnings from the way evident among the academic, political, social intelligentsia. In that recognition Eliot has long since abandoned "formal" (i.e., academic) philosophy as a "profession." In poetry he seeks (though not recognizing himself *seeking*) an escape from that dead end in the Modernist embrace of logical positivism as the only acceptable "philosophy." Such his circumstances, so like our own that he yet serves us well as surrogate reflector of our own "selves" in the first decade of the new millennium. He responds in an understanding of St. Augustine and St. Thomas and of his favored poet Dante Alighieri, they echoing the possible to us as *homo viator*. Eliot's, too, are questions posed in wonder as recovered from his old indifference, whose virtue he once declared as *ennui*. He initiates his return to ground zero, speaking willy-nilly to us as to him in a still point, recovering old awe in consequence of perceptions of things actual, of a loved thing as a *something* perceived that is not the "self." How arresting to reason: by *knowing* a *something* as both *actual* and *other* is to rediscover to that knowing "self" its own "self" as actual. In that instant of knowing is a certification of the existence of a knowing receiver of limited truth, despite Descartes' confusions bequeathed us that

so radically affect Western philosophy. We have forgotten St. Augustine's old refutation of the "Academics" as skeptics of existence, argued long before Descartes. Those "Academics" asked St. Augustine, "What if you are deceived?"[1] "If I am deceived," St. Augustine declares, "I exist." That is to say, even the *idea* of illusion in intellect is a proof of the actuality of the existential nature of the knowing subject, my "self." And so St. Augustine declares (in his *City of God*, XI, 26): "Without any delusive representation of images or phantasma, I am certain that I am, that I know, and that I delight in this. On none of these points do I fear the argument of the skeptics of the Academy who say: What if you are deceived? For if I am deceived, I am."

St. Augustine began that great work *The City of God* late in life, turned fifty-nine. He worked on it for a decade and a half. But the "Cartesian" problem of certainty as to whether the thinker himself actually existed he had long since engaged. Indeed, he wrote his Against the Academicians the year before he was baptized by St. Ambrose. In it he breaks with the skeptics of the "New Academy" of his day who took departure from Zeno the Stoic, to whom he had been briefly drawn when he abandoned a decade's adherence to Manichaeanism. He turns from the "new Academics" through Neo-Platonism, becoming drawn to St. Ambrose, who baptized him Easter day of 387, Augustine by then having parted form the skeptics in his arguments rejecting the "Academics" as prelude to his Easter day commitment.

We recall that journey of St. Augustine as suggestive of correspondences in the journey T. S. Eliot makes out of his own "academic" skepticism, encouraged in him at Harvard. He remarks his recognition of this turning in retrospect, in that late "Introduction" to Pieper's *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, Eliot then in his sixties. In the long view he has gained since an undergraduate at Harvard, he remarks the derailing of philosophy from theology which had affected at last his own turning from the Modernist philosophy in which the principle certitude rested in a faith in the autonomous authority of finite reason. Though in his late "Introduction" he does not engage Descartes directly, nor remind us of his discovery of a spiritual kinship with St. Augustine, we may recall his uncertain Prufrock. And we recall as well those lines in his *Waste Land* that echo by allusion St. Augustine's *Confessions*: "To Carthage then I came....Burning burning burning burning....O Lord Thou pluckest me out....burning...."

With our reflection on St. Augustine's argument which will be rationalized further by St. Thomas, there may begin for the intellectual soul a measuring of the reality of things through reason. In that turning is implied (though often ignored) a collateral measuring of the perceiving "self" as stirred by the wonder that anything should be. The partial truth perceived of a thing experienced (*partial* in that the intellectual soul as finite in its given nature is inadequate to an absolute comprehension) certifies to the "self" something true of its own nature, though a limited self-knowledge. For by the very nature of the intellectual soul the truth of things actual are *incepted* though but partially and willy-nilly from experiencing actual things through the senses. St. Thomas argues the point: by perception we respond to the essence of things as resonating to us out of their essences through the "accidents" of—the particularities of—things perceived.

Particularities speak to intellect limited truths, those particularities which St. Thomas calls inherent *accidents* of the *essential* nature of a thing. His use of accidents in this respect does not connote randomness but rather actualities of a thing perceived

as spectacles of its discrete nature as a thing actual. We tend to the contrary to associate *accident* in Thomas' sense as but *spectacles* concluded a randomness of things perceived in confluence, in a fragmented "accidental" world of coincidences unresolved save by analytical logic.

The temptation for us as intellectual finite creature becomes to dissociate particularities from the essential nature of the thing perceived, endangering thereby reason's responsible but limited stewardship of things as actual in themselves. It is a dissociation exacerbated by our intellectual process, especially in its "Modernist" mode as serving an intent to power over *being*, as Eric Voegelin argues in his *Science, Politics & Gnosticism*. At its extreme, this dissociation leads ultimately to the denial of grace to the nature of a thing, a dogma of self-sufficiency made programmatic in the interest of manipulating (through its accidents) the nature of the thing. The final end of a thing is thus to be determined by intellectual intent, to the convenience of the perceiving intellect. Such becomes a false art, a perversion of stewardship as the responsibility of the intellectual soul. And thus in intellect itself is obscured as inconvenient the fundamental ground to intellectual knowing in the essence of a thing, the spectacles instead abstracted from that grounding in *being*, which reality (*being*) was once understood through the speculative intellect as allowing us recognitions of the orders of nature as depending from that grounding in *being*. Reason is misled by will, disjoining *being* itself from the *Cause of being*, a strategy necessary to the separation of theology from philosophy. Descartes' obfuscations through the doubt he holds sacred, which becomes the disorienting inheritance we have from him which trickles down into the "popular spirit" in our "economy" of pragmatism. We *know* (in limited ways) nevertheless truths spoken of the *essence* of a thing to the intellectual soul through its particularities, and we do so by our very given nature as intellectual creatures, perceived in that we are *incarnate* creatures. That knowing is of a communal sharing in *being* within the confluence of things local to perceptions, broadening for us as a *creation* depending from *being* as the universal ground to the mystery of existence itself. We respond as intellectual souls despite our possible willfulness in refusal of moments in wonder at the marvel of experience itself as registered in and registering self-awareness. We declare, "I am," as if self-created *ex nihilo*.

In a brief respite to Western culture, insofar as it had survived World War II, Eliot and Pieper look back, along with many others who become concerned as they observe danger in our increasingly euphoric intellectual conclusion of victory in the recent violence of World War II. We seem (as intellectual creatures) to have been lured to a manner of self-righteousness in intellectual responses to that victory over the "Axis of Evil." It began to seem to us as if we were issuing upon some recovered Eden, to be certified by that victory—a presumption especially affecting our progeny, who would become the now notorious "Baby Boomers." Thus Pieper's sentence, borrowed from St. Thomas to a moment in the 1950s, warns us of shadows in intellect itself, even as we seemed to be emerging into a sunlit "new" world of our own making. His was a foreboding of a pending new war, more subtle in nature than that war of machines from which we had emerged victorious through superior technologies after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And indeed initially in the 1960s, those spectacles were disturbing prospects of a new Eden in what we now call the "Cold War." Cultural spectacles began to portend a new war, which however proved in the issue an old spiritual war in disguise,

that oldest and continuing war in recorded history lacking immediate spectacular destructions such as the shock of "the Bomb," but always ticking away in that inner man we so fondly call the "self."

The fuse to a spiritual bomb in intellect itself had long been smoldering toward ignition in the soul. What some of these prophets like Pieper or Eliot detected was that the smoldering was increasingly fed by decaying volatile gases within Western culture itself, gradually eroding the intellectual soul from con-union in community, toward possible new explosions more destructive within the discrete intellectual soul itself by its separation of "thought" and "feeling." Eliot had earlier imagined in his concern as poet and literary critic a "dissociation of sensibilities"—a separation of "thought" and "feeling" as he put it, but in his concern was limited to a "literary" weakness he inherited. As he would conclude, reading St. Thomas and rereading *The Divine Comedy,* the most terrible destruction in that separation was not so much a failure in our poetry or even the horror of a world threatening its own destruction precipitated in spectacles of conflict between the U.S.S.R. and the United States, but the destruction of the particular intellectual soul in a spiritual suicide, following upon its increasingly studied abandonment of sacred tradition as orienting it on its way as *this* intellectual soul incarnate.

Pieper in the chapter which he closes with the Thomas' sentence admonishing knowledge of how the truth of things stands, first says that "the very moment anyone engaged in philosophizing abandons the guidance of sacred tradition...he loses sight of his true subject, the real world and its structure of meaning." By that loss, he will then begin to talk about "philosophy and philosophers," not of the proper end to such talk: namely, an accommodation to the truth of things as an intellectual soul incarnate. That is, Pieper adds, he becomes occupied "industriously with the opinions of other people." That sentence Pieper chooses to sum his argument was written by Thomas in rejection of Thomas' fellow scholastic, Siger of Brabant, who (along with others among the scholastics Thomas knows) distorts reason's attempts to accommodate thought to reality. Thought begins to take precedence over truth, failing to speak truths known to intellect by experiences of things actual in themselves as experienced here and now. Thomas' argument may be understood as an explication of St. Augustine's witness to his own epiphany as he turns form his professed Manichaeanism and then from the self indulgent skeptics of the "New Academy." He recalls in his *Confessions* a moment of arrest to his reason by a disturbing question about his own response to things in their actualities. He demands that those things speak truth to him. Why, given that he now loves his God above all else, does he still also "love a certain light, a certain voice, a certain odor, a certain food, a certain embrace?" It is the question he puts to "all the things that stand around the doors of my flesh." They must tell him "something" of his God, by their own relation to God. Their response? He hears all those things cry out of one accord: "He made us!"

There comes an understanding to him through his reason: "My question was the gaze I turned on them; the answer was their beauty." Not a beauty speaking their *perfection*, given what we may call the "going-on-ness" of things in their becoming out of their limited being toward worldly ends, but a speaking to the intellectual soul of the Cause whereby those things *are* at all. Things in their becoming are a present reality to the intellectual soul through perceptions, entering intellect by a grace through

his "flesh" and speaking an Absolute Thing as their Cause. Alas, that is a Transcendent Reality beyond any *comprehensive* name at the command of the finite intellectual creature. For if a comprehensive name were possible to that finite intellect, the perceiving intellectual soul would thereby be so transcendent itself as to replace that Thing Comprehending all creation, God. How inadequate, even if to a pious intellectual creature, to name that mystery pervasive of creation by such a term as *God* or *Absolute Omnipotence and Omniscience*. But how easily may follow a presumption of a *comprehension* by *naming*. That self may presume itself the only knowing cause of the thing perceived, in a willful disjunction from the realities of things as actual, things reduced thereby from dependence in Cause. That is a presumption effecting in the intellectual soul its illusion of autonomous transcendence of all things, whereby the "self" becomes the only absolute that is worthy of its own love.

Alas, the sad consequences to culture closer home to us than Siger of Brabant. There began to fizzle in the academy in our own "New Academy" in the decade after the end of World War II, the 1950s, eruptions of intellect toward "self-love" as the highest virtue. It grows in a special challenge to the academy from within the society upon which it depends and to which the "New Academy" caters in relativisms. How are we to "process" the sudden flood of new students—how certify them on an efficient, cost-effective, assembly line as it were? Surely we must abandon that "leisure" which Pieper defends as necessary to our cultural survival as community, that old academy lacking pragmatic sufficiency to the present circumstances. And so we began substituting *talking* and *writing* about *philosophy* and *philosophers*, *poets* and *poetry*—as if their witness were but lingering residual history to be codified in museums called libraries, thereby exorcised from responsibilities to intellectual stewardship by intellectual purifications, and as thus dislocated from the truth of things subsumed by a "pure reason." We must become less and less concerned for the truth of things as other than *ideas* residual in that history, too long held by intellect in reverence in a popularly vague term, "tradition." Tradition must be concluded by pure reason no longer vital to a progressive social order.

At a crucial point on this way to the profound transformation of the ends of education itself, in pursuit of an "American Spirit," John W. Draper had published a hundred years earlier his *Thoughts on the Future Civil Policy of America*, in 1865. In it he declares that "all political institutions...should tend to the improvement and organization of National Intellect." It is therefore the scientist who must supplant the clergy he declares, the scientist to be paramount in directing trained technicians to effect a reconstitution of society, but under the firm direction of established lords of the "National Intellect." Therefore "centralization is an inevitable issue in the life" of the United States as it is to be reconstituted. Meanwhile, "If the people will open their eyes, they will see that it is few who govern," and come to accept "the domination of a central intelligence." George M. Fredrickson alerts us to this defense of a new "National Intelligence," to be governed in Draper's vision by what emerges as the philosophy of logical positivism. Frederickson's work is *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union*, published in 1965, a hundred years after Draper's work. In it Frederickson raises incisive questions about the consequences of that "inner civil war" of the victorious "Northern" intellectuals, after 1865, rising to public acclaim out of the Southern defeat as a "New Academy," as St. Augustine might call it. There

rises, for instance, the necessity of a quest for a "moral Equivalent of War" since the late "unpleasantness" with the South is over, and "soldiers" defending "National Intellect" must be recruited and trained. It is pursued by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. in an intellectual debate with William James in the 1870s. In relation to that minor intellectual civil war between the two, the Harvard College intellectual environs settled upon athletics as one helpful means of training civil soldiers for a continuing civil war to establish a "National Intelligence," with ironies too multiple to list in relation to the Academy and its Professional Athletics.

What is curious about Fredrickson's engagements of these Northern intellectuals, largely associated with Harvard College, is that he does not include in his concern Charles W. Eliot, who becomes President of Harvard in the 1860s. President Eliot sets about a program of reconstituting higher education in service to Draper's ideas. What Eliot anticipates, as he argues to Harvard Divinity students in the summer of 1909 on his retirement from his long labors, is what he calls a "Religion of the Future," one which will "not be propitiatory, sacrificial, or expiatory," requiring therefore a rejection of Christianity in pursuit of a secular religion to be established through scientific specializations. It will be a "religion" which is no longer given to "worship, express or implied, of dead ancestors, teachers or rulers." Nor will that religion of the future have as its "primary object" "the personal welfare or safety of the individual in this world or the other" but only "service to others" in a worship of "the common good." And so, a hundred years after Draper, after a "world wide" civil war within Western culture (World War II), the consequence is the elevation of the positivistic scientist over the philosopher, though he may go in robes of a secular religion worshipping the "self" as autonomous over creation, as if a philosopher.

How were we in the wake of World War II to handle within the academy the sudden flood of those eager and naïve recruits pursuing education toward becoming technicians (of whom I was one)? There were still some lingering habits of an old "tradition," that of the "liberal arts." But even that residual presence might be adapted to the crises in educational circumstances, even in literature as a lingering academic discipline, becoming intent on specialization. How does this *idea* measure up against that *idea*? Or is this poet X influenced by this poet Y? So long as unhampered by a conclusion into philosophical or theological questions, how convenient to a pragmatic address to explosive social circumstances. Fill in the blank, demonstrate by quotations (in more ambitious undertakings) from each poet—in juxtapositions like unto a cross-idea puzzle. Not that such exercises as these are *absolutely* in error. For they may indeed be *possible* points of departure in seeking the truth of things. For St. Thomas does not say we should avoid what men have said (intellectual "tradition"), but that to simply know what men have said is not the end of knowing. Departures, not ends, in the quest for understanding the truths spoken by things in themselves as witnessed by a tradition of persons witnessing along the way with signs to us. Otherwise, codification by process, as if lab-exercises, become increasingly only partially correct and fraught with danger as encouraging abandonment of a commitment to the end sought—to know the truth of things. But that end becomes less and less the proper consideration governing the academy, which itself first separates theology from philosophy and then reduces philosophy toward limited convenience to positivistic science.

