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Cover and illustrations by Martin Kane Donovan
Poetry as Sacrament: A Reflection

by Joseph Mancini, Jr.

Anyone who reflects deeply on the nature of man will, I think, agree with me that each man is ultimately solipsistic: each individual has a core of meaning, a reality that cannot be communicated in toto to another. But despite this often saddening observation, it is nevertheless true that something of a hint of that meaning is communicated through Poetry in an almost miraculous way.

Poetry, in this respect, has a sacramental nature. To understand this statement one must be aware of the nature of a sacrament. In its historically profane use, the word “sacrament” was employed to designate the oath taken by newly inducted soldiers of the Roman army, and also the money placed as security in the Temple by the litigants in a civil suit. In both instances the significance of the sacrament lay in the idea that the individuals concerned were entering into a special relationship with the Common Good, with something greater than themselves.

As for its historically religious use, the word “sacrament” in the Scriptures implied a mystery linking man to something greater than himself. Through the centuries, the word “sacrament,” as used by the Church Fathers, came generally to designate a sign of something hidden, usually sacred, now being made manifest to man. St. Augustine called it a visible sign of divine reality.

Looking at the nature of a sacrament in another way, we observe that it is “meaning in matter”; that is, some material, outward sign signifying a spiritual reality. Man, being himself a spirit (meaning) in matter, can easily involve himself in a sacrament; for he comes to know spiritual reality through his material senses. A sacrament, then, ap-
peals to the whole man, not to one or the other principle of his being.

In appealing to the whole man, a true sacrament, of itself, effects a real modification of its recipient; it does not effect merely a "cloaking over" of the man. The true sacrament affects the past, present, and future of the individual involved, as well as his mind, heart, and actions. But in order for the sacrament to work, the recipient must approach it with the will to open himself to its influences; it is the combination of the recipient's right use of the sacrament and its signification that makes it efficacious.

Now, what has all this to do with Poetry? Much, I think. Every work of art, whether it be humorous, sad, lyrical or objective, evolves out of the artist's attempt to communicate his personal vision. Because there is an incommunicable core in every man, this vision is ultimately mysterious and hidden; yet, paradoxically, Poetry as Sacrament communicates a hint of the poet's encounter with life: words are necessarily used as a veil, but an idea of the vision is grasped by observing how the veil drapes it. The artist's unique perception is, then, mysterious and hidden; but it is also sacred. Shelley once remarked that "Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man": "A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, the one." (David Perkins, English Romantic Writers, pp. 1085, 1073.)

The idea of divinity here suggests the creative, god-like instinct in man. Out of the chaos that surrounds and inheres in the artist, he miraculously creates something in which we, the readers, can participate to the extent that we rise out of ourselves into something greater than our individual goods. Poetry, in a very real sense, can effect a union of minds which reflect on the meaning contained in the matter.
Every work of art appeals to both the spirit and the body, for each one is a sense medium embodying meaning. In varying degrees, however, each artistic creation appeals to the different aspects of man: some contain more meaning; others, more sensual stimulation; some obscure the meaning in the senses, while others parade it openly. But, ultimately, we can agree with Coleridge that:

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of Imagination. (Perkins, p. 455).

This bringing of the whole man into activity is a real modification of the man. Poetry does not cover man with a cloak as though he were a vile creature that could be given only the appearance of being ennobled. Rather Poetry points to the dignity of man, to his ability to be radically changed in his perception of life as he lived it in the past, as he lives it now, and as he will live it. But Poetry cannot effect the interior modification if it is not approached properly. Poetry is Poetry only when the reader frees himself from all types of bigotry (eg. aesthetic and moral) and opens himself to its influences. Mere words on paper are actualized into live Poetry for the reader only when he comes with an open mind and a trusting heart.

All Poetry has the same general quality of interiorly changing man, but it does so in different ways, ways as varied and numerous as there are unique artists. However, all Poetry shares in one or several primary qualities. To give the reader a new birth is the primary function of all Poetry. Through this baptism, the familiar becomes unfamiliar; the old, new; the conventional, awesome. To be born again
through the medium of Poetry is to witness a dead world resurrect itself.