Now if we recall our young in revolt in the 1960s, we in retrospect might con-

sider whether their revolt is in part at least occasioned by their intuitive, not rational, recognition of having been starved intellectually, through various species of one-upmanship in the name of specialized progress, a dogma presented in condescending (by self-righteous intellectualisms) to expert *knowing* divorced from *understanding*. We are more advanced than our unprogressive fathers, some of whom were like the "monks of old" (as Flannery O'Connor's Mr. Shiftlet in her "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" says) slept in their coffins. Such progress in the issue will be justified to the public spirit by stirring its *feelings* as more important than its own *reason*, they content to leave "thinking" to their betters. There grows thereby a dogma of knowing as reserved to specialization and thereby contributing to a revolution centering in the academy in its losing sight of the end proper to our knowing: that proper devotion to the truth of things. The new dogma becomes universal: "Everybody has a right to his own opinion," or so the public spirit is encouraged to declare. That declaration becomes a political banner, regardless of the truth of things, but also contradictorily justified by specialization—by a faith in "expert" authority as transcendent of social realities. How quietly St. Thomas yet observes to those with ears to hear, from within the loud and louder cultural upheaval in the academy of the 1960s. "The purpose of philosophy is not to learn what others have thought, but to learn how the truth of things stands."

In valuing that quietly spoken truth, we must once more make a careful distinction lest we be misunderstood. Thomas does not declare that we should be *indifferent* to what others have thought, whether they be philosophers or poets or scientists. Thomas' incisive arguments against Siger of Brabant, and against the heretical Averroists in general, demonstrate just how thoroughly he knows what *they* have said.[2] His arguments are concerned to recover the purpose implicit to our human witness, through our most various arts of making, much of it his own inheritance from those surviving monuments in philosophy or poetry that still stand in present witness to us as bequeathed the living who honor the dead. The recovery of reality in discovering how the truth of things stands is cumulative, though never *comprehensive* of truth, as Thomas is also careful to remind us often. For Thomas as philosopher—as a lover of wisdom toward an accord of the intellectual soul to creation—would have us gain in recognition of the truth of things beyond what even he could know as *this* finite intellectual creature remembered as Thomas Aquinas.

Thomas' concern is that the intellectual soul may nevertheless become distracted from the true ends to be properly sought with our gifts as intellectual creatures, to each according to the limits whereby he is *this* person and no other. He knows that both his and our capacity to recognition of the truth of things is limited. He knows as well that whatever our particular gifts, they must be governed by prudential humility in recognition of our finitude as intellectual soul incarnate. How interesting in this context, Josef Pieper's observation about St. Thomas as philosopher. "Thomas did not establish any definite, fixed terms which he planned to use in a consistent manner. On the contrary, he was fond of employing several synonymous expressions side by side. We find that he employs no less than ten different phrases to express the concept of *relation*. Contrariwise, the word *forma* has ten different meanings as Thomas used it....Thomas was convinced that an absolutely adequate name, completely and exhaustively defining a given subject or situation so that no alternatives are excluded and that name alone can

be employed, simply cannot exist." It cannot, since finite intellect is never omniscient. We need here to remember then, that shortly after St. Thomas, William of Occam introduces Nominalism into Western philosophy in an attempt at an absolute certainty to dominance of intellect through its authority in limiting things by *name*, Nominalism an instrument in a conquest of *being*, preparing the way for that radical doubt about *any* knowing that so haunts Descartes, a doubt that will be fought out in 18th century intellectual civil wars of the Enlightenment in attempts to certify intellect itself as autonomous, as by *intent* omniscient over *being*.

We may *understand*, but are never *comprehensive*, in knowing things. For *comprehension* is an absolute denied us by our very nature, since as intellectual creature we exist and can only exist by the grace of *limit*. Without that limit in being as *this* intellectual soul incarnate, indeed, we would not *be* at all. And always the gnawing question, a grace to intellect itself stirring wonder out of awe. Why this *somethingness* perceived rather than that strange shadow in intellect itself, haunting our experiences of self-evident somethingnesses known. Whence that shadow of idea called *nothingness*? How astonishing then to realize that *nonexistence*, which seems so alluring a prospect to some intellectual souls in their desperations, is necessarily consequent *to* and therefore of itself alone an impossible concept without *existence* as actual and prior to any concept, necessary even to that shadow idea *nothingness*. Nonexistence then is but a shadow of doubt cast by fallen intellect upon the actual, through those actualities as finite intellectual creature. We but see things as through a glass darkly, though with an abiding desire for a fullness of vision beyond finite intellectual light. That stirs in us the marvelous mystery of *being*, stirring reason to its wonder and to a pursuit within the limits of finite knowing as *this* person—as *this* intellectual creature seeking fulfillment of its given limits.

How deeply learned, then, is Aquinas in those not yet dead to philosophical and literary witnesses of his own pursuit of the truth of things that he inherits, those witnesses by past intellectual "fathers" of their own experiences of the actual—both Pagan and Hebrew and Christian witnesses. Most especially he believes himself indebted to Aristotle, to whom he refers emphatically as "the Philosopher," as if there were few if any others to whom that limited name might properly be given. For St. Thomas, Artistotle is unquestionably a part of that "sacred tradition" of witnesses who are concerned for the truth of things which speak to the intellectual creature man through his experiences of things actual, wherever and whenever.

St. Thomas is aware of his intellectual fathers, then, as intellectual souls incarnate, to whom he is indebted as a philosopher in his quest for metaphysical vision. They prove very present to him by their witness in their made things, signposts to us in what otherwise might seem a bare intellectual waste land. And even we reading them (if we dare) find that they speak to our common concern to know the truth of things, a concern—a *native* desire in man as intellectual creature—to understand universal truths to steady us on our way. They seem suddenly very close to us, though centuries dead in history's terse and abbreviated accountancy. A desire stirred by experiences as an intellectual soul incarnate in discovering that what men have said is very often *present* witness to use of their quest for the truth of things, the quest which is to be emulated—in whatever *place or time* we find ourselves. However seemingly distant to a reader their words in whatever his own place or time, such witness yet abounds,

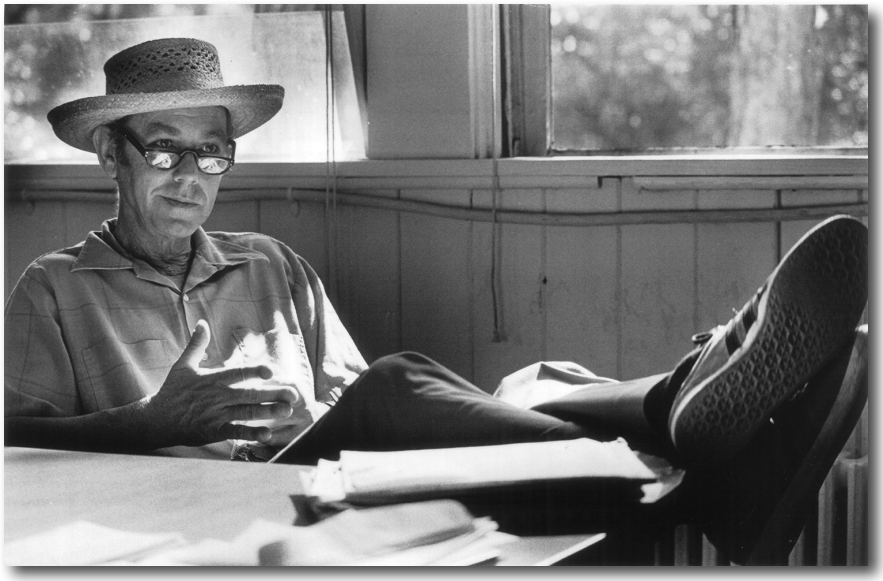
to be sorted for truths as our inherited "tradition." St. Thomas supposes that out of this common desire there may be established a common *understanding* of, though not a *comprehension* of, the mystery of being itself toward an eventual contentment as *this* intellectual soul incarnate, despite man's nature as fallen in Original Sin. The desire to know remains common, regardless of our dangerous willfulness in knowing which tempts presumption of comprehension. For willfulness tempts intellect to self-satisfaction in *knowing*, as if that were the end. That is largely a limit to the reach of Aristotle, though a considerable reach by "*the* philosopher," as St. Thomas recognized. St. Thomas understands that *knowing* is a means but not the final end. It is a beginning toward fulfillment of limits as *this* intellectual soul incarnate, a perfection of limits in being *this* person and no other.

To know is not for St. Thomas the final end, but the point of repeated departures in continuing quest of the truth of things known, though never comprehended by finite intellect. For him comprehension is the province of Omniscience. In us, he holds, is nevertheless a grace inherent to our given nature: the desire for a fulfillment of our limits whereby we are *this* person and no other. We are both *actual*, that is to say, and in a *potentiality* to that fulfillment through grace. To know, therefore, opens to the intellectual creature on its way a larger prospect beyond its own illusions of comprehension. For such is an illusion tempting to presumptions that we may transform *being* itself, perhaps even reconstitute essence, as if our autonomous prerogative by a transcendence self-induced, escaping by will all limits to absolute freedom from limit. That is the Grand Illusion, worshipped tellingly by Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov and celebrated by Ivan in his "poem" he calls "The Grand Inquisitor." As intellectual creatures—or so St. Thomas would remind us—we *know* and *become* as intellectual creatures toward an understanding of the limits of our knowing, which Ivan (an intellectual disciple of the Enlightenment) must deny. The sequence of that becoming is not from *knowing* to *understanding* to *comprehension* Thomas would warn us. It is rather from *knowing* to *understanding* to a *wisdom* governed by prudential humility, in an accord with our limits as *this* person and no other, limits measured to us by the truth of things though in error we presume ourselves the measure of truth.

Notes

1. On the philosophical inadequacy of Descartes' "academic" doubt as in that celebrated phrase *cogito ergo sum*, see Etienne Gilson's *Methodical Realism*, an extended refutation of Descartes.

2. Siger of Brabant is Thomas' antagonist as philosopher in Thomas' crucial arguments. *On Being and Essence* and *On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists*.



SPECIAL FEATURES
MEMORIES OF
SMITH KIRKPATRICK

Working With Kirk, 1961

Lawrence Hetrick

For several weeks I have been living in 1961, with Kirk's sense of things running around my mind, 2008 having receded into background. Smith Kirkpatrick died this summer, and I began to think about my time as an undergraduate with him at the University of Florida, not so much because of his death as because of our good talk on the phone just before, bringing back my sense of him as my early teacher. Then by pure chance I came into possession of a file of letters I had written from June through December, 1961, including much comment on Kirk's fiction writing seminar that fall. The letters produced lively images of Gainesville then, details about Kirk and the other writers in his class, and a sense of my commitment, under his influence, to writing. I am learning about that all over again, after forty-seven years, as Kirk would understand. In fact it is difficult for me to separate what I think now from what Kirk taught me. They seem the same at every turn. And this is part of what getting to be sixty-eight years old feels like, I think. It doesn't really matter which part is him and which me: I like the fact that we're in it together.

In spring, 1961, Kirk was physically attractive. He was confident and took care to put others at ease. He was young because he was much younger than Andrew Lytle, whose assistant he was. But he was dying, doctors alleged, from the hereditary disease that had spatulated his fingers and enlarged his joints. He bore within himself an unusual sense of doom. "Death is a flight jacket lying on the floor," he wrote in his WW II novel, never published. He had been a fighter pilot in the South Pacific. He wrote of "half-trained Japanese pilots toward the end of WW II, youths who would attempt fancy slow rolls while centered in the gun sights of our fighters." Having lied about his age in order to fly those missions, he was about thirty-three when I first knew him, in Mr. Lytle's fiction writing seminar for graduates and advanced undergraduates, in fall, 1960. Of Lytle's class I have written (along with many other things about it, in *The Chattahoochee Review*, Summer 1988):

> We got addicted to the kind of communication we were enjoying in class and sought ways of seeing each other outside. I remember Frank Hannold, Tom Hammond, Pat Waters, Pat Butler (Kwatchka), Harry Crews, Roger Coles, Alan Himber, Tony Austin, and Felicity Trueblood. Of these, Felicity was probably the most accomplished and Pat Waters the most passionate. Former students, especially Frank Taylor and Smith Kirkpatrick, attended. The class that year was distinguished by Kirk's clear-headed observations.

Late in 1960, Mr. Lytle negotiated his way into being offered the editorship of *The Sewanee Review*, where he thought he could "change the course of American literature." He would leave the university at the end of spring semester. The question for those of us in his seminar was whether Kirk, as next-in-command and our natural

leader, would be allowed to teach the class in the fall. All spring and most of the summer we wondered. In the English department were vocal opponents to having any writing program at all, most prominently Dr. Aubrey Williams, whose prestige and power could not be denied. On the other hand, the chair of the English department was J. Hooper Wise, Kirk's father-in-law.

Would we writers continue as the vital group we had been? Desire to continue the class burned in our hearts, so much so that some of us met unofficially and informally that summer on Thursday nights, as was traditional. We were a group. On June 17 I wrote in a letter:

> We got back [from Jacksonville] and immediately over came Pat Waters who had just driven back from Montgomery. He had no place to stay, and we promptly sat down and began drinking beer and Robert [Fichter] came over and we watched Archie Moore box hell out of Rinaldi on the tee vee. After that the beer was gone and we went to see Felicity [Trueblood]. She wasn't home. Pat and Joany. Not home. Ree Fee Fee has a ticket from the Gainesville Police Dept. Then we met Felicity riding down 13th and turned around and had some more beer and discussed our Thursday night [fiction writing] meeting venture, and Andrew [Lytle], and talent versus control, and such. When we came back [to my apartment] Nelson [Meyer] was waiting for us in the yard with a sixpack, which we drank listening to Leadbelly. Then we went to bed and woke up and I fed them all breakfast, a very good one I may comment.

Good times in Gainesville. We were a community of interest, and not just in beer. The values we shared, learned from Mr. Lytle and now left to our own devices, simmered more intensely within us.

Everything was getting ready to change that summer. I stayed in touch with Mr. Lytle. In July I wrote my fiancé:

> I got a long letter from Mr. Lytle, and wrote him one back. He doesn't think he will be able to come to our wedding. This summer he has been fixing up his log cabin [at Monteagle Sunday School Assembly] for winter. He forgot to write me a recommendation to Hopkins [where I was planning to attend the Writing Seminars] because he thought I shouldn't go there, but when I reminded him, he did. Thinks I need a "harder discipline," but I don't know what that means. We are also having a debate on the criticism of James Dickey in the *Sewanee*. [I thought it was sloppy posturing. He liked the fact that it scored on the Beats.]

I was twenty years old, working all summer at manual labor for money to get married in December, and writing a story that already was titled "The Mirage Weather." I re-

wrote my story all summer. At some point we learned that Kirk would indeed teach the writing class in the fall although there would be no further graduate program in fiction writing. I registered for the course. Before classes began, I turned in my story to Kirk's mailbox on the second floor of Anderson Hall. I was surprised when, at our first class meeting, Kirk did not read it aloud.

"Did you get my story?"

"We need to talk about it." As though that went without saying. I did not know that I had barely begun, much less finished. The next week, on Tuesday at about two in the afternoon, we met in the legendary classroom in Building D:

> ...a WW II barracks serving as faculty office space. The upstairs southeast corner room was crowded by one long seminar table with a desk at its end, leaving just enough space around it for a dozen chairs.

We sat in that room and talked about my story for two hours. Kirk had read it with a kind of care and attention that was astonishing.

The previous year I had written three or four stories in Mr. Lytle's class. They were competent, I think, and one had been published, but this new story was far more exciting to me because, first, it was actually *written* in a style that was beginning to be my own and because, second, it explored emotional depths within me that I did not fully understand. I was fortunate that Kirk was especially interested in the second thing. To him writing *the* story meant exploring one's self, honestly, without compromise, until the most powerful materials were revealed in their proper form. Ultimately, Kirk taught character. We did not learn quantifiable knowledge—facts, rules, cases, formulae, etc. (Think how quickly those date nowadays.) He taught relationships and values. In the classroom, the material was literary interpretation and narrative craft, but they led straight back to character, his and ours, as artists.

The lift in spirits I got from that first two-hour conference with Kirk stayed with me through fall semester. Kirk was a friend, sitting across the table, gently asking me one question after another about my story. He led me to confront exactly what I had written, what it meant, and whether I was willing to stand by it. Kirk understood very well that it didn't matter whether he knew what to do about the story. What mattered was whether I knew. These simple values have stayed with me through forty-seven years of writing and teaching. The revelation of what he was going to mean to me as a teacher and a friend was energizing, and my energy was also related to the kind of optimism he had (and still had in our last conversation), the sense that if one is artistically honest, great things, unexpected things, can happen.

Kirk and I had two more conferences with two revisions in following weeks, revisions where eight pages disappeared from a sixteen page manuscript and eight entirely different pages took their place. Only then did he read aloud "The Mirage Weather" to the Thursday night class. Interesting, intense, they said, but there were problems, especially according to Harry Crews, who didn't like the poetic elements of my prose. Kirk's approach to my story shows that in those days he did not follow the "What's on the Desk" method that he described in his essay of that name in *The Chattahoochee Review*. According to that essay, the teacher "reads aloud whatever student works were waiting on the desk."

Class meetings with Kirk that fall were rowdier than they had been with Lytle. Everyone was on his or her own for the most part, rather than deferring to the Master. Pat Waters got very angry at someone who did not pay attention to what was present in his story, and suggested that if he did not want to listen, he should drop the class. Harry and I had conflicts. He didn't like the poetry in my prose and I didn't like the non-standard grammar of his third person narrator. At one point Harry and Tony Austin came close to violence in the seminar room, with all possible preliminary verbal and physical demonstrations. You could cut the testosterone with a knife. After class Felicity, Kirk, and I laughed about it.

I revised my story again, and Kirk and I conferred again, at first every week, and then every other week. Eight is the number I have always recalled with unequivocal clarity. Eight conferences, eight full-scale revisions.

That fall was the coldest I remember in Gainesville. Temperatures stayed in the forties for weeks on end, dropping precipitously into the twenties, and even when it warmed up the wind was brisk or the rain cold. My feelings about the weather were influenced by my walking through it a mile from the university to work downtown each day, then another two miles home to my apartment. Taking nineteen semester hours in order to graduate, I worked thirty or forty hours a week at a print shop in order, again, to marry in December. It was night when I got home, for hours of typing. Studying was beyond my resources. I got run down. I was failing several courses. I continued to rethink and revise. On October 9, I wrote:

> Thursday night after class Kirk invited me to play a couple of games of pool [at the Happy Hour pool room in downtown Gainesville]. He is a real sharpie. Smeared me. He thinks the one thing that includes everyone in the story ["The Mirage Weather"] is Belinda's plea, Please make me good. This is a very good point, I think. Timmy doesn't want anyone to owe him anything. (As I write this I hear an advertisement on the radio for Youth Conservation Camp, Lake Eaton, Ocala National Forest [where the story is set].) Starr is trying to repay some debt she thinks she has. Lew thinks he has one to Belinda.

These characters in my story, Belinda, Timmy, Starr, and Lew, had become as real to me as my friends, my "sycophants" as Mr. Lytle termed them, who arrived a moment later:

> As Kirk and I were finishing our second game and leaving, in came Robert, Anthony [Colson], and Nelson [college mates and friends from high school, with varied artistic interests]. And John Basso [Anthony's half-brother, former Marine and poet, now a businessman]. Drunk out of their minds. Knee walkin drunk. Basso was all apologetic about having said he was going to kill me a couple of years ago (he was), and I was a Good Guy, Why don't we go to California and write, That's where it's hap-

> pening, Let me show you some poems I got in the car. Bull. There were no poems. I left as quick as I could.

Kirk thought all this was hilarious. I was pleased that he felt that I was capable of leaving behind these now questionable associations of my youth, and for once I had a ride home instead of having to walk.

So Kirk began to think my story was pretty good. At the end of October I wrote, "My story is rocking and rolling along, and Kirk is more and more impressed with it." After all, I had answered his questions about it not with justifications or rebuttals but with revisions. But at the beginning of December it was still in process. "This weekend I am going to try like hell day and night to get a finished copy of my story." By December 5, I did have it done, and took it over to Pat Waters to critique. On December 7, I wrote:

> Kirk agreed my story is as good as done. I called him just as he got home and he ran in puffing and excited about it. I had finally got the guts of it in there, he said. I said something about some part of it being awkward, and he said, No, for you don't write awkwardly.

That use of *for* was a characteristic Kirkian expression.

Shortly thereafter I sent the "finished" and "done" story to Mr. Lytle, whom I missed terribly. Letters did not seem enough; a story would communicate better. But this was a fateful decision on my part and not a good one. Although I had not submitted it for publication, Mr. Lytle replied at once, asking whether he could publish it in *The Sewanee Review*. Figuratively, Kirk wrung his hands. He hung his head, deeply morose. "I wish he hadn't done that."

"Why?"

"What you're doing is fine. Stick with it. You need time to write, without all this recognition and expectation. You don't need to get married. You don't need that graduate school. Just write, first. Do that one thing."

He was right. I wish I had had the sense to pay attention to him, just because he was a great teacher. That kind of avoidance is the most tempting, and most dangerous, mistake any student may make. I wish I had had the moral courage to rescind my wedding plans, to stay in Gainesville instead of leaving a month later for Johns Hopkins. The most valuable thing I had was the discipline within my self, as Kirk well knew. It had only recently been born, and I was jeopardizing it through premature publication, a desperate, doubtful marriage, and attendance at a high ranking but not rigorous graduate school. I was a "half-trained youth, attempting fancy slow rolls while centered in the gun sights." And I would spend most of a lifetime trying to get back to what I had in those months working with Kirk in fall, 1961.

But at the end, on the phone with Kirk, I realized we were still in it together, this thing about writing and life. Neither of us had abandoned what we had been and known then. Whatever the intervening years had brought, with all their mistakes and despairs and alienations, we had been true to the values, and the love, we shared in his class.

Building D: Remembering Thursday Nights with Smith

Marie Speed

No matter how old you get, September always means going back to school, and, this year, all I can think about is what happened every Thursday night in Building D at the University of Florida. Building D was a temporary wooden barracks delivered from Camp Blanding after World War II with a lot of other surplus military buildings brought in to accommodate all the guys coming to Florida on the GI Bill. And it just stayed on about 40 years too long. It wasn't a real building, like McCarty or Anderson Hall; it was a rickety two-story rabbit cage across from the library and what was then a Krystal. Building D was a dusty shadowbox of grad student offices and classrooms—including the one where our fiction group met every week.

Some of us were enrolled, and others just showed up, week after week, year after year, men and women of college age and older who were passionate about writing, who brought their short stories or chapters from their novels to be read and discussed by the rest of us.

Leading the class was Smith Kirkpatrick, a soft-spoken man from Arkansas who had been anointed by the Old Man to carry on the tradition of teaching craft in writing at Florida. The Old Man was Andrew Lytle, a novelist and literature professor who was a leader of the Southern agrarian literary movement, along with poets Robert Penn Warren and Allen Tate. Mr. Lytle left Florida before my time to become the editor of the prestigious *Sewanee Review*. All I remember now about him was that when he came down from the University of the South on the rare visit, he drank his bourbon from a silver chalice. He called me "daughter" and once delivered to me in the space of 45 minutes the entire history of the Judeo-Christian civilization. He was brilliant, Southern, eloquent and the father of what is now Florida's master of fine arts program.

Smith was his devoted student and the man who carried on Mr. Lytle's message that narrative required discipline ("moving easy in harness") and a love of language. Showing, not telling. The importance of point of view. Smith, a successful novelist himself, would read our stories aloud into the night in that soft twang of his, bifocals perched on his nose, an unlit cigarette rolling between his stubby fingers.

And he also read us Hemingway, Flannery O'Conner, Eudora Welty. We were in that room for hours, listening to our own words and those of the greatest writers we knew, learning the awesome distance between craft and vision, wanting so badly to be good that we could taste it.

The writing group endured for years and became the reason I woke up most mornings. And, always, the calm center of that class was Smith Kirkpatrick, the most gentle man I think I have ever known, a man who believed in me and what I could do.

But then, like all families, people began to break away, graduating and getting jobs, going to grad school, moving to L.A., all kinds of things. We drifted apart, and, then the time warp that is adulthood took over, and suddenly we were all 30 years older.

In 1992, Smith Kirkpatrick retired from teaching. This summer I went to see him at his home. He was dying from lung cancer, and his hospital bed faced the sloping

backyard and pool, the towering live oaks, the exact place I had sat at the feet of the Old Man all those years ago. Now Smith was the Old Man, slipping away from me, from all of us. “You changed my life,” I said to him loud enough so he could hear me. He asked if I had children. I asked if he had regrets.

He paused at that one, eyes far away.

“I have done so much,” he said slowly.

“Yes, you have,” I said to him.

I found out they tore down Building D sometime in the late ’70s. But it’s still there in my mind, and so is Smith Kirkpatrick, reading my stories into the night.

This article first appeared in the July-August 2008 issue of Boca Raton Magazine.

Things That Count

William Luse

I offer this in memory of Smith Kirkpatrick, and in the wish that his daughters, Anna Marie and Katie, will find in it a worthy keepsake.

* * *

I remember Ward in one of his group missives looking forward to our "penetrating insights" concerning our years in Smith's tutelage. In my customary manner of shirking a burden I'd rather not shoulder, I wish to serve advance notice that that will not be forthcoming from this quarter. I'm not even sure I can fulfill the task I've set myself, which is to relate simply and honestly what the man meant to me. I've probably an inflated estimate of my own abilities, but not so much as to think that my words could take the measure of even that, let alone what he meant to others as a man, a teacher, a father. His guidance was a thing that is still alive within me, and just as love is so much bigger than the word we put to it, I can't find the words to fence it off.

And when I think on Smith, I remember not him only, but all those – all of you – who sat in that classroom in Building D year after year because you thought something not merely useful, but important, was going on. I think of Ward, and Willie Mickelberry, and Marie Speed, and Sterling Watson, and John Feiber, and even, from my early years, of John Morefield, who disappeared one day, but now I hear we can thank Sterling for digging him up. Rick Barnett did not sit in Building D, having come into the program on the cusp of my leaving it, but rather took his instruction in that new brick bunker I can't remember the name of. By means of that occasionally happy accident of technology called the internet (Highway 666, says Rick), we found each other; to be exact, he found me, and another friendship has been born. But for the more significant accident of having known Smith, I might never have known any of you, and even though Rick and Ward are the only ones I've seen in the last 20 years, I want all of you to know that, as with Smith, you've never been far from my thoughts, that I have kept the good memories close, that I've wondered about your trajectories, and have hoped often that life has been gracious to you and those dear to you in good measure. I was frequently in those days a fairly sizeable rear aperture, and would like further to take this opportunity to hope that, if I offended, or hurt, any of you, it would not be a presumption on your good will to imagine that you've let me off the hook. For any who are reluctant, I'll invoke Smith's spirit by asserting that he would command it, who held us together in all our variety by his mere presence, and in the conviction that, through fiction, the human spirit in its most baffling manifestations was worth exploring, and that if it was worth exploring it was also worthy of respect. Otherwise, what were we good for? Some of those friendships may have run aground at times, but most seem to have survived to one degree or another, and it can only be due to that sense of respect inculcated by our mentor, to the miracle of our common past, and the understanding that most differences aren't worth saying goodbye over.

Some of those memories I ought to be ashamed of (don't worry, I'll spare the details), but sometimes I smile too much at the recollection, like the night John Feiber lectured the cops outside the bar they'd just thrown him and Ward and me out of for

behaving like pigs (though I'll have to say the Major gives a good speech). When I got home I told Mary Helyn (my wife) the story, thinking she'd be amused. She wasn't. She preferred that I take the world a little more seriously. When she took her vows, she said, she didn't see anything in there about posting bail. (Recently, approximately 30 years later, she asked, "When are you going to grow up? I mean all the way."

"I *am* grown up."

"See what I mean?")

Others are of acts of kindness, like the day Willie helped me unload a washing machine off a trailer, though I believe a bottle of Kentucky bourbon offered in bribe was what secured his assistance. I also liked talking to him about fiction – especially my own, which he was always willing to read - because he was generous with his compliments and always gave me the impression that I was on the verge of saying something interesting. And I remember teaching an undergraduate fiction class with Marie as part of our graduate internship, and some years later her writing a letter to help me get a job at the Flush (Santa Fe Community College for those not conversant). It was effortless, graceful, "glowing", a real work of art as it came to that sort of thing. She didn't have to do it, I didn't deserve it, but she did and I can't even remember if I ever thanked her for it. And there was the night Ward showed enough confidence in me to ask that I substitute-teach his fiction class at Santa Fe (the campus was still downtown in a building near the Baptist church). It's one thing to be a student in such a class, contributing now and then, and another to be its guide. I wasn't as good at it as I had thought. Fortunately, John Feiber had sat in on this one and, during the awkward moments, kept the conversation going. I don't know if it was a deliberate act of kindness on his part, but it was certainly a mercy.

Over time, things seemed to fall apart, though no one in particular was doing the destroying. Apparent injustices had been perpetrated – Lytle being eased out at the *Sewanee Review*, Smith being relieved of his seniority in the program – but mostly it was just the press of life, that ongoing event in which nothing stays the same. People left Gainesville for their various pursuits, and how could it have been otherwise? Eventually, I left too, cynically wondering if Lytle's words could be true, that "Things that count never seem ended", but also in the company of a childish, deep down sense that maybe it was just temporary, a sort of leave of absence that time would remedy when all were gathered again, for some unknown reason, the occasion for which I never bothered to imagine because of its seeming impossibility.

Well, the occasion is here. A man's death makes a difference that really can't be ignored, and we're all together again, in a manner of speaking if not in the flesh. And the things that matter really do survive, for if the spirit of a thing has any truth in it, it's hard to kill. Every time you pick up a story or a novel, Smith's eyes are helping you read. Those of you who still teach probably read stories aloud now and then, and your students are grateful, as once were you. And when you write, even if it's nothing more than a letter to a friend, you sometimes bother to hone the language with the tools of the trade, because your possession of them is a gift for which you are indebted. Maybe sometimes we even remember, and try to pass on to our children and students, the reasons *why* we read and write. I think Mr. Lytle would back me up in saying that these are civilizing activities, and have been since man first lit a fire to see by, that in standing in awe of those oft-mentioned "eternal verities of the human heart," we pay proper

tribute to the possibility that they might really have their source in eternity. I won't say that a writer must believe it, but he must confront it if he is not to become mired in the mere surface of things.

Unlike the case with Lytle, I never knew what Smith's "doctrine" was or if he even had one. I never pressed him on it because I didn't have one myself, and because I knew – in his writing and teaching – that he paid the proper tribute. He may have dropped a clue here and there, as in "The Anointed Powerhouse," his analysis of the Welty story (from the Winter, '69 *Sewanee Review*) that would have remained forever closed to me had he not opened it up: "This then is the center, this is the powerhouse: love, the divine part of man...that sets in motion the artists...impels the artist to give everything he's got – even for an audience of one...When Powerhouse is urging those musicians who count to give it up, it is the self he is urging them to leave behind. He is urging them to become selfless, which is the very essence of love." Only a man who knew something about it, and believed it, could write such a thing. It may have been as close to a creed as he ever got.

As I say, I never asked him about it because at the time it didn't seem important. I do remember stopping by the house on 10th Avenue once to find him somewhat agitated. He was down by the pool and had just finished reading one of those articles by a scientist who also fancied himself a metaphysician, or perhaps I should say a reductionist who'd discovered that metaphysics could be dispensed with. Struck by the realization that man had indeed come from the earth and would return to it, the author announced (authoritatively) that the apposable thumb was what distinguished us from all other creatures. Smith was in a state. "The apposable thumb," he snarled. "It's the *brain* that makes us what we are."

"Maybe," I said, "he meant that the thumb made the development of the brain possible."