Aside from this universal effect, Poetry can confirm us in our aspirations in order that we may proclaim our worth and dignity as human beings; it can make us priests of a New Order, mediating between man and his soul, and between man and God (even an atheist has to grapple with the God-idea); it can call us into communion with others in Mankind's long history by exhibiting to us the scores of sacrifices made by artists to bridge the gap between man and man, to communicate the incommunicable; it can seal a marriage of minds, hearts, and wills; it can reconcile and comfort and awe us by discerning possible answers to our agonized or mute questioning of the mysterious, often horrible spectacle of suffering and death; and it can redeem us from our mistakes and prejudices and shake society from its smugly accepted, often materialistic foundations.

It is true, of course, that each work of art varies in its efficacy. But there is also spurious Poetry, spurious because it pretends to change us inwardly but ultimately is abortive in its attempts; for such poetry is either a corruption of a personal, sacred vision or a misuse of the medium of the Word. The works in this volume are, however, true sacraments, outward signs of that which vivifies their creators. We hope your judgment will confirm our opinion.

*Dr. Rene Fortin suggested the idea of Poetry as Sacrament; and the information about the nature of a sacrament was gleaned from a course in Sacramental Theology. The development of the theme and any pretensions are my own.*
A Green Corduroy Shirt

by Brian Kirkpatrick

A green corduroy shirt and a pair of cut-off jeans spread herself across the damp cellar floor with a Virginia Woolf novel in one hand and a cup of cold black coffee in the other. Beside her well-worn couch some dirty underwear lay quite undisturbed. For a moment she played with a flip top pack of Marlboros, but eventually discarded it without removing a cigarette. Her hair was a dirty red, tangled beyond repair. Her body was lean, sturdy and practical — no excess poundage to get in the way. Without warning she stood quickly and screamed her first word of the day. “SHIT.” Virginia Woolf landed flat on her face at the opposite side of the room. She ran to the door and let the dog out.

“What a dump.” Her disgust this Saturday morning was no more than the usual scolding she gave herself. Luckily, her mother’s friends could neither see nor smell this hell. Yes, she’d have to get organized some day but not now. She looked out the window, blew some dust off her ceramic frog, rolled up her sleeves. Unconsciously, she slumped into the chair at her typing table and began pounding away at several well chosen keys. What she wrote was not significant; in fact, at times her thoughts were quite incoherent. The exact words, however, were written in confidence between her and the typewriter.

A scratching sound made itself heard above the clicking noise of the machine; nevertheless, she continued communicating her secrets. “All right, don’t get a rash.” The dog rushed in swishing his tail madly. She looked at the elaborate Victorian clock, then glanced at her watch to find out the real time. Lunch consisted of a bottle of Diet Pepsi
and two Smokies. She wiped herself with a flowered paper towel and returned to her cave. Scattered on the corner desk were bills, letters and advertisements still unopened with three week old postmarks. She picked up a magazine, *The Arizona State Parks*, thumbed through the pages, and finally settled on an article about desert camping. Several minutes later she tore open a friendly letter from the Vassar Alumnae Association reminding her to give generously to the current building fund. Out of college three months and already begging for money. They don't give anyone enough time to find a millionaire.

Virginia Woolf was still on the floor. She lifted her up, straightened a few wrinkled pages, adjusted her jacket, and began reading as if they were still friends.
Night of the Sunrise

by JAMES HOMER

Do you hear the stars? Someone told me they spoke the other night. All I can hear is a child stifling resentful cries. Someone said, “Beyond the stars a loving father must dwell.” That is too far away for one child. Bring the stars down upon us, if that will give him a father. Better that cosmic condescension, than the stars’ occasional conversation on a still night. But as for myself, I have never heard a still night — a child always bothers my sleep with un-called-for sobs, barely audible to me in the growing deafness to loneliness that is my lot.

THE SNOWS

He Who Strives

A simple sunshaft, dispenser of the hush of dark as yet unheard, rushes through muted pines in search of waters to mirror its grandeur, bright white and burgeoning. The tenderest dew of dark dies and gives rein to an Apollonian kingdom, replete with the regalia of light. And Prometheus awaits the imperious day with wonder at the seat of so refulgent a fury. So, it is with just pride that he puts on his new garment, the one of fire, the one that fills his head with delight at this lightening of the treacherous air, air as supple and as sinuous as a trickle of water, but clearer, deadlier.

Gazing upon the mountains, he views the embittered snows as they curse the momentum of the sun; and they are at last trampled by the tremulous hoofs of Apollo’s horses, who are mindful only of their master.

Prometheus beholds this newer epiphany with wonder and reaches out, as tremulously as do the horses, to
caress Aurora’s rosy fingers, blushing under Apollo’s heat. The fire that enchants Aurora outlines her fingers against the violet sky. Prometheus begins to climb toward those embittered snows to see what it is behind the sun that so empowers Apollo and so enchants Aurora. The snows only feel another free-wheeling lover chastening his beloved and hastening thereby their own dissolution under a divine pageant. The snows gave way beneath Prometheus, that usurper of fire and beauty who had dared to affront the snows.

**HE WHO CEASES TO STRIVE**

Beginning from the navel of the world, the mountain the Gautama was climbing massed itself against the encroachment of the orient sun. He weeps with regret born of a vision of rapacity as he sees that the white mantle of snow had been shorn from the shoulders of the mountain. The sharpness of the land was reflected in the diaphanous eyelids of the one Enlightened; he was almost too weary to wander over the mountain and shelter its naked sides with his whitened hair.

Burning burning burning burning Buddha begins climbing anew to reach the sight unseen behind the sun, the source of woe, the font of life. In the gentlest tremor of the air he was taken up beyond the seeing of the tall sun into the abyss of silent still waters, and he became opaque to the sufferings of all beneath the fallen sun, in those waters inconsolable.

**MUSINGS ON HEROISM**

A poem begins in the poverty of experience and ends in a revelation of inadequacy. A poem is a restless revelation.
A poem begins with the fall of night and ends in grey dawn.
A poem begins at the end of summer and ends in a benign autumn.
A poem begins in blindness and ends in a woman’s touch.
A poem begins in a dearth of passion and survives that dearth.
A poet cannot grasp anything but his poem — and this is his inadequacy and also his gift — he recognizes the nothingness that surrounds us and he attempts to circumvent the void. Along the way to surmounting nothingness, he fails. His special insight is that he admits his failure for those of us who cannot accept the poverty of human experience.
A poet becomes heroism in the poet’s challenging of reality.
A poet is a seer of futility, of heroism unconsummated.
A poet listens for a revelation.
A poem is the celebration of the sound of the human voice.

THE SONS OF CAIN

Night collapsed like a broken sigh on the heart of Miguel Alvarez. More than once he had prayed for a rain shower to grant him a respite from his bondage to the earth. He did not have to pray now: night had fallen. In his childhood, before he knew what the groans of his father meant, Miguel would steal out after dark to lay open his arms to the caresses of the evening sky, whose myriad sparks were a mother to him. Star after star enveloped all his desires and hid him with unspoken solicitude from the glare of his father, who wished him only a manhood of tenacious labor, submissive and dumb. He could only gape at the
black sky then, begging like a deaf-mute would beg for a glittering coin from a disdainful, plump duenna.

Like a cat on the prowl, he became a creature of the night. How often he startled beautiful women with his fatherless cries! They would pause, unsure of themselves despite their riches, and secretly slip him a coin. But they did not wish to know him, for his face spoke of the company of sweaty men, and indifference to self-respect. Some fishermen had taken him in, perhaps more for their amusement and convenience than for himself. He was not bad for an eleven-year old beggar; he had a way with a woman. Miguel would emerge from the night as a cat would, but with gold coins gleaming instead of golden eyes. And the men treated him so kindly when he slipped the coins into their rough hands.

When the fishermen had first taken him in, Miguel felt that God had befriended him. They were gone now, and so was God. Miguel had only the company of the fields, the unspeaking earth and her hard ways. The earth yielded up fruits to Miguel, but as always there were men who praised his way with a woman and gratefully took his labors. God had come and gone. He did not know who his father was. He suspected the mountains were where he was born, those placid hills and simple snows.

Now his nightly cry found gasping utterance and his pain burst from him like liquid oozing from a pierced tumor, or like water rushing in a torrent. He repeated with a passion born of weakness verses heard greedily and mouthed hoarsely as if he were aflame with fever:

Walker of highways, thresher of grain,
Gather up your sheaves and walk again.
Sing! A hymn of dispoiled tillage
Raped from the earth by an unknown lord.
If you fear the heritage of time's long curse
Cry aloud, blaspheme the foreign God!
_Diablo, danos la paz!_

RAGA POEM: THE MOOD OF THE NOON SUN

To have gone far in the night is no triumph. To traverse the sun's path is going far. The stillness of the noon sun is the danger of believing that the hope of morning will not suffer the decline into darkness.