He looked at me. "What good's a thumb without a brain to use it?"

Ah, the old chicken or the egg difficulty. I smile at the memory, as one who, in time, was unable to accommodate himself to a modern literature in praise of Nothing, nor to the materialist's description of a man as a complicated assemblage of coagulated proteins, inexplicably blessed with the gift of temporary motion which allows it to twitch a while upon the earth before disintegrating back into it. I can no more find a man in that definition than Smith could find one in a thumb. What seemed unimportant back then isn't anymore. As much as Kirk meant to me and to all of us as a teacher and friend, and to his daughters as a beloved father, I want to know that he was worth something beyond that, beyond what any of us could see in life; and whether, when he left this world, he was taking that leave of absence or imparting a last, and irrevocable, goodbye – a severance beyond repair. I want to pay the proper tribute.

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I think it was the end that took me back to the beginning, the day that Anna called to tell me of Smith's last days. I had asked her to email, but she called instead, and indeed I was glad she had, to hear the story from his own flesh and blood. Even an email can convey a nuance, but her voice inflections were sounds to see by.

Earlier in the week, a couple of those days had been plagued with a sleepless suffering as his lungs tried to fill up and Anna feared he might drown. The Hospice lady

gave relief in the form of "positioning – and drugs." He got some strength back, but a corner had been turned. He was surrounded day and night by family - his brother Bill's daughter, Sharon, among them - touching him, stroking, punctuated by brief but frequent effusions of spoken love, for Smith himself could no longer speak, his efforts emerging in whispers that others understood only with great difficulty, and sometimes not at all. On the last night of his life, they shoved his hospice bed up next to another, the old wooden one he was born in, so that someone was always beside him, and he did not have to sleep alone. "Katie lay with him the first part of that night," said Anna, "and I the rest of it," she with her hand on his chest, lest he slip away unnoticed. Also that night he made a great effort, reaching out to embrace his grandson Max, Anna's son, and in the morning ventured it one more time, holding to himself both Max and Ollie-Ella, Katie's infant daughter. At some point during those early morning hours he tried to speak. The word "paper" was deciphered, but they didn't know what he meant. He made a motion as if to write, and after being supplied with pen and paper, got down two letters: W A, which they at last understood was a cry for water. He couldn't swallow (I had witnessed this during my visit) but, she said, "How do you deny him?" Well, you don't. And so she held the cup to his lips. I didn't ask for the details of how this went. Not long thereafter his gaze became distant. She told him she loved him, but his attention was reluctant in its return. At this point (and I'm sorry I can't remember precisely what she told me) she either went outside to make a call to someone who needed to know what was happening, or was called by that someone. Katie and Max were still beside him and watched him draw his last breath. "I got back inside," said Anna, "just in time to see the color leave his face."

As she said it, all I could see was Kirk leaning against the desk at the front of the classroom in Anderson Hall back in the Fall of 1968, the first time I ever saw him, his hair just starting to streak silver, bathing us in that perpetual smile - gentle, gracious, indulgent - and wondering aloud how many geniuses he had before him, which we greeted with a nervous titter. That was the first time I heard The Speech I never tired of, the one informing us that he didn't know how to talk about storytelling in any other way than as an art form, as a craft with its attendant discipline and tools of the trade and its exceedingly mysterious subject matter, upon which we were to exercise our talents in lifting the veil without tearing it. Then he read us a story, we talked about it, he told us to go write one of our own, and I left the class thinking, "I might want to do this," my life changed forever, and to this day I have no clue how he pulled it off. A couple of weeks in he read Morefield's "Bear in the Street", which caused some blonde girl to cry out when the little boy "let all the blue inside." After I turned in my own first thing (it was bad, but he saw something in it), he invited me up to Building D to that other class and that's how I met all you folks.

Out of embarrassment, I don't want to dwell at length on the degree of vanity I brought to the exercise, huge bloated quantities of it. If physically manifested, I'd have been obese. I remember Marie Speed (at least I think I do) sticking up for the down-trodden, and by that I mean those who were literally trod underfoot by people like me. She didn't like that kind of thing, and I think Smith was on her side, because one night I got a comeuppance. After reading a story, he set it aside, then swung his gaze in my direction, the one that said "Get the conversation going." The story was terrible and I said so. The problem was, I enjoyed saying it. Awful, I said. I knew good stuff when I

heard it, and this wasn't it. I went on a while finding different ways to say "awful" until finally Kirk interrupted. You know, he said, it's one thing to tell a writer his work is bad. It's another to give him something useful to take home, so that he might have reason to write again. If my instinct for quality was often correct, my ability to articulate it hadn't kept pace. He shamed me into silence, and made me careful thereafter to have a reason for my discontent. He had never treated a story of mine, or that of anyone I knew, in such manner. What gave me the liberty to think I should do it to others? More than the teacher was at work there, perhaps a touch of the father, whose reprimands seem severe at the time but later deserving of thanks.

And how do I begin to thank him? Other than a now deceased Catholic priest, the burden of whose instruction bore a slightly different emphasis, I'd never had, until Smith, a teacher who was also my friend. I had never thanked him for *being* that friend. I tried, last time I saw him in late May, but the effort in person seemed inadequate, and so I wrote afterwards to Anna that it was "a great reward to find him so lucid and as strong as he was. Please tell him that I think about him, and pray for him, every day, and give thanks that I was so fortunate to have had such a teacher at the time when our lives first crossed. He stopped me in my tracks and sent me down another road without even trying. I could not have written the little I have without the knowledge he gave me - free of charge, no interest due, as a father gives freely to a son (and he had many sons and daughters) - nor can I even imagine what shallowness I'd have brought to the reading of literature had not his powers of perception enhanced my own. He's not the only one I owe, but he was the first; and if I could repay it I would, but I can't. As if he would ever ask, but he won't."

And always there was Anna, whom I'd last seen in her teens, now a woman fully grown. When it came to his daughters, some of you might remember Smith's bent for sentimentality, showing himself guilty in life of what he forbade in our fiction. On more than one occasion – we might have been talking about the state of the arts, or politics, or any number of things - he suddenly sidetracked into a story about how Anna, and later Katie, had suddenly, for no discernible reason, thrown her arms around him and said, "I love you, Daddy," as little girls will. And Kirk would conclude this annoying diversion with, "That's what it's all about. It doesn't get any better than that." It was annoying until later I understood that he didn't care about much else, at least not in quite that way. It was annoying until I had daughters of my own and decided he had a point. The writing, the work, was important, but it wasn't what "It" is all about. I think I can die not having left an imprint on the world of letters if my daughters could say of me, as the grown Anna said of Kirk, "I just feel so lucky that he was my Dad"; and if my wife could likewise swear that casting her lot with my own had been worth the risk.

She was always at his side, wiping his chin when he couldn't hold down a sip of water, running back and forth to the bathroom to freshen his washcloths. Once she left the house to run an errand. Smith became anxious about something and called her on the phone. She turned the car around and within moments had returned. She was his angel now, the face he saw before going to sleep at night, and the one he expected to see again when he awoke. She would be with him till the end. "Many," I wrote to her, "are not so fortunate as to die with the one we most love by our side. Maybe Kirk was just enough of a good man to deserve this final grace. He always seemed so to me. I'll

pray that your strength and patience be kept up, and that death for him when it comes, if it *must* come, does so quietly. Give him a hug for me, and a final thanks..."

She read him the whole thing, and reported back his words: "That was a good letter," and I'll be keeping that as close as anything he ever said to me.

Later, when she called after he was gone, I asked how she was doing. Bittersweet, she said, missing him, but at the same time "excited for him." He was going off on this new "journey that none of us know anything about."

During that last visit, we had sat together, Anna and I, on the back porch for a while, talking about what he'd been through, what she'd been through, and what was to come. Below us the back lawn sloped down to a creek invisible beyond the azaleas now crowded by encroaching undergrowth. I reminisced about coming over to mow that lawn for him in the early 70's, and about sitting around the pool and talking with him about a story I couldn't make work, and his incredible patience. It's a wonder he didn't throw me out. And she remembered the Writer's Conference parties and, being a girl of ten, making herself stay awake so that she could listen to the conversations, some of which she probably shouldn't have heard. Writers can be a profane lot, their vanity presuming license. But in Smith's own home, in his gentle and hospitable presence, things (in my experience) never got too out of hand. As we talked, time seemed to reel backwards, as if none of it had passed at all.

Meanwhile Smith slept and awoke, slept and awoke.

I visited Ward and Barbara that day on their thirty acres out in Alachua, fed the cows by hand (got slobbered on, cow snot blown all over me – I loved it), ate pizza, drank wine, and talked to Johnny Feiber on the phone. I would not see him face to face, but in Ward and Barbara's company, amid the reminiscing, and with Johnny's voice in my ear, that old thing happened again, the abolishment of time, but it was only an illusion, of course. "Well, goddammit," he began, when I told him that in a few minutes I'd be driving off into the darkness, heading home. But soon, I assured him, maybe soon we'd all be getting together again, all those who'd missed each other this time around, and then we'd play that round of golf I'd been promising.

Yes, he agreed, it all depended on that rasp we heard when Smith dozed off.

*

I had sat with Smith for several hours, Rick Barnett there with me, having come all the way from Atlanta. Several times Smith asked about Marie, as though he'd forgotten the previous inquiry. He really wanted to see her. At some later point I asked Rick if he had told Smith that he was still working hard at his fiction, that he'd written three novels and a bunch of stories. No, he admitted, he hadn't done that yet. So, fed up with modesty, I leaned toward Smith, speaking loudly, and said that he needed to know that Rick, unlike me, was still working hard at the craft, and doing good work. Some of it might even be great work.

"You might have taught him something, Kirk."

"It's true, Smith," said Rick. "If I know anything, I learned it from you."

Smith blinked for a moment, then smiled faintly. Well, it reminded him of that poet's line he liked so much. He squinted, looking frustrated, the name just out of reach. But he was able to deliver the line: 'the life so short, the craft so long to learn.'

Which brought back a declaration uttered by one of Smith's former students and

later a colleague, one who achieved a notoriety that Smith never sought. He made the proclamation in open forum, up in that classroom in Building D: "Smith Kirkpatrick knows more about the craft of writing fiction than any man I've ever met." Considering Smith's small output, his apparent lack of worldly ambition, and his gift for self-effacement, it's unlikely that a future historian will dig that one up, but there it is, as much a part of history as anything on the record. And it can't be taken back, erased, or revised. I wonder if that same historian will stumble upon Smith's gem of a short story, "Silence", or upon that piece of *The Sun's Gold* excerpted in *SR,* when the Kid's perched on the crosstree, riding the ship's roll, and experience what Willie Mickelberry told me of later, that it made him dizzy.

Anna got my attention and motioned to a corner of the room. I got up and went over and found a piece of wood sitting atop a pile of books and papers, and on the wood someone had engraved for Smith the line he could not forget: "The Lyf so short/ The craft so long to lerne." The name he couldn't remember was Chaucer's.

*

Most of the time he'd been right there with us, in spite of his hard hearing, taking part in the conversation, but every now and then his gaze wandered out the glass door leading to the porch and the trees beyond, but I don't think drawn there by any object of nature. Whatever he saw was too far away. The rest of us kept talking while he was off out there in his own place, no doubt pondering, as Barnett called it, the "looming, invisible Event," the end of Time, the only thing we know how to live in.

Andrew Lytle passed away in 1995, at 92. When I first met him circa 1972 or 3, I can't have been the only one for whom the experience was like running into a family member I hadn't seen for many years, now renewing a bond we'd simply left off for awhile. I can't explain it. He made you feel that you had reconnected with something important you'd forgotten about, something that stretched far back in time. Now one of his foremost students was following, and soon that latter's, Smith's, will follow after. It all goes away, and even though we all know it because we're all grown up now, it's hard to choke down. I wonder what Mr. Lytle would think of my bemoaning the fact. I don't think he'd approve. Something will survive, he'd say, even if only here and there, in hard-to-find places: an enduring philosophy of literature, a method of teaching, a vision of the humane and civilized life (the 'good' life), all subserved by that "covenant with God", which he said we had lost, and without which we have recourse to nothing but despair, but with which no cause for anything but hope, and in the end, joy – perhaps adding with a wink that its quality might be enhanced in the company of a good bourbon.

"Things that count never seem ended." I'll work on it, because for me that's what it really is.

As I watched Smith's eyes leave us again for that other, farther off, field of inquiry, then return, then do it again – possibly wondering how much he counted, worrying the hope of a world beyond time – it reminded me of a scene in that story he liked to read us, O'Connor's "Guests of the Nation," when the condemned prisoner Belcher, a normally quiet man now babbling in the face of death, says of his already slain comrade lying on the ground at his feet, "It's very queer, chums, I always think. Naow, 'e knows as much abaout it as they'll ever let 'im know, and last night he was all in the

dark."

Well, I think Smith counted, was worth more than any could see on earth, and I have great hope beyond worry – that on that morning when his gaze became irretrievably lost in the distance, its focus dimmed upon this world, he was eager only for the path ahead, the one followed on that "journey none of us know anything about"; and that, when my own time comes and I try to peer through the darkness woven by this trick of time, I'll have the grace to let it go, and that maybe Smith, having gotten there first, will be able to teach me what he knows one more time.

And one more time, Smith: thank you.

Thursday Night, Building D

William Mickelberry

Smith knew that we, his students, felt that much was at stake those Thursday nights in Building D. And he knew that we were right: beyond our egos and flirtations, but not excluding them, something fundamental *was* at stake. A simple story, for example, could be of the highest value and mystery. We learned it from his careful listening, his playful but serious eyes – how closely we tried to read them -- and then from his voice talking on fiction, mingling with the sounds of crickets or a passing couple's small talk outside in the darkness.

Deep friendships began there with him. The worthiness of writing as a way of life began there. Two nights I remember especially. One was my first night in his class. The times were chaotic and I was pretty daunted sitting at the farthest end of the long table. But as the class went on, I felt (understanding came much later) that Smith was showing us a way to be ambitious and humane at the same time. I wanted to write, I guess more than I knew. That would take practice and time and, OK, embarrassments, but there could be honor in it.

Then there was the night he read a story of mine (not my first) and gave me some of the highest praise I've ever gotten. Afterwards, he further complimented me by inquiring about my general circumstances. Walking home by myself along University Avenue, I was happy almost to the point of disorientation, even, were I more expressive, of dancing on the sidewalk. To have been understood in the thing I was trying to do and to have been complimented by the man whose compliments I most valued – I just felt very, very lucky. And I was.

Smith has been a great friend to me over the years. I know my feelings are reflected in the feelings of many others, many more than I know. He is in our lives and hearts, which for many of us he opened.

A Stream of Memory

Sterling Watson

Call these islands in the stream of memory. They are what recollection provides. There is no single story that captures Smith Kirkpatrick as I knew him. Smith taught the wholeness of stories better than anyone, but his, as I know it, is fragmentary. Perhaps all that we his students say about him will have the completion we seek in stories, the unity he taught us.

I met Smith on a night in the early 1970s when a piece of my writing was discussed in that for us famous room at the end of a hallway in a building, "D," that had been temporary since World War II. I use the word "piece" because what I submitted for discussion was certainly not a story. My struggle for many years after that first night was to discover the mysterious nature of narrative and how to tell a story whole and without cheating. As you will see, I intend the word "discuss" as irony.

It was a piece of writing about my boyhood, a series of impressions of seasons and games and people, nothing more. Entering his office that night, Smith found my manuscript on his desk. (I seem to remember that one of his students had told me that the curious mode of the class was "to read and discuss what was on desk." I later learned that this method came down to Smith from John Crowe Ransom by way of Andrew Lytle.) Smith read my pages while I, while we all, sat smoking so concertedly that the room became a fog bank, and, when he had finished, his gentle, expressive voice had revealed every false note and sophomoric pose in them. Smith asked the class in his fashion, somehow meek and sardonic at once, for comments.

A student said, "Nice writing, no story."

Smith nodded, his wire-rimmed spectacles precarious at the tip of his nose, and said, "Yes, I believe that's right," and he set my manuscript aside and picked up the next one. Which *was* a story, as I recall, though it, too, needed the kind of help that Smith and his students had learned to give way back in those days before "creative writing" was an enterprise as grand as Microsoft.

How did I feel that night?

Embarrassed, humiliated, beset, hurt, no, *harmed.* But somehow I kept myself from walking out with grim dignity. Then I convinced myself it would be shabby to leave at the break. Then I thought I might demonstrate a certain admirable stoicism by staying to the end. And of course then I was hooked, converted, the victim of an epiphany. Walking home, I dropped my "piece" in a trash can at the hamburger joint across the street. I couldn't wait to return the following week to begin the long lesson in talking that talk and knowing that thing. How to write a story.

I stayed with the class through the two years of my master's degree and wrote the first thesis of fiction the university had permitted since the days when Lytle taught and Madison Jones was his student. That permission is worthy of recollection now because it is part of Smith's legacy. In the days when scholars ruled a kingdom of footnotes and treated storytellers with casual scorn, Smith fought for and won our rights. He laid the groundwork for what is now an important writing program. I heard later that he was badly treated by the writers who came after him, who did not recognize what he had done for them.

Who knows how many novels and stories Smith's fight for our rights cost him? Let us all remember that when he began the fight, he had not yet published his fine novel, *The Sun's Gold*. It was his reputation as a teacher whose classroom had been a magical place for a generation of students that finally convinced the footnoters to open the gates and let us in.

How did he teach? He taught by inviting the best from his students, by orchestrating their comments so that at the end of every hour, every conversation about a story, the sum of what was said was marvelously greater than its parts. He was not the first discussion leader, but he was one of the best. Lecturing was not in him, though reading aloud with spellbinding beauty certainly was. You will recall that for a number of years in the university's freshman lecture series, Smith read aloud to fascinated audiences a short story by William Faulkner, "Two Soldiers." That was it. He read it, and they loved it, and him. And consider for a moment that Smith taught in the age before copying machines, that he read our stories aloud, and that we discussed them after hearing them once and did it well. Extremely well, as I recall. That training in listening and thinking was infinitely valuable to us.

I stayed with Smith's class for several years after finishing an M.A., writing bad stories, then beginning a novel that was bad for a very long time and then finally good enough to be published. It was eight years from the time I met Smith until that publication, and there was never a day and rarely an hour when his gentle dicta did not echo in my head.

One of the especial privileges of Smith's class during those years was that he read aloud to us chapters of *The Sun's Gold*, offering them for discussion in the same spirit of humility that he asked of us. We talked, offering help as best we could, and those were heady times. Our teacher was writing a book we knew was good, a book that would be published, and that might even do well in the marketplace, might make him, and by some hopeful chemistry of association, make us more connected to the greatest of all conversations, literature. It was to Smith's everlasting credit that he wanted our thoughts and ideas, that he sifted and considered them and listened to us with never a scintilla of ego or rancor. He lived his teaching method in the most risky way. Never have I in over thirty years of teaching offered anything of my own to students for critique, and, as I write this, I have no idea why this is so. I know that in those days Smith gave us something very rare—his work and himself, the art and the humility from which it came.

Smith started a writers'conference at the university that brought to our then still small town voices from the great far away, some of them exalted, all of them interesting, most of them, like Smith, people who knew themselves to be servants of the story not its masters.

Out of the writers' conference came residencies, for a time three each year. Richard Adams, John Ciardi, James Dickey, John Knowles, Maxine Kumin, Richard Eberhardt, Reynolds Price, John Nims, and Nelson Algren were among those who came. And under the bright stars in Smith's grassy backyard, even the footnoters, made sensible by the bourbon that flowed (Heaven Hill), gave ground to the charms of those voices, talents, minds. I tended bar at Smith's big parties, wandered here and there among the literary lights, listened to the talk, laughed inwardly when stern scholars, lords of my English classes, went weak in the knees and the voice in the presence of

Ciardi, or Dickey, or Algren. Once or twice I added my own voice to the conversation, later recalling with boiling mortification the drivel I had spoken.

It is probably a little known fact that Smith was a wonderful golfer. Every writer is the protagonist of his own myth, and Smith's was the legend of a boy from an Arkansas mountaintop who found a seashell left behind by the timeless alluvial shrugging of tectonic plates, and who knew then and there that his destiny was to go to sea. How did such a man, small and wiry, learn to hit a golf ball preternaturally straight and sneaky long? It is a mystery as impenetrable as the origins of the gift of gab. I was often invited to fill out a foursome with Smith, John Ciardi (whose game, like much he did, was muscular and not subtle) and Don Eastman, then an English graduate student, now a college president. My game was just on the good side of awful. Eastman frequently broke 80 on the old university course, and Smith often did, too. His strength was his short game, pitching, chipping and putting. Especially putting. On the greens he stroked the ball with a simple elegance and a casual confidence, and many were the putts that ran home like homesick gophers. One day on the links, Smith walked into the rough and began pulling a plant from the earth and stuffing it into his golf bag. When I asked him what he was doing, he declared that the herb was pokeweed, and that he was taking it home to cook and eat. Thus did Arkansas invade the empire of golf.

After grad school, I returned to teach fiction writing at the university. I was proud to have been chosen to teach the same course Smith taught. I did my best to imitate his method and his manner. My classroom was his Building D office, and in the drawers and filing cabinets I found several of his old manuscripts. One of them was a war novel. It was about life on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific. I read sections of it, loved them, wondered why it had not been published, wondered if Smith would ever rewrite it (to this day I wonder what became of it), and wondered what Smith would do if he walked in and caught me guiltily, happily turning his pages. When *The Sun's gold* was underway, I realized that the alcoholic captain of the aircraft carrier had been practice for the merchant ship captain of similar vice in *Gold*.

Once when I visited Smith at home, I saw a framed picture of a Douglas Dauntless dive bomber taking off from a carrier deck. I could not make out the face of the pilot or his rear-facing gunner. I knew that the Dauntless had earned grim fame as the glory and coffin of aviators in the Battle of Midway. I think I recall hearing Smith say that he had flown the Dauntless, but can't be sure. I wonder if any of you know the story of Smith's war. Like so many men of his generation, he did not talk about it much.

I have only one recollection of time spent alone with Smith. After I had tried a story in a Fitzgeraldian voice, he took me into a vacant classroom and there in the dim, chalk and linseed smelling silence, told me that I was attempting an idiom I had not earned and could not yet manage, and, after that blow, he added with characteristic hope and gentleness that he thought someday I might grow into a voice of my own.

Smith always told us that the meaning of a story had to be discovered in the telling. As I write this, I realize that Smith's dusty old office in a temporary building is the perfect metaphor for a permanent treasure. The class that met once a week long ago and its teacher were intended like all things human for transient love and glory, but somehow, sometimes, under Smith's gentle guidance we glimpsed through a glass darkly the mythic, the legendary, the eternal. We knew the whole story.

Too often the teacher's gift is given to those who cannot recognize its value. Too

often the student sees the goodness of the gift only when it is too late to say a simple thank you. I have heard that Smith's last years were sometimes lonely and bitter and that his death was hard. I hope that in times of reflection he knew what he meant to us. I regret that I never told him.

Caesar's Irregulars

John Morefield

On a day in late summer 1962, I parked my red Corvair on University Avenue as near as I could get to Anderson Hall, which, I was told, housed the University of Florida's English department. I had just switched off the engine when, like an omen of something unguessable, as spectacular a young woman as I had ever seen emerged from the end door of a dingy wooden building next to Anderson Hall, crossed in front of my car and continued across the Avenue. I can still see her flowing, fierce red hair, her pale and freckled muscular legs displayed on platform sandals, her short, snug flowered dress. This was not going to be like the small all-male college where I had just spent four years.

I sighed, locked my car, and entered Anderson Hall in search of the office of Dr. John Tyree Fain, the man I was supposed to see, the adviser to new graduate students. I found him to be a lovely man—white hair, tie, seersucker jacket (practically a uniform for professors it seemed)-- a southern gentleman of the old school, a Vanderbilt product and former student and associate of those hallowed figures I knew only from my college course in the Literature of the South: Ransom, Lytle, Tate, Warren. I soon learned that Dr. Fain was an authority on Donald Davidson and was in the process of editing Davidson's letters. He greeted me warmly, gave me the Master's reading list (books I was made responsible for reading and being tested on before I could receive my degree—a list that might stand up to some PhD lists of today), signed me up for a couple of obligatory courses which I frankly can't remember. I only remember asking about the creative writing class at the graduate level; Dr. Fain said I would have to seek the permission of the instructor and he directed me to the office of Mr. Kirkpatrick, just next door in the "temporary building" (temporary since WWII—it was old Army surplus stuff, brought in like the FlaVet villages to accommodate the swarms of veterans that settled on campus after 1945).

I found the man in question in a second-storey corner room of Building D that I imagined must have once been a company office. It contained a long center table with chairs, odd seats around the walls, a desk at the end farthest from the door, a worn easy chair, and, at the desk, a swivel chair that at that moment contained a fairly slight pleasant-looking man who, feet up, listened to my request, asked how much I had written, what I had written, and asked me for a writing sample. During the conversation it came out that Mr. Kirkpatrick was experiencing his 40th birthday and was having a little trouble coming to terms with it. I tried to commiserate (I silently agreed with him that 40 was awfully old) and left. I came back later in the afternoon, bearing a silly story I had written during the summer. I believe he actually looked it over while I waited. It was about a dying boy with a pet king snake he named Villon. I was full of Swinburne in those days, of that "sad bad glad mad" language (so, I will say in my defense, had Faulkner been at my age), and I alluded heavily to Algie's poem about Francois Villon. Smith, as I would come to call him, did not laugh, as I probably deserved, but said I seemed to have a way with words, and granted his permission.

I wonder how many of us can identify except in retrospect those moments when life's direction changes, when, for good or ill, we close one pathway and open another. My desire to take a creative writing course seemed not so momentous at the time, in-

stead of another period course to fill in the considerable gaps in my knowledge of English literature. But what if I had taken the more academically rigorous path and gone on to write a solid critical thesis under the direction of one of the department's several competent scholars? My Southern lit professor in college had told me that I could get a "very respectable Master's" at Florida. Perhaps I would have gone on to earn a PhD there or somewhere else (I never did). But I remember Smith saying once, "The PhD program is the graveyard of the creative writer." Maybe I took these words to heart, either ignoring or simply not knowing at the time about all those fine writers who did hold PhDs (Robert Penn Warren comes immediately to mind). Whatever the reasons, and whether Smith had much to do with it or not, I came along the way to think of myself as the non-doctorate type, that the idea of holding a doctorate was incommensurate with the idea I had of myself. Decisive or not, that line is one of the many Kirkpatrician utterances that have stayed with me for over four decades.

So I became a member of the Thursday night writing class. Consisting of graduate students and selected undergraduates (including to my intense pleasure the young woman I had seen crossing University Avenue), it met in Smith's office in Building D. He also required newbys to attend his undergraduate course, 327, where we worked our way through Brooks and Warren's Understanding Fiction, one of the greatest and most influential textbooks ever produced in America. (We used the 2nd edition, one of only three to appear in thirty years; the 3rd has been in print for some 35 years.) For the graduate class we used *The House of Fiction*, a critical anthology by Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate.

Smith had been a student and close friend of Andrew Lytle, one of the Vanderbilt crowd and a contributor to *I'll Take My Stand*. Mr. Lytle had been at Gainesville until a year or two before I arrived and was still an almost visible presence in Building D. No doubt Smith did a lot of what it is fashionable these days to call "channeling." Well, all right. I have done a lot of channeling myself over the years. Even now, in my late sixties, I will hear echoes of Smith's words in what I say to classes.

Many of us, maybe most of us, move in and out of tight groups during our lives, knots of people like clubs that seem to hold, quickly as we might enter into them, everything that matters, whether the organizing principle or practice or belief be religious or intellectual. The bond might be ownership of an Open Road camper or a Harley-Davidson, a love of Bluegrass music or contract bridge. It might be a church, or a group within a church. Or a cell of Amway salespersons. Whatever the basis, the group can become life's very center, offering the certain knowledge that these are the only people who matter, that everyone else is benighted, ignorant, incapable of sharing what we share, knowing what we know. With me, at that time in my life, it was the Thursday night writing class.

I'll name some names. Smith's designated assistant was Don Hammond, a big crew-cut ex-serviceman who owned the ragged easy chair that sat to one side of Smith's desk. He would take over when Smith was ill or otherwise indisposed. This rarely happened. There was Doug Taylor, whose mother, Kressman Taylor, wrote the famous story "Address Unknown" in the 1930s, which has appeared as a book in several editions and still occasionally shows up in anthologies. (Amazon lists a recent edition with an introduction by him.) There was Al Himber, whom I presume to be the Alan Himber who has made a career as a Yates scholar. There was Frank Hannold,

now teaching English at The College of New Jersey. Hill Pearce (a particular friend of mine), Helen Anne Easterly, Charles McCarthy, Karen Becker (the red-head), Pat Butler, Wes Patterson. Harry Crews—and believe me we heard a lot about Harry Crews, ditto Merrill Gerber, Claude Koch and others-- had already left and was teaching at a junior college in Fort Lauderdale, yet to publish a novel in spite of having written several, though Mr. Lytle had accepted a story for the *Sewanee Review*.

Not everyone in this group was a registered student. Frank Taylor had published a novel in England years earlier called *Mortlake*. Frank lacked any sort of college degree, but was one of the most erudite people I ever knew. Lytle would send him stacks of books on critical theory and medieval philosophy to review for the journal. Sometime in the mid-sixties, Frank was given a full faculty appointment at the University of Florida. I remember J. Wayne Reitz, the president at the time, saying that feeling ready for such a move was a measure of the institution's maturity. Frank never presented anything for comment in the class, but was a steady, enlightening, self-effacing voice in the discussion of students' work. Blessings on thee, Frank Taylor.

There was Janos Schoemyen (forgive the spelling if inaccurate), a colorful Hungarian who lived in Gainesville and supported himself by various means while he wrote short stories. One of these, "Brandenburg Concerto," appeared in *Short Story International* while I was in Gainesville and I have a copy to this day. Since, he has published many collections, at least one with LSU Press. He writes and teaches (now at Santa Fe Community College), under the name Lawrence Dorr. I remember a nice lady from the non-university community named Mary Robertson, who had studied under Lytle for some years. I think she might have edited technical books while writing stories for children. There was, unforgettably, Felicity Trueblood, who should have become a successful romance writer on the strength of her name alone.

The class typically started with Smith leading discussion of whatever story from the text we were assigned that week, something by J. F. Powers, Truman Capote, Faulkner, Frank O'Connor. Sometimes we were told to read a whole book between classes—*The Craft of Fiction* or *As I Lay Dying*. It was here that I learned to read, much more so than in any literature class I ever had. That, in the last analysis, is what the New Criticism, and Smith identified himself as a New Critic, brought to us: a sense of the necessity of and, gradually, a facility for close reading. That was the whole deal. Read closely, account for every word. That's why we studied the same stories over and over, to a degree that students wouldn't stand for these days. But Smith believed it was necessary. He had a stable of stories he had worked up over the years—Welty's "A Memory" and "A Piece of News"; Warren's "Blackberry Winter"; Faulkner's "Was"; Conrad Aiken's "Silent Snow, Secret Snow"—I could go on and on. The New Critics, or strict Formalists, are today mostly dismissed, even politely made fun of in academic circles. And maybe the followers of Feminist Criticism, Deconstruction, Cultural Poetics, and all the rest have good reason for their derision. But I have never heard a convincing argument against close reading.

Where they have us, I suppose, was in the New Critical assumption that a community (or class) of intelligent, close-reading, dispassionate critics will eventually settle upon a shared--and correct --reading of, say, "A Good Man is Hard to Find." The literary culture's long overdue dose of multiculturalism and feminism and postmodernism, as well as the always present but disregarded (by us) biographical approaches,

have opened New Criticism to legitimate questioning. We weren't even supposed to consider what a writer said about her own work, and might have ignored what Miss O'Connor says about the meaning of her story in The Habit of Being, of that staggering, enigmatic line the grandmother delivers to the Misfit, "Why, you're one my babies! You're one of my own children!" even had her interpretation been available to us then.