We walk the middle path. The bliss of illumination and the gloom of darkness, the dawn long awaited and the deep fall of starless nights is our lot, is the sweep of our being. There is a tyranny in the noon sun, an accosting of all who would carry their fresh expectations across the formless track of time.

Noon is the transparent eternity we cannot bear to gaze upon, for fear of a blindness about to strike us: we do not dare to linger on the look of God in his noon revelation.

We walk the path of the sun, now we walk with eyes upon the earth. She is our hope, we dare not look up. Earth is our salvation, we dare not slight her majesty. A majesty unexpressed rules our gait, and we are not to break stride lest we appear indecorous. So we are tempted.

We are to halt and gaze upon the sun, as we have gazed upon the night sky unwearyingly and spent whole nights without revelation. The sun is ours, he is our restless revelation, our heroism at noon.

Dare we look behind the sun? There are those who have penetrated that region beyond heaven and earth: they have witnessed the opacity of night. Must we follow them, must we too become heros? But surely we cannot live upon the earth; the noon, it would melt us.
We cannot live in night, nor can we gaze in stupefaction at the light. To survive the noon and our self-destructive heroic impulses, the ceaseless rhythm of coming and going, sun’s glowing, night’s flowing, the elusiveness of the day. The barrenness of the desert of loneliness and the flowering of loving-kind union are one; one are the indistinct dusk and the clarity of dawn, the ebb and flow of the sea, autumn’s decline and summer’s fullness, a man’s death and his life, a child’s cry and his silence. There is a source for the fountain, an end for the desert, a giving forth and a taking back, God’s way of night and light that means we must be split apart before we can come together. We must die before we can become.
Old Man and Pigeons

by William Bernard

There was a "No Litter" sign tacked to a tree beside the bench, and, on the other side of the bench, there was a wire trash receptacle. The clean-up man came along carrying his pointed stick.

Scraps of torn newspaper were scattered amid the pieces of orange rind that lay at the feet of an old man who sat upon the bench. Pondering over a brown paper sack that lay open upon his lap the old man rubbed his hand along the grey wire-like stubble that bristled from his chin. A shapeless, weather beaten hat was pulled down over his eyes, and the old man's clothes were baggy and sagged from his body.

The clean-up man was away from the old man. Spear­ing a crumpled candy wrapper from the ground he depos­ited it into the canvas bag that was slung from his shoulder, and, as he dug up a small piece of turf with his pointed stick, the clean-up man watched the old man.

The pigeons flocked about the bench and pecked at the kernels of popcorn that the old man flung to them. A handful of popcorn capped a small mound of orange rind and paper, and, atop the miniature peak, there were two pigeons fighting over the kernels. Another pigeon was perched on the bench and ate pieces of popcorn from the old man's hand.

The permanent crease of the clean-up man's uniform trousers cut the air before him like the fine-honed edge of a steel knife as he walked to where the old man sat upon the bench. The pigeons dispersed with a flutter before the oncoming clean-up man.
The clean-up man stood before the old man and crumpled bits of trash beneath the crepe soles of his shoes. "What are you doing old man?" asked the man in the uniform. The old man sat, motionless, peering at the paper sack in his lap — without answering the clean-up man's question.

The clean-up man tapped the tree, just below where the sign was tacked, with the tip of his pointed stick and said, "Old man can't you read? 'No Litter.' Go home old man. Don't you have a home?"

"I won't go home," said the old man looking up into the eyes of the clean-up man, "A park is for old men to feed the pigeons in. I'll stay here."

"You old bums are all alike. If you don't go now I'll call a cop."

The old man withdrew a fistful of popcorn from his paper bag and showered it into the face of the clean-up man. Taking one step backward the clean-up man pointed his stick at the old man. As a small white feather floated down between the two men, the old man threw another handful of popcorn at the clean-up man. A pigeon dove from the tree and swooped up a piece of orange peel. Then the old man bent down and scooped up a handful of garbage and hurled it at the clean-up man's face.