This is why we were forbidden to open our mouths when our own stories were talked about—more often flayed—in the class. Occasionally someone would find it impossible to keep quiet when his story was being torn up, but that was considered a grave offense against propriety. And sometimes it was hard to stay quiet. I can remember sitting with clenched fists, ready to hit somebody when an especially tender passage from a maudlin little story of mine called "Jimmy Creek" was the occasion of great amusement, causing Al Himber I think to suggest retitling it "Jimminy Creekits." Of course, one always got a chance to strike back. Don Hammond had been working for months on a long story about a white dolphin (Pat Conroy readers will recall the same conceit turning up much later in The Prince of Tides) and was having trouble finding a good title; I suggested "Flipper." Well I thought it was funny.

But Smith was always gentle with us, unless someone presented something clearly fraudulent, something designed only to tittilate or shock or impress. Then he could be ruthless. People who tried to float trash didn't last long.

For those who were sincere, fellow communicants in the belief that what we were doing was the most important thing there was and therefore must be approached with respect, even reverence, he always had good advice. Some of it was recycled from his mentor: "Andrew always said to look for the archetypal action"; "Andrew used to say that if you wrote the story right the ending would fall off in your hand like a ripe fruit." Or out of his own insights he might say, "We need to know more about the grandmother. She's the key to that story." Or, "You need to cut all that description. It's pretty, but it doesn't advance the action." You didn't want pretty.

I forget who said, "Lytle made you want to go home and write. Smith makes you want to go home and revise."

It wasn't all reverently sitting at the feet of the master. After class we usually went to Knott's Tavern, a hangout on NW 13th Street near 6th Avenue. It was a beer bar, as were all the bars in those days, and it was presided over by a bartender named Vernon, who I felt sometimes took a dim view of all these writer types crowding into the side room with their pitchers of beer. The talk, all of it about writing and fiction, got more sweeping, declamatory, authoritative and absolute with every pitcher. "Faulkner is the second Shakespeare!" (This would be Smith himself.) "Flannery O'Connor is the second Faulkner!" There was an electric bowling/shuffleboard machine called Flashomatic and we all had to line up for our turns. It flashed all over and made a lot of gratifying noise when you got a strike and Smith loved it. Well into the third or fourth pitcher one evening, someone remarked how much fun this was, though it didn't have much to do with writing. "Creative people like games," he said. Inevitably closing time rolled around—we never left earlier—and there would come Vernon's dread cadence, "You don't have to go home but you can't stay here. You don't have to go home...," always the same deadly rhythm.

Gainesville didn't get liquor until two or three years after this, so if we wanted

the hard stuff we had to go to some other county, maybe to Williston or south on 441, across Payne's Prairie to a roadside tavern and liquor store that might have been 15 miles away. Once two classmates I have already mentioned and I thought it would be a good idea to have a few snorts of bourbon—southern writers are supposed to drink bourbon-- before Thursday night class so I drove us down there and we picked up a bottle of the cheap stuff, something like Ten High. We drank probably two-thirds of the bottle on the way back. I somehow got parked outside Building D and the three of us, dog drunk, made our way up the dark steps, trying to be quiet. When we got to the second floor I could hear Smith's voice through the open door of his room, quietly reading somebody's story. We tiptoed toward the door, running into fire extinguishers and waste cans, by this time wishing we were anywhere else but here. The room fell silent as we stumbled in. Smith looked at the three of us, more or less expressionless. One of us managed to get to his chair, sink ungracefully into it, and become comatose. I sat at the table, gripping the edges and starting to feel sick. At some point I had to excuse myself and go to the men's room where I rid myself of a lot of my load, using both ends. I was deeply ashamed.

I try to imagine what I—or any other teacher I ever had—would have done in the event of three students showing up for class in that condition. Certainly not what Smith did, which was nothing. In his mild way, he thought it was funny. But he somehow let it be known that it would never happen again.

I don't know if this story got out among the graduate students at large, that crew of seersucker-clad PhD candidates who, though some of them were nice enough to us—at least to me—individually, looked on our group with skepticism and, it turned out, a certain amount of disdain. We learned that one of them had dubbed us "Caesar's Irregulars," for reasons I am still uncertain about, though the term seems to imply a certain sense of the motley, the undisciplined. Of course we saw ourselves as the chosen, the future of American literature. Instead of picking through the bones of culture as our accusers did, we were creating new culture. And how did that work out? What did that little group of 1962 and 1963 actually accomplish, then and later?

Here is what I am aware of. Al Himber, as already noted, had a story in the *Sewanee Review*. Wes Patterson and I got included in *Story* magazine's volume of Prize College Stories of 1964. We certainly did not measure up to those who went before us, Crews, Gerber, et al. Nor to many who came later. I only got to know Lawrence Hetrick when we were both teaching at Miami-Dade and then at UF in the late 'sixties (Lawrence had also placed a story with the *Sewanee Review* in the mid-sixties). That was when I had the privilege of meeting and knowing Sterling Watson and seeing the beginning of his distinguished career as a novelist. That was when I knew William Mickelberry and John Miglis, both of whom seem to have had success in the movie industry. All these were students of Smith Kirkpatrick.

I'm going to close with a memory that has little to do with writing. In that undergraduate class I was expected to attend I immediately spotted a young woman I wanted to know (not the red-haired young woman). I found out her name somehow and, after thinking about it for a few days, called her one night and asked if she wanted to go out sometime. "Well I don't know. I'm not sure which one you are," she said. But we met and began a relationship that was on and off for much of my year and a half in the program. I guess I was infatuated or something and was devastated one day when she

sat me down over lunch and told me about her illness. She had become addicted to the barbiturate Seconal during the previous year and regarded her situation as practically hopeless. She saw no future for us. Of course this might only have been her way of dumping me in a way she thought might allow me not to feel too bad about myself. It hurt, though. I moped around campus well into the afternoon and found myself in Building D, climbing the stairs to Smith's office. He was at his desk, feet up; my demeanor gave me away. He asked what was wrong, and I went through the story from the beginning. When I finished, the room was quiet for a time. Then I said, "Isn't it a hell of a world." Smith thought for a minute. "But it's a beautiful world." I'm not sure why that little conversation made me feel better, but it did. That was Smith Kirkpatrick.

Center Post: A Tribute to Smith Kirkpatrick

Ashley Mace Havird

"God Almighty, that's one big car for such a little girl!"

I don't know how long he'd been standing there in the university parking lot, watching me maneuver the long boxy mustard-yellow Lincoln into a parking slot. But there he was, arms folded, laughing as though the car with me in it was the height of absurdity.

I didn't see the humor. At 23, I was quite grown up and quite capable of handling the used car that my husband and I had gotten--even paid for--from my parents.

When Rick Barnett tracked me down, informed me of Smith's death, and invited me to contribute to his online journal's premier issue devoted to Smith, this was the first image that jumped into my head. It's how I like to see him. Cutting through the bullshit--but gently. "Look at yourself through my eyes," he might have been saying. "Step back and you just might see a character in a story. Let go!"

At the time, as we walked together to class, I was no doubt red-faced on the outside and pouting on the inside. I had a long way to go, in order to let go.

From Winter 1977 through Spring 1978, I drove the big yellow Lincoln to Gainesville from the small mill town of Palatka, where my new husband taught in a community college. An hour each way. Since I was commuting, and since most of my classes were late afternoons, I missed out on much of the college social life. I recall a few evenings--beer and apple pie with the other students at some little restaurant, the writers conference where I met Andrew Lytle, Peter Taylor, and John Ashbery, that great party for John Ciardi. . . . The host was a writer/body-builder who lived in an upstairs apartment. The night was miserably hot and humid. Ciardi settled himself on the screened porch swing, sweating profusely, drinking, and reciting limericks. (He and Isaac Asimov had collaborated on *Limericks Too Gross.)* My husband, the poet David Havird, and I couldn't budge from that porch. We may have been the last to leave. Ciardi had driven up to Gainesville from Key West in a big Lincoln, as well.

It was privilege enough just to participate in Smith's classes. Always kind and soft-spoken, he strove to teach us not to take ourselves too seriously but to take the craft of writing deadly seriously. What we were writing now, he said around the toothpick he was always working in his mouth, was apprentice-work. (Did we really believe that?) But if we kept writing and reading critically, kept wrestling with the craft, our work might mature into something fine. It would never be easy.

As a sometime teacher myself, having taught creative writing to college students, adult church groups, enthusiastic librarians, and children as young as 7, I can say from distance and experience that Smith was one natural teacher. A master of constructive criticism, he never used sarcasm or insults--and he never insulted us by coddling or lying to save our "feelings." Like a strength-trainer, he pinpointed specific weaknesses and gave concrete direction towards strengthening them.

His example was contagious. I believe it never occurred to any of us in his classes to be snide or condescending. In workshopping each other's fiction--as least as I remember it-- we remained respectful and thoughtful in our critiques. The atmosphere was balanced and serious and great fun.

As writers, we felt safe but at the same time pushed hard to develop our talent and skill--and to grow thick skins. He no doubt knew that if we kept writing, we'd meet with brutal criticism. And he was right. Biting comments from future teachers and editors, reams of rejection slips . . . the strength-training definitely has come in handy. Indeed, that early balance of praise and criticism prepared me (and, I assume, many of us) to welcome the harshest comments, particularly from other writers.

I don't recall that Smith devoted even one class period to the world of publishing. As close as he came to discussing it was to advise us that when we thought we had a story finished, to "lock it in a drawer for 10 years. It takes that long to grow new eyes." Pretty crazy talk to a 20-something. In retrospect, damn good advice.

He never gave us any illusions about publishing. He seemed to care little about it, himself. For Smith, all that really mattered was the craft--learning to write well, then learning to write better. His own publishing history was modest: one novel, *The Sun's Gold,* and some stories (I have no idea how many) that appeared in top journals such as *The Sewanee Review* and *The Southern Review*.

Towards the end of the last class I had with Smith, he brought one of these stories to read aloud. For most of us, this was the first work of his we'd been exposed to. He read a 7-page story called "Silence," which had appeared in *The Southern Review*.

"Silence" is a deceptively simple piece about a blind old man recalling his boyhood which revolved around a blind old grandmother, a story that pivots on his father's premature death--and the grandmother's natural one--which together shatter the world as he knows it. The economy of the narrative, the skillful use of retrospective point of view, the sophisticated structure, the inspired description--all this was eclipsed by the music of Smith's phrasing, the honesty of the voice. I was moved to tears.

> "She [the grandmother] could never understand that as long as she was sitting there I knew the house would never be empty. I guess I looked on that old woman like The First Man. I figured she had set in that rocker so long before even I was born that she was the center post holding the whole place up, and if she fell, nothing was safe."

The little boy wants his grandmother to stay in her rocking chair forever. He does everything he can think of to keep her there, but he is powerless against fate and the force of aging.

The final sentences are these: "I wanted to yell up into the night, but I didn't. I was as still and silent as the answer I knew would come ringing back to me."

Soft-spoken yet honest, gentle yet unsentimental, marked by a depth of both feeling and intelligence--these words describe the writer as well as his lines.

A Teacher in the Classical Sense

Jeff Trippe

When I wandered into one of Smith Kirkpatrick's undergraduate classes in the spring of 1980, I had never really heard anyone talk seriously about writing before. I had always done well in my literature courses, but I kept my own interest in the creative end of things more or less a secret. Among my friends at the university were several pre-law students, some business majors, a couple of failed baseball players still smarting over the sting of having been cut from the team, one or two aimless musicians...but nobody I could have talked to about writing stories. Anyway, I did not even know that there was a vernacular for such discussions, let alone a graduate program for those interested in the craft of fiction. Even though it took several weeks before Smith got around to reading one of my stories to the class and then soliciting responses, as was his method, I guess that at some point he remarked to me after class that I ought to apply to the program at UF, unless I had some other kind of plan. I didn't.

Was I lucky? Did time prove that such was my destiny? I don't know. For me, the struggle to write and to learn goes on, but I am sure that my relationship with Smith came at the right time in my life: I needed some direction, and he lit a passageway; I needed motivation, and true friends, and he brought me into a community of artists. I doubt whether I gave much back to him at all, and I probably let him down on many occasions, but as I have learned, that is the lot of the teacher. He was always the first to recognize mistakes, but he was also the first to forgive them.

Smith was a teacher in the classical sense, in that there was, foremost, a deadly seriousness about the subject matter. I understood this on the very first night of class, when he told us that he naturally assumed each one of us was determined to become a professional writer. We were not to be screwing around and missing classes; we were not a "club," we were not hobbyists, and we certainly were not to bring in anything but our best work. Smith did not care for any of the latest theories on education or inclusion, and for all his gentility and his calm demeanor, his class was not a sensitivity training exercise. I also took a couple of classes with his former student, novelist Harry Crews, and Harry had a reputation for absolute brutality with students who missed the target, so to speak, but now I can honestly say I don't know which man's dismissal was more terrible. Granted, Harry's rejection of a piece he saw as inferior was like blunt trauma, but Smith...he would sit and ruminate for a few moments, and then he would look down at the desk and say, in a withering tone, something like "I have no idea what this writer is trying to do here." And that was enough to make you want to go back to your apartment, cram your pathetic stuff into your trunk, and go back to where you came from.

He was also a teacher from an older time in that he did not mind letting on that he was human and was therefore sometimes weak. I like to think that he drew some strength from us, his students, as we were mostly in our mid-twenties, and the world seemed marvelous and without limitation. Not long after I had met him and started to get to know him a bit better, I learned that Smith was looking into the abyss – the end of his second marriage, and as it all played out, it became ever more clear that it would not end cleanly. Even so, he never missed class, as I recall; nor did he ever miss our

Thursday nights at the Winnjammer, down on Third Street, where the discussion of the craft of writing would continue, but without the restrictions of being on state-owned property.

Finally, the time came for Smith to move out of his own house, and Rick Barnett and I helped him move his things over to one of those drab student apartments in one of those boxy, characterless complexes you'll find in virtually any university town in the U.S. As the afternoon wore on, I started to feel as if I were coming down with something – clammy and out-of-sorts (though it could also have been the shots of vodka we had been downing for most of the day). In any case, Smith gave me the spare bedroom that night in his brand new "home," and by early the next morning I had a 103-degree fever, a choking cough, and an earnest wish to be left alone to die. Smith took me over to the campus infirmary, and within just a few days, I was back at my parents' house in Jacksonville, recuperating from a bout with pneumonia. I don't remember whether I ever thanked him for taking me in, but probably not. In fact, I'm sure that was only one simple kindness out of many that Smith performed unhesitatingly for students over the years. While in the classroom he could be demanding, exacting, even a taskmaster at times, outside of it, his instincts always ran toward unconditional friendship.

We admired him immensely for the things he had done and his modesty about them – his flying days and his service to his country, his intimacies with real literary luminaries such Andrew Lytle, John Ciardi, and James Dickey (and to be among these giants once in a while was another benefit of having Smith for an advisor which I, for one, stupidly took for granted at the time), and for his own novel, The Sun's Gold, still a supreme work of craft which any student writer ought to study closely. But when I think of him now, and remember what was best about him, I think of him with his daughters, Anna and Katie. His love for them simply flowed out of him in an unending stream so pure and powerful that even I, in the stupor of youth and ego, could see it plainly.

Once we all took a trip together. A few of us grad students convinced Smith that the right thing for him to do was gather up the girls, pack a suitcase, and ride with us up to North Carolina for some skiing. Katie, who I believe could not have been much older than eight or so, gave us a non-stop comedy routine from the backseat of the car, as she married off older sister Anna to various ones of us along the way: "And do you take this woman to be your awfully withered wife?" She had us all laughing wildly, until we got into the mountains and realized that the white stuff blowing through the headlights was not sand but snow – something we never got to see. The unplowed road became very slippery, and so we pulled into a little mountainside hotel and got a couple of rooms. Smith and I slept on the floor in one of them, and the girls got the big double bed. I pretended to be asleep, but I have to say I have never been around a more loving parent, as Smith tucked his daughters in, in that strange room in the middle of nowhere. You could see it in their eyes and hear it in their voices: they were a family forever, and I envied them. If I have been even half the father to my own children that Smith was to his, then I have succeeded.

Nonetheless, we all grew up, didn't we? We moved along, however reluctantly and uncertainly. When I heard of Smith's passing this last summer, I went to the shelf and took down my copy of The Sun's Gold. Near the end, the protagonist, a kid from Arkansas who calls himself No Name, decides that his time at sea is over, that he has

seen enough, and that his journey to find not his ancestry but his origins, is – at least for a while – done:

> With his foot on the lower railing he felt the warm night.
> Going home.
> To the mountains. It was about over now. He must remember
> to take the seashells from the cardboard suitcase and drop them over the
> side. He'd leave them here where they came from, and he'd go back.

I wish safe passage for a certain old boy from Arkansas as he makes the return voyage – my friend and teacher, Smith Kirkpatrick.

A Recollection of Smith Kirkpatrick

Rick Barnett

> "If a miracle could happen, every man as craftsman would know again he has only one contemplation, the mystery of God made manifest in the natural order."
>
> – Andrew Lytle

I first heard the name Smith Kirkpatrick in Ward Scott's creative writing course at Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville, Florida in 1976. One of our textbooks was Smith's novel, *The Sun's Gold*, which had recently been published. It was in that classroom that I learned the rudiments of how to read a good work of fiction and, not coincidentally, how one was made. Besides *The Sun's Gold*, we were taught from that classic short story anthology that Smith himself used to teach fiction writing, Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Fiction*.

"Fiction is an action composed of two separate actions, an action-proper and an enveloping action," Ward wrote on the board that first class. He explained that his teacher Smith Kirkpatrick had taught him this, and that Smith had learned it from his own teacher, Andrew Lytle, whose stories we would also read. Ward also told us grimly that it had taken him years of reading, writing, and discussing fiction with these two masters and others before he began to understand something of what the terms and the definition really implied about good work, and that fiction writing was finally a mysterious undertaking. He spared us the worst, though later I was to hear Smith imply many times and hear Mr. Lytle say outright that one has to struggle on his own, in solitude, inside his own work, to make the words flesh, so to speak.

So with Ward's introduction, I entered the Creative Writing Program at the University of Florida to study fiction writing under Smith Kirkpatrick. I liked him immediately. He was from Arkansas, and I was from Georgia, and we laughed recognizing one another's idioms; for example, parts of *Moby Dick* and *War and Peace* were "too much sugar for a dime," and certain Southern writers were "all truck and no hogs." (I didn't know it at the time, but coming from Georgia and from people who had lived in one place for two hundred and fifty years would turn out to be a good thing.) At the beginning of each new term, Smith would ask us all to say who we were and why we were there. Those of us who had been around awhile had learned not to say that we wanted to be "a writer." There was a distinction between becoming "a writer" and learning what Smith wanted to teach us.

At times I was puzzled over the differences between the quiet, patient, soft-spoken man behind the desk and the man I had imagined from the fly-leaf of his novel: the rugged merchant seaman, the fierce Navy pilot who flew torpedo planes off the deck of the aircraft carrier Enterprise, which had figured mightily in turning the tide of the war in the Pacific against the Japanese at The Battle of Midway and was nearly sunk off Guadalcanal. Over the years I studied under him, his personal life sometimes seemed a shambles inside a catastrophe, and yet as a teacher he was extremely capable, focused, dedicated, and generous. I am unable to reconcile the two different men his life implied. Perhaps, like the middle-aged former pilot in James Dickey's "The

Fire-Bombing," he had demons he simply kept at bay as best he could. In any case, to delve too deeply into such would be to cross from the public into the private arena of his life, and my purpose here is to convey some sense of the nobility of the man as a master teacher and a craftsman, to relate the view of fiction writing as a traditional craft which he passed along, and to acknowledge the great privilege it was to study under him and to count him, as Marion Montgomery has said, among "the men I have chosen as fathers."

Smith gave his time, energy, and knowledge to his students at the expense of his writing, and he never seemed to regret it. Once I entered his class and he took me on, I felt like an adopted son, so completely available was he. He introduced me to Andrew Lytle and to another accomplished student of Lytle's, Madison Jones, at the Florida Writers' Conference in l979. He arranged for me to meet privately with Lytle to discuss a piece of my work. Smith was open-handed with everything he had, with his literary contacts, with his advice as a craftsman, and even with his personal belongings –he once lent me his favorite pair of loafers when I hadn't anything but sneakers to wear on a certain occasion– but what I remember most is how freely he gave of his time.

If a student thought Smith's class was going to be simply a forum for applause, he didn't last beyond the first class reading (aloud, anonymously) of his work. We were brutally honest concerning one another's work even outside of class. Once, I showed up late at night at the apartment he lived in for a time inside one of those venerable old houses near the duck pond off downtown Gainesville. It wasn't even a Thursday night, but there I was, nursing a story another student had just savaged. The light was still on inside his room. Peering through the window, I could see that he was not alone. Self-absorbed, with more than a little self-pity, I knocked at the front door anyway. In a minute the porch light came on. Smith came out and sat on the porch steps with me for an hour and read the story and then discussed its main problem in his usual patient, insightful, and helpful manner. He did what he always did with student work; he left the student with a deeper knowledge of the challenges of his story than he had had previously, and he left him thinking, eager to go back to work.

I think Smith's generosity to his students had a lot to do with him being a loving father of two daughters. He never denied them his lap. He doted on them and would stop to teach them something important about the world in the most ordinary circumstances. He possessed a remarkable prescience regarding what was needful. I remember a road-trip he and a group of us students took once over the Christmas Holidays to North Carolina to do some skiing. (We were all flops at it, but riding in the car listening to him talk was worth all the hard falls and the bruises.) He brought along his daughters, Anna, who was about thirteen, and Katie, then about six years old. We traveled in our caravan of cars until nightfall. We had left the interstate for a narrow, winding mountain road when it began to snow, so we stopped at a small motel by the wayside and rented one room. Anna and Katie got the bed, and Smith and the rest of us piled around on the floor in sleeping bags. The next morning, in the car, Katie told her father that she had heard a noise that sounded like someone knocking at the door, and that at first she had feared "it was robbers."

"But then," she said, "I remembered: robbers don't knock." (This was about the time the dapper Ted Bundy was driving his Volkswagen Beetle around north Florida

introducing himself to young women.) Smith gently pulled Katie up on to his lap and explained to her that sometimes robbers DO knock! Some time afterwards, I came across Walker Percy's novel, *The Thanatos Syndrome*, in which one of the characters, a canny priest holed up in a fire-tower, echoes Flannery O'Connor's admonition to modernity: "tenderness is the first disguise of the murderer. . . ," and I recalled how Smith had taught the same thing once in words that even a six year-old could understand.

His sagacity caused me to seek his counsel at important times. He was my Best Man when I married, and years later, when I called to tell him of the birth of my own daughter, I could hear the smile in his voice as he said: "Now you know what you're here for." It took me a long adolescence to learn what he meant when he said that there was really only one subject for the serious fiction writer: love or its absence.

Smith taught that fiction writing was a craft, and during the years I studied under him, I felt I was being initiated into a kind of sacred lore, one with its own mythology and heroes. There was former Lytle student Thomas Adams, whose story "The Sled" was taught as an example of fine craftsmanship alongside ones by Faulkner, Chekhov, O'Connor, Joyce, Maupassant, Hemingway, Porter, Welty, Taylor, and other "lions in the path." Likewise the story "Bear in the Street," by former student John Morefield. (I met Morefield unexpectedly at Lawrence Hetrick's house in Atlanta years later, and it seemed as though I were conversing with some literary Parsifal, who had survived the Chapel Perilous of apprenticeship, and returned victorious to tell of it.)

One of the most precious things Smith taught me was the traditional view of the craftsman that he had learned from Lytle. As Ananda Coomaraswamy observed in his treatise, *Christian & Oriental Philosophy of Art*, which Lytle mentioned often in discussions with students, all the traditional crafts (or arts) have "fixed ends and ascertained means of operation." That is why they can be taught and learned, master to apprentice. Under Smith's guidance, I learned that I was not studying to be "a writer," but that I was an apprentice of a great craft, one that was connected, teacher to student, with the traditions of a rich literary heritage, a guild, as it were: through Smith to Lytle, through Lytle's teacher, John Crowe Ransom, to the Fugitive and the Agrarian writers Ransom taught at Vanderbilt after the First World War. (Among these were some of the finest literary craftsmen the country produced: besides Lytle and Ransom, Allen Tate, Caroline Gordon, and Robert Penn Warren.)

This traditional method of learning the craft of words went even further back, deep into the literary associations of the English writers; for the master and apprentice style of teaching had been brought by Ransom from England, where as a Rhodes Scholar he had sat in on the Christopher Morley group's discussions of, first, aesthetics, then finally particular objects of beauty, such as poems. A long historical tradition of writers meeting informally in taverns or in private homes to critique one another's work and to discuss their craft can be traced back to the groups associated with Wordsworth and Coleridge, with Swift, Johnson, Pope, and beyond. There was much to learn, and the ghosts of many great craftsmen crowded our classroom meetings and the discussions afterwards over beers at The Winnjammer.

The practice of any craft, whether writing fiction or farming, must be rooted in the transcendent, Lytle had argued. It is, as Coomaraswamy said, "an imitation of the nature of things, not of their appearances." In other words, art is not simply an end unto itself, unless one subscribes to the most prevalent of modern errors, that the uni-

verse is only a backdrop for the human reality show.

Reading Lytle's essays, I learned that the vision behind what he taught Smith and Smith taught me, though not explicitly Christian, was taken from Christendom's philosophia perennis, (Faulkner's "eternal verities") the vision of the world that informed medieval Christian Europe. Indeed this vision informs every traditional society, where every man is a craftsman of some kind. Not only St. Thomas and St. Augustine, but Aristotle and the Greeks before them (and Neolithic man before them) all viewed the world similarly, as a hierarchy, beginning with First Things or First Truths. This view implies a sense of the divine that is transcendent throughout Creation via the creative act of the Primus Mobile. As Lytle affirmed, man the maker does not create; only God creates. Man the maker only imitates what he observes, within the limits of his gifts and the diligence of his practice, of the nature of Creation. This is the vision that informs all meaningful art (literary or otherwise) throughout the world, from the foundations of the world. I think an instinctive Arkansian knowledge of what Christendom calls Natural Law was behind Smith's words when he told the class, "I can't make you a writer; I can only save you time."

I was among Smith's last students. As his teacher Lytle taught, the hero fails in the end. The English Department relegated him in his last years at the university to teaching freshman composition courses to students who often seemed not to know who they were or why they were there.

I am now nearly the age Smith was when I first knew him. Most of my students come to me knowing even less than I did, and I graduated from a public high school in Georgia. (Though I live in Atlanta, which has "picked up" some and is no longer Georgia, sometimes I sit in traffic and wish I had kept my bad roads and hookworm.)

Teachers like Smith Kirkpatrick are almost non-existent now. I feel it providential to have had him as teacher, guide, and friend. The Educationist and the Specialist (Lytle's Momentary Man, Tate's Yankees of the Spirit, C.S. Lewis's Men Without Chests) the Agrarians and others warned against decades ago no longer just threaten society, they rule it. Their ersatz religion is Progress (including the tender mercies of infanticide, euthanasia, and genetic cleansing), and their communion wafer an antidepressant. As Warren said, "our faith has gone from God to experts." And any cursory glance at the evening news reveals that "sometimes experts don't work out." Perhaps what Tolkien's Aragon said of the inhabitants of Middle Earth is also true of me and others among Smith's students who are now teachers and writers: "we fight the long defeat." Now it is a bit easier to understand the master's world-weariness. It is not likely any of us will prevent with our words what Eliot termed society's suicide attempt. Greater ones have failed. Yet if we have been bequeathed a great inheritance, we also have a great responsibility to it, to humbly teach what Smith taught us, to diligently practice the craft "through the dark ages before us." Thanks to Smith Kirkpatrick, we know where we must begin, --alone, confronting the ancient terror of blank space on a blank page.

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Visual Arts

The Jetty
oil on canvas, 24”x24”
William Mickelberry

Full color image available at:
http://christendomreview.com/Volume001Issue001/visualarts_001.html

In Todd's Kitchen
oil on canvas, 16"x20"
William Mickelberry

Full color image available at:
http://christendomreview.com/Volume001Issue001/visualarts_002.html

SIGNS OF GRACE

In the following letter, a former priest of the Episcopal Church explains to those who knew him, as both pastor and friend, why he became a Catholic. He felt he owed it to them. In offering it to our readers, the editors are not proselytizing for the Roman church, nor implying that readers ought to take off running in that direction, but only that any sane man disturbed by the modern Christian accommodation to the prevailing moral chaos ought to run somewhere in search of refuge, to whatever house his lights tell him is built on rock and not sand. The author, in fact, wishes to preface his remarks with the following:

> My decision to become a Roman Catholic, and the four major reasons for this, have been the subject of much thinking and praying for about ten years. Throughout this, in my morning Office, I have read "Lead Kindly Light", John Cardinal Newman's poetic expression of his yearnings. Many friends, clergy and laity, have been through the same dark night and have thrown their lot in with other expressions of Anglicanism that hope and work for a reformation, e.g. The Anglican Catholic Church, Anglican Mission in America and a few lesser-known efforts. I respect their agony, their search and their choice. I tried to find a home in these, but in the final analysis, I could not. I am grateful for their integrity, wish them well, and pray for them regularly.

Letter to My Friends

I suppose the place to begin is with the bedrock of all other issues, be they things that attract me to the Catholic Church or things that compel me to leave the Episcopal Church.

Some of us want a 'final authority' in most of life's activities, someone or some body which says "this is right and that is wrong, this is good and that is bad, this is orthodox and that is heresy." We want definitions in medicine and surgery, on the football field, in economics and investing, in marital relations, in moral decisions and a host of other human experiences. Many of us want authoritative religious and spiritual definitions. The attitude that "everyone is the boss of his religious beliefs" may be the democratic way of doing things but it was not the New Testament way, nor that of the Early Church which was led by those spiritual giants who went to their martyrs' deaths defending the orthodox faith delivered to the Apostles. Nor was it the way of those Fathers of the Church in the first six centuries who hammered out the definition of the Christian Faith in many councils, beginning with the councils that produced the Nicene Creed.

There is no 'final authority' in the Episcopal Church, or in Anglicanism. There can never be one by the organization and definition of Anglicanism developed in the 17th century. The "breakaway churches" that use the name 'Anglican', AMiA, the ACC, and all the others, cannot have a final authority. Someone has said, "The most we have in Anglicanism is a gentleman's agreement with a handshake over a glass of

sherry" (obviously reflecting a British background; we would say "over a Scotch" or "Jack-and-water").

From her beginning, Anglicanism has been content to define her theology with the dictum: "lex orandi, lex credendi, the law of prayer is the law of belief"; how we pray will tell you what we believe. We define our beliefs by the words we pray in the Prayer Book, the outline of the Faith in the Catechism and the Protestant definition in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Episcopal Church. But there is no ecclesial body that has the final authority or can enforce any discipline. Again, by the definition of Anglicanism, there can be no 'final authority.' This structure and freedom has become a loophole, a breach in the dam that allows people to believe whatever they want to, theologians to teach whatever they want to, and bishops, priests and deacons to preach whatever they want to. Along with this is the relativistic notion that religion is a private matter and 'who are you to tell me what is right to believe'?

The Roman Catholic Church possesses a 'magisterium' (from the Latin word for teacher) through which the Church claims absolute authority in matters of Doctrine, Morals, and Tradition.; The Church is the Teacher.