The tip of the clean-up man's stick was a tapered steel spike which caught the sun's rays as he held the butt end of the stick with the tip pointing at the old man's head. Small bits of orange rind and newspaper clung to his uniform jacket as he moved forward and thrust the tip of his stick into the patch of grey bristles that covered the old man's throat.
By Their Hands You Shall Know Them

by Joseph Mancini, Jr.

By studying that “unexpurgated,” seemingly primitive, Anglo-Saxon epic known as Beowulf, the observant reader can soon detect various manifestations of a Christian influence. Among the more obvious references to Christianity are the baptism motif, the divine, Messianic character of Beowulf’s mission, and the number of Beowulf’s retainers. By these allusions the poet has adroitly Christianized the pagan legend he had assimilated.

This Christianizing process can be further demonstrated through a study of the manifold uses of hand imagery. In the prologue hand imagery is first summoned to furnish the “formula” for the renowned and noble, earthly king. He is one who cultivates the virtues even contemporary poets ordinarily attribute to a king; but the emphasis for the Beowulf poet is on generosity, the giving of golden rings, in short, on being “wisely open-handed in peace” (1.23). Further examples of this generosity symbolized by the “open hand” are: the time Hrothgar “opened out his treasure-full hands” (1.81); the assertion that no king had “passed such treasure through his hands with the grace/ And warmth Hrothgar showed” (11.1028-9); Weland’s superfluous advice to her husband to “let gifts flow freely from your hand” (1.1173); Hrothgar’s lamentation for the dead Esther and his consequent exhortation to his men to mourn “that noble/Treasure-giver, for all men were treated/Nobly by those hands now forever closed” (11.1342-4); Hrothgar’s admonition, at the time of Beowulf’s departure, in the form of a story of Hermod who “shared out no treasure” (1.1719) and “clung to the rotting wealth,” “clawed to keep it” (11.1748-9), and who would be superceded by
“some open-handed/Giver of old treasures, who takes no
delight in mere gold" (11.1756-8); and finally, Hrothgar's
assurance to Beowulf that we “will share our treasures,
greeting travelers from across the sea with out-stretched hands” (11.1859-60).

Although Christian ethics stresses the ennobling charac-
ter of charity, such open-handedness was obviously pre-
valent long before the Messianic mission. Evidence pointing
to the ancient origins of the tradition of open-handedness
is discovered, for instance, in Homer’s Iliad. One of the
defamatory characteristics of Agamemnon which engenders
wrath in Achilles is his gluttonous habit of hoarding the
best booty, his apostasy of the tradition of generosity (Bk.
I). The reader has only to be reminded of the exchange of
gifts among the embattled (Diomedes and Glaucus in Bk.
VI, and Hector and Aias in Bk. VII), or the prizes bestowed
on the victors in the funeral games (Bk. XXIII), or the
magnificent array of gifts Agamemnon provides to entice
Achilles to return to battle (Bk. IX) — the reader has
only to be reminded of these examples of generosity to con-
cede that the seeds of open-handedness are sown in anti-
quity. Hence, in Beowulf the application of hand imagery
to symbolize generosity should not be viewed as having
been motivated by Christian concerns.

There is yet another non-Christian application of hand
imagery, that of characterizing and even comparing some
of the personages in relation to their hands. One of the first
comparisons heightened by hand imagery is that of Unferth
with Beowulf. Unferth, the sinner who soiled his soft hands
in fraternal blood, cannot help admitting, in the process
of degrading Beowulf, that Beowulf has “swift-moving
hands” (1.514) enabling him to beat Brecca in the swim-
mimg race. Beowulf, once told by Hrothgar that his “hands
are strong” (1.1844), reproaches Unferth by reminding
him that "if your hands were as hard . . . no fool would dare/To raid your hall" (11.591-3).

Another comparison enhanced by hand imagery is that of Welthow-Higd with Thrist (since they are similar in character, I have grouped Welthow and Higd in opposition to the character of Thrist). Welthow, in saluting the Geat's great prince, "thanked God for answering her prayers,/For allowing her hands the happy duty of offering mead to a hero" (11.626-7). In like manner "Higd gave the Geats gifts/With open hands (11.1930-1)". Contrasting immensely with these two munificent, virtuous queens is Thrist, whom no one but the king dared look upon, for "her hands would shape a noose to fit their necks" (11.1396-7).

There are yet other individuals whose characterizations are enriched by hand imagery. Sigmund is spoken of as having "glorious hands" (11.994-5) — Sigmund, the prototype of the dragon-slaying Beowulf. Efor, Wulf (11. 2991-2) and Higlac (1.1204) are all praised as possessing "battle hard hands" which earn them golden hoards. And what can more eloquently describe the faithful Wiglaf than to note that he has "gentle hands" which bathe his bloodstained prince (11.2720-1)?

It is, then, evident that the Beowulf poet has been successful in utilizing hand imagery to provide a formula for the paragon of kingship and to characterize and compare several figures. The question of the Christian influence now arises. To observe how the poet has developed hand imagery to serve his Christian purposes and messages, the reader must first distinguish the Christian attitude from what has preceded it.

Perhaps what contributes most to the uniqueness of Christianity are the redemptive, curative, and purgative
functions of God as a performer of miracles. It is significant that several of the miracles result from God’s stretching forth his hand and touching. Recall the restoring of life to the son of a widow at Naim (Luke 7:11-7), or the healing of a man born blind (Mark 8:22-6), or the healing of a leper outside Capharnaum (Matt. 8:1-4). And remember the restoring of the vision of two blind men (Matt. 9:27-30) and the curing of many ill and possessed at Capharnaum (Luke 4:40-1).

To seek the Christian influence on hand imagery, the reader must discover a character who performs redemptive, curative, and purgative functions with his hands. Such an individual is Beowulf. According to Wiglaf, Beowulf adheres to the code of the magnanimous king and gives “with open hands” (1.2868) booty to his men. And like the other brave warriors, Sigmund and Higlac, Beowulf’s hands are strong and hard, an indication of his character.

Yet Beowulf is obviously, as Hrothgar persistently asserts, the “best of soldiers” (1.946), the redeemer who “did what none of the Danes could do” (1.941). As his various appellations testify, Beowulf is beyond any degree of perfection heretofore attained by man; in short, he is the Godman who redeems, purges, and cures. Such a figure must conjoin in battle with an adversary potent enough to be his source of glory.

No other figure, with the possible exception of Beowulf, has the poet so intensely and brilliantly described in terms of hand imagery as he has Grendel. The hand imagery alone suffices to convey the unutterable horror of such a foe. It is appropriate that a hell-bred perversion of man should have “hell-forged hands” (1.149). By noting the “clumsy fist” (1.681) of Grendel, the poet effectively contrasts the open-handed generosity of the noble kings. Re-
call the sight of those “fingers/Of that loathsome hand ending in nails/As hard as bright steel —— so hard, they all said,/That not even the sharpest of swords could have cut/It through” (11.984-8).

To grapple with such a foul monster without the reassuring presence of a sword would be the epitome of folly — for an ordinary mortal. Not long after the arrival of Beowulf and his company, he boastfully declares that “my hands/Alone shall fight for me . . . God must decide/Who will be given to death’s cold grip” (11.438-41). Moreover, “I will meet him/With my hands empty” (11.682-3). Nowhere, Grendel fearfully acknowledges, “had he met a man whose hands were harder” (1.752). Scorning the efficacy of a sword, Beowulf “stopped/The monster’s flight, fastened those claws in his fists till they cracked, clutched Grendel/Closer” (11.765-8). Far from clumsy are Beowulf’s fists! The hands that are usually open in peace are obstinately closed into fists in war with a creature confident in the power of his murderous claws.

Like Christ, Beowulf redeems with his hands a lost and bereaved people, purges Herot of a devastating evil, and “cures” the disease of cowardice in the inhabitants of the country. But furthermore, Beowulf, like Christ, has illuminated the way to salvation: the personal, immediate, solitary confrontation with evil. “Fate saves/The living when they drive away death by themselves” (1.573): “Once Beowulf was back on his feet and fighting” (1.1556), God granted him victory. It is not Beowulf’s strategy to conceal himself from an unseen enemy, to yield sleeping quarters to a beast, to invoke “the old stone gods” and make heathen vows” (11.175-6). Nor is it his policy, in killing Grendel, to wield a sword, the protector of the timid. (It is significant that in the battle with Grendel, Beowulf has undermined, in part, the tradition of the sword as companion, a
tradition which encourages the christening of swords with names).