I want to spend the rest of my life in a church that knows who she is, what she believes and where she is going.

Now, having laid the foundation let me describe the other factors which led me to this decision.

First, the matter of history. I am convinced, along with the belief of all the Early Church Fathers, that Jesus founded the Roman Catholic Church and founded it upon St. Peter and his profession of faith, "thou art the Christ", with these words, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church." We know from the Acts of the Apostles that Peter was chief of the Apostles. As early as the middle of the second century, we find one of the patriarchs of a leading city referring matters "to the See of Peter," the Bishop of Rome. What questions there were about the primacy of the Bishop of Rome from the leaders of the other great cities and centers of Christianity, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople and Jerusalem, were resolved within a century.

Second, the matter of theology and doctrines of the Faith. By and large, the Early Church Fathers believed all the doctrines of the modern Catholic Church. Most of the earliest of them believed in the Immaculate Conception of Mary, i.e., that she was conceived without sin in her mother's womb. Most of them believed in her bodily Assumption into heaven. Intercession for us by the Saints in heaven was never in question. Nor was praying for the deceased for their growth and perfection in Paradise. I could go on through the other doctrines, but the verdict is the same. The Fathers believed them.

They also believed that the bread and wine of the Eucharist become the 'body and blood, soul and divinity' of Jesus. Jesus said, "this is my body....this is my blood." The doctrine states that the substance of bread and wine is changed into the substance of Christ's body and blood, though the appearance, smell and taste remain the same.

The Fathers believed it and preached it. Even one of our great Anglican Fathers, William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, said, "His were the lips that spake it, His were the hands that brake it. What His Word doth make it, that I believe and take it." But in the face of Early Church history and the testimony of the Fathers, Anglican bishops and priests may believe and teach a broad spectrum of Eucharistic doctrine.

The options range from Transubstantiation to Memorialism (the belief that the Eucharist is only a historical memorial of Jesus' death and resurrection) to Receptionism (the belief that Jesus is only present spiritually in our reception of Him, not objectively in the consecrated bread and wine). It is no wonder laypeople don't know what to believe about Eucharistic doctrines. How, in God's name, can we be the Body of Christ while we hold beliefs that are 180 degrees apart?

In the Roman Catholic Church, and the Orthodox churches, all the foundational doctrines of the Christian Faith are settled and the Church has declared what is orthodox and what is heresy. Those theologians who espouse heretical doctrines (denial of the Incarnation, Resurrection, Ascension, the virginal conception of Jesus, etc.) are disciplined and finally separated from the Church if they persist in their doctrines.

In the Episcopal Church, the bottom line is that anyone is free to believe anything he or she wants to. The Creed and Catechism are not definitive for many. We have bishops and priests today who deny the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Trinity. In the 1960s, Bishop James Pike espoused all sorts of heresy in denying the major tenets of the Faith...and yet was exonerated by the House of Bishops, with only Bishop Henry Loutitt of this diocese and nine other bishops voting for his censure. In the 1990s, Bishop John Spong of the Diocese of Newark denied the major doctrines of the Church and no presentments were made by the House of bishops... because many of them were in concert with his beliefs. He remains a bishop with no disciplinary action taken against him and even with encouragement by our more avant-garde bishops. Some of our bishops deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus, his virginal conception and his atoning death. There are priests in this diocese who sit loosely to adherence to the foundational doctrines of the Christian Faith. No wonder laypeople don't know the solid doctrines!

Another strong argument for my becoming a Roman Catholic has to do with moral and social issues. The most important issues today are abortion, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia, the definition of family and marriage and capital punishment. The Catholic Church is on the front line in the fight against these things. The Episcopal Church is not even in line (or, as bishop Howe said, "On the front line going in the opposite direction"). There are Episcopal bishops and priests who do not accept the Church's definition of family and marriage and who have defied that doctrine and celebrated unions in violation of those definitions with no disciplinary action against them and with strong support from many other bishops. I want to belong to a church which will fight for biblical truth and for the sanctity of human life from womb to tomb.

And, finally, I want to belong to a church that is growing by leaps and bounds and in which high school and college students are on fire for the Lord and their church. Several hundred high school students in this Catholic diocese began raising money last summer, traveled 16 hours both ways to march in the March for Life in Washington back in February. High school and college students by the hundreds went to Washington or New York just to see the Pope. When I attend Catholic churches I see scores of teenagers attending the mass without any parents.

I hope you accept the fact that my leaving the Episcopal Church was not precipitated by the turmoil in our Church, but was the result of years of searching and praying. Please pray for me as I try to live out this new commitment and new chapter in my life.

Love in Christ,

Arthur Dasher

Contributors

Rick Barnett is from Thomasville, Georgia. A graduate of The Florida Writing Program, he lives, writes, and teaches in Atlanta. His fiction, poetry, and essays have appeared in *The Chattahoochee Review*, *Touchstone*, *Notre Dame Magazine*, and elsewhere. He is the editor of *The Christendom Review*.

Olivia Bustion is a Ph.D. candidate in English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan. She was a John N. Wall scholar at the Sewanee Writers' Conference. Her poetry has also appeared in *AGNI* and *Ninth Letter*.

Paul J. Cella III, is a writer living in Atlanta. His essays have appeared in *The New Atlantis*, *The American Conservative*, *Touchstone*, *The Dallas Morning News* and other publications. He is currently an editor at Red State and chief editor of the website *What's Wrong with the World*. Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, he graduated from Wake Forest University.

Arthur Dasher is a former priest of the Episcopal Church. Born in Macon, Georgia in 1937, he received his B.A. in philosophy and French from Stetson University in 1959. In the early sixties, he attended the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale where, while doing field work in a small suburban parish, he met and worked with Cleanth Brooks. He was ordained a priest in December, 1962 on the Feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury. He brought two missions to parish status, nourished both Haitian and Hispanic congregations to maturity, and has taken in Sudanese families fleeing persecution. He has also served as Director of Development and Community Relations for Edgewood Children's Ranch, and in Orlando as Assistant to the President of Campus Crusade for Christ for Church and Community Relations in Florida. He has two children from his first marriage, and three step children from his second marriage to Frances Mary Demetree of Orlando.

Thomas DeFreitas was born in 1969 in Boston. He was educated at the Boston Latin School and at the University of Massachusetts. He now lives in Chelsea, Massachusetts.

Merrill Joan Gerber is a prize-winning novelist and short-story writer who has published seven novels--among them *The Kingdom of Brooklyn*, winner of the Ribalow Award from *Hadassah Magazine* for "the best English-language book of fiction on a Jewish theme"--as well as six volumes of short stories and three books of nonfiction. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker, The Atlantic, Mademoiselle, Redbook, Commentary, The Sewanee Review and* elsewhere. Her newest novel is titled *The Victory Gardens of Brooklyn*. Ms. Gerber teaches fiction writing at the California Institute of Technology. She was a Wallace Stegner fiction fellow at Stanford and the winner of an O.Henry Prize. She studied under Andrew Lytle in The Florida Writing Program.

Ashley Mace Havird's poems have appeared in many journals including *The Southern Review, Shenandoah, The Southern Poetry Review,* and *Southern Humanities Review.* Her short stories have appeared in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* and elsewhere. In 2000 and in 2007, she received a Shreveport Regional Arts Council Fellowship in Literature. In 2002 she was awarded a Louisiana Division of the Arts Fellowship in Literature, and her poems that year were nominated for inclusion in the *Pushcart Prize Anthology.* She has taught Creative Writing at Centenary College of Louisiana and in the University of Virginia's Division of Continuing Education. She

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Lawrence Hetrick grew up in Gainesville, Florida, where he attended the University. From 1966 to 1986 he taught poetry writing and English there. He has published reviews, interviews, essays, poetry, and fiction in journals such as *Art Papers*, *New Art Examiner*, *Mississippi Quarterly*, *New Virginia Review*, *Sewanee Review*, *Terrain*, and many others. He is a former editor, from 1997 to 2004, of *The Chattahoochee Review*. He currently teaches English and humanities at Georgia Perimeter College in Atlanta.

The late **Darius Lecesne** (1959-2006), defender of Christendom, husband and father, poet, bibliophile, and graphic artist, was born in Kingston, Jamaica. His father was an RAF airman who flew night missions over Germany as a gunner in a Lancaster bomber during WWII. This subject,along with his emerging faith, informs much of his poetry and his artwork. Lecesne entered the Roman Catholic Church as an adult after coming to the spiritual dead-end of Marxism. In the communion of saints, he prays, as he lived, for others.

William Luse is the associate editor of *The Christendom Review*. He has published articles in *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*, poetry in *The New Oxford Review*, and other articles at websites like *The New Pantagruel* and Orson Scott Card's *Ornery.org*. He has written one novel which remains unpublished. He was once a good golfer (even financing, back in the 90's, the down payment on his wife's new car through skin game profits), but can still drink European lager to admirable excess. He studied the craft of fiction under Smith Kirkpatrick beginning in 1968, and knows that the day will never come when he does not consider himself that man's student. He is currently an adjunct professor of English at Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida. But more importantly he's been married to the same woman for over 30 years, which union has issued in two daughters, now in their twenties, who still like him.

Lydia McGrew is a housewife and home schooling mother living in Michigan. She took a PhD in English from Vanderbilt University (1995) and has published a number of works in philosophy. She is the co-author (with Timothy McGrew) of *Internalism and Epistemology: The Architecture of Reason* (Routledge, 2007), and her articles have appeared in journals such as *Erkenntnis*, *Journal of Philosophical Research*, and *Philosophia Christi*. She is a contributor to the group weblog *What's Wrong with the World*.

William Mickelberry graduated from the University of Florida's writing program under Smith Kirkpatrick. His fiction and poetry have appeared in *The Literary Review*, *Quarterly West*, *The Denver Quarterly*, *The Black Warrior Review* and the *Southern Poetry Review* among others. After teaching at the University of Florida and University of North Carolina--Greensboro, he currently works as a screenwriter and lives in Los Angeles. More of his artwork and poetry can be seen at http://www.wcmickelberry.com.

Marion Montgomery lives and writes in Crawford, Georgia. His most recent book is *With Walker Percy at the Tupperware Party*, *in Company with T. S. Eliot*, *Flannery O'Connor, and Others*.

After getting his MA under Smith Kirkpatrick, **John Morefield** taught at Miami-Dade Junior College then returned to Gainesville and UF as an English instructor for

seven years. Later he did technical writing, sold wine, played fiddle in a bluegrass band, bought and tended an orchard. He wrote very little for most of his thirties, then in his forties began to buckle down. During the next decade and a half he wrote four novels, two of which were accepted for representation by the New York agent Robert Lescher, who had guided the careers of Isaac B. Singer, Edna O'Brien, Calvin Trillin, and Leonard Gardner. Lescher was unable to place these books. John continues to write and occasionally publish short stories, some of which have appeared, or will soon appear, in *Columbia*, *Aethlon, The Chattahoochee Review,* and *Louisiana Literature.* He is Associate Professor of English at East Tennessee State University.

Marie Speed received her M.A. in English with emphasis in Creative Writing from the University of Florida where she studied under Smith Kirkpatrick and Harry Crews. She was also editor of the university literary magazine, the *Florida Quarterly*. Her career has largely focused on magazine publishing; she is currently group editor at JES Publishing based in Boca Raton, which publishes *Boca Raton* magazine and *Florida Table*, among others. Ms. Speed is a member of Leadership Florida, class XVII, and a board member of the Caridad Center, a medical clinic serving the working poor. She lives in Ocean Ridge, Florida.

Jeff Trippe is an educator and freelance writer who lives in Yarmouth, Maine, with his wife Laura and daughter Alex.

Sterling Watson is the author of five novels: *Weep No More My Brother*; *The Calling*; *Blind Tongues*; *Deadly Sweet*; and *Sweet Dream Baby*. *Weep No More My Brother* was nominated for the Rosenthal Award given annually by the National Academy Institute of Arts and Letters. Watson is the recipient of three Florida Fine Arts Council Awards for fiction writing. His short fiction and non-fiction have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Los Angeles Times Book Review*, *The Michigan Quarterly Review*, and *The Southern Review*. He is Director of the Creative Writing Program at Eckerd College and holder of the Peter Meinke Chair in Creative Writing.

Submission Guidelines

General Guidelines

- We strongly urge you to read our "About Us" link before submitting your work.
- We accept fiction, poetry, essays, and visual art.
- We accept only electronic submissions to our managing editor at the email address below. Send us a cover letter in the body of your email. Include the writer's name and email address. The writer's name and email address should also appear on the first page of the manuscript.
- Send your work as a Word attachment. **Do not** submit your work in the body of the email.
- You may submit work in more than one genre, but send them in separate cover letter emails with separate attachments.
- Fiction and essay submissions should be double-spaced and limited to 5000 words. Poetry should be single-spaced and limited to 1-3 poems.
- We accept simultaneous submissions but wish to be told that your submission is such in the cover letter. If the manuscript is accepted elsewhere, we require immediate notification by email.
- We do not accept previously published works except by special arrangement.
- At present we are unable to offer any payment to contributors.
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- By submitting your work to *The Christendom Review*, you attest that your submission is your own, original work. All other rights revert to the author. If you reprint the work elsewhere, we request that you cite *The Christendom Review* as the original publisher.

Fiction Submissions

- We prefer stories in which plot is a result of the tension between character(s) and circumstance.
- We prefer the action to be rendered in scene and panoramic summary rather than reported.
- We prefer the choral effect to the didactic narrator.
- We prefer stories that observe strict adherence to the chosen point of view (e.g. first-person/third- person/central-intelligence).

- We prefer stories with a conflict and a resolution. We do not encourage submission of "flash fiction" unless you can approach the subtle intensity of Katherine Ann Porter's "Magic" or Guy De Maupassant's "Love: Three Pages from a Sportsman's Notebook."
- Fiction submissions should be free of emotion, sex, or violence that is gratuitous. We concur with the ancient Greek dramatists that "obscene" means "off-stage." We don't care for nihilism as the basis of artistic vision. Neither do we care for sentimental Christian stories.
- While we believe in grace, we don't subscribe to cheap grace in the form of forced or contrived endings; however, we do agree with Flannery O'Connor that evil may be rendered so as to be plausibly in the service of grace.
- We accept chapters from novels so long as they contain an entire and complete action.
- We encourage fiction that is located. (No professional Southerners, please.)
- We are more interested in the quality and vision that informs the writing than in your publishing credentials.

Poetry Submissions

- While we admire narrative poetry, we prefer an unobtrusive, subtle, and controlled use of the first-person voice; we believe the felt experience of the poem to be more important than the personality of the poet. We invite metered, even rhyming verse, provided the end-line rhyme is not forced. We love a good sonnet. We like dramatic monologues. In other words, we prefer formal poetry that is neither too private nor too public in meaning.

Essay Submissions

- We accept thoughtful, possibly humorous critiques of some aspect of modernity, in the tradition of C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesteron, Flannery O'Conner, Walker Percy, Andrew Lytle, Richard Weaver, Peter Kreeft, and Marion Montgomery; however, non-fiction essays that have a strong sense of storytelling are considered as well.

Visual Arts Submissions

- These should be limited to two images per submission.
- We prefer art work that is comprehensible, beautiful and observant of Natural Law as revealed in creation. We are not interested in private or prurient views of reality.
- Images should be submitted in both print and web-ready versions.
- The print version should ideally use a 300ppi resolution and not exceed 6" by 6" (1800x1800 pixels). 150ppi is acceptable but should not exceed 900x900 pixels. Print-ready versions should be submitted in a lossless format, preferrably tiff with any mode of data compression. File size is not important.
- Web-ready versions should have an sRGB colorspace at 72ppi and should not exceed 800x800 pixels. High quality jpegs are preferred with a file size not exceeding 1MB.
- Items submitted and accepted outside of these guidelines are subject to resizing and modifying as necessary only to suit the publishing needs of this website.

Send submissions to submissions@christendomreview.com