The evil embodied by Grendel must be opposed in a “hand to hand” (1.2085) manner. As Christ, after forty, enervating days in the desert, alone, without food, had to submit himself, face to face (“hand to hand”) to the torments and temptations of the devil (Matt. 4), so man must face evil unflinchingly, lacking the dubious aid of a personified sword, if he is to subdue the threatening devil. And what could be more symbolic of the immediate confrontation with evil than Beowulf’s clutching the very instruments of evil in his bare hands. How appropriate that Grendel should die by having “his hand,/His whole right arm” (God’s “right arm” is supposedly His stronger “arm”) wrenched from his body (11.2097-8).

It might appear that the redemptive, curative, and purgative functions of the Messianic Beowulf and the emphasis on personal confrontation with evil are the chief Christian messages conveyed through hand images. Yet there is another message to be couched in hand imagery, one that seemingly weakens and depreciates the optimism suggested by the aforementioned themes. This additional idea is developed concomitantly with the progression of battles with fiends.

In the struggle with Grendel, Beowulf is portrayed as the redoubtable and invincible giant among men. The pusillanimous Unferth stares incredulously at what Beowulf “had done armed with only his bare hands” (1.990). But, for the encounter with Grendel’s mother, Beowulf arrays himself with a suit of mail and Hrothgar’s helmet wrought by “some smith’s/Long dead hand” (11.1450-1) — an ominous fact. When Hunting, the sword he has deigned to carry, proves unavailing, he relies on “his hands,
the strength in his fingers" (recall Grendel's fingers) (1.1534). But soon her "clutching claws" weary him, "that best of soldiers" (11.1542-3). Finally he must trust in the sword of giants, "blessed with their magic" (1.1559) to overcome her. True enough, Beowulf emerges victor; but the reader begins to question the efficacy of purging and removing evil by immediate confrontation. Cannot Beowulf's placing the remains of the sword in Hrothgar's "wrinkled hands" (1.1675) be a prefiguration of the imminent aging of the God-man?

As the story of the engagement with the dragon progresses, the hand images carry premonitions of evil, decay and death. "Thieving hands" (1.2301) have precipitated the war with the dragon which inhabits a tower filled with tarnished helmets because "the hands that should clean and polish them are still forever" (1.2256).

Moreover, the hoary Beowulf felt "his armor" ("armor") was strong, but his arm/Hung like his heart (Grendel's arm hung from Herot's rafters) (11.2422-3). He recognizes his incapacity to crush his foe in his arms: "And now I shall fight/For this treasure, fight with both hand and sword" (2508-9). And as Wiglaf lamentingly remarks, "Now our lord must lean on younger arms" (11.2647-8).

It is significant that the dragon is different from Grendel and his mother in three distinct ways. First, there is a curious lack of hand imagery in descriptions of it. Secondly, it does not possess a name but is referred to as "it." Thirdly, it destroys not by clawing and tearing but by breathing fire. Beowulf cannot address it by name and cannot distinguish it by its sex (It has no human characteristics as the other monsters have), for it is not an embodiment of man's evil, but rather the embodiment of a more encompassing, engulfing cosmic evil that haunts the world and never entirely succumbs to man's domination.
Of great import is the fact that the immediate confrontation is dismissed as ineffectual in the battle with the dragon. Beowulf, fully clad in armor, wielding Nagling and crouching “behind his high shield” (1.2567), feels “no shame” (1.2523) in thus protecting himself. Aid must be sought even in another man who exclaims, “My sword will fight at your side” (1.2668). At the conclusion of the battle, this man, Wiglaf, discovers that “his hand was burned” (1.2699), a further suggestion of the impossibility of actually grasping this evil. Neither Wiglaf nor Beowulf actually touches the dragon; Wiglaf’s sword is alone in fatally touching the beast.

In analyzing the three battles through hand imagery, the reader beholds the God-man confidently crushing his foe in his naked hands, then reluctantly accepting the aid of a sword to crush another adversary, and finally trusting in another man to thrust the fatal blow at a demon which destroys him. Inevitably pessimism arises through acknowledging the seemingly futile redemptive, purgative, and curative actions of a God-man whose death appears to deny the success of crushing self-perpetuating evil. The third message gleaned from an analysis of battles whose account is enhanced by the hand motif is that man, although he must necessarily face his evil, must also constantly face his finitude, his mortality.

Working against this pessimism is the final Christian message conveyed by the poet through hand images. This message is repeated so often in the greater part of the book that its significance is undervalued: God’s omnipotence must supplement man’s languishing strength. What can more eloquently represent God’s omnipotence than the image of His holding the world in His Hands. “Who doubts that God in His wisdom/And strength holds the earth forever/In His Hands” (11.699-701). “The Almighty makes
miracles/When He pleases . . . and the World/Rests in His Hands” (11.929-32). Is it not wisdom to conclude that “then and now/Men must lie in their Maker's holy/Hands, moved only as He wills;/Our hearts must seek out that will” (11.1058-60)? There is a noticeable absence of hand imagery in the last lines, perhaps because of a desire of the poet to be ambiguous about the end of Beowulf; yet it is not inconceivable to visualize Beowulf's commending himself not to the “waiting hands of still worst fiends” (1.808) but to the caressing Hands of God (“Father, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit” — Luke 24:46).

Undeniably the Beowulf poet has once again manifested the Christianization of a pagan legend by means of the various uses of hand imagery. From employing the hand motif to provide a formula for the exalted king and to characterize and compare individuals, the poet has Christianized the image (that is, called upon the image to serve as a vehicle for Christian messages) to enhance the ideas of the functions of a Messianic king, the immediate grappling with evil, human finitude, and Divine omnipotence. Hrothgar embodies the idea of the munificent king while Beowulf embodies all of the ideas presented through the hand motif except that of Divine omnipotence. Only God can boast that he has the Hand of Hands.

NOTES

1Beowulf, trans. from the Old English by Burton Raffel (New York, 1963), 11. 1-52.

2These uses might be called the “secular” uses of the image.

3Since Beowulf and Grendel are antithetical in nature, the functions of their hands/claws represent the opposing powers of man to create and destroy.

4It was necessary for the poet, to convey the last two Christian messages, to confront Beowulf with an evil incapable of being crushed in his hands.
Dear Sir,

We regret to inform you that your petition for retention of your right arm has been denied. Careful consideration has been given to your request, but, as there are a number of such requests from many others in situations similar to yours, we find that, given these circumstances, it would be unwise on our part and, in the long run, of no benefit to you if we were to grant your request.

Although we realize that, in meeting the demands imposed upon you, you will perhaps encounter some momentary inconvenience, we are confident that you will be prompt in the fulfillment of your obligation.

It should be noted that, enclosed herein, are instructions that will be of value to you in regard to the proper severance and packaging of the aforesaid arm. Careful attention to these instructions will prevent any errors in regard to the angle of severance, the proper dimensions of the severed arm, the protrusion of the humerus, etc. Failure to comply with the specifications listed in these instructions may result in severe penalties as enumerated in section 42 of the Severance Act (October 14, 19……).

In the past we have encountered certain individuals who have tried to circumvent their obligation by employing various devices aimed at deceiving the Severance Bureau. Chief among these violations are: surrender of artificial limbs (such as those used on department store mannequins), surrender of left arm and/or the purchase and surrender of a proxy arm. Any violation of the specifica-
tions listed in manual 31B, page 184, subsection G, para-
graph 5 under the heading “Surrender of Right Arm” will be severely punished. Any difficulties or questions con-
cerning these specifications should be forwarded immedi-
ately to the above address.

As we receive a number of written inquiries daily, it
would be greatly appreciated that any difficulties regarding
the actual severance of the arm be taken to a licensed physi-
cian. It should be noted that the tools specified for sever-
ance of the arm are available at any hardware store as well
as many other establishments involved in the sale of cutlery
and carpentry tools.

Careful attention to the enclosed pamphlet, entitled
“How To Sever an Arm,” will greatly facilitate the oper-
ation. By following the procedures outlined in this pam-
phlet and proper application of the specified tools, one
should be able to sever his own arm. Although the pam-
phlet outlines the proper method of self-amputation, it
should be mentioned that it is permissible to seek the aid
of a second party in performing the operation. Needless
to say, when seeking such assistance, it is preferable to con-
sult a licensed physician rather than an unskilled amateur.

Arms need not be delivered in person, and, in most
cases, it is preferable that they be shipped via parcel post.
Since the identity of the arm must be certified by checking
finger prints, skin texture, dimensions, etc. against the
information contained in our files, it is necessary that the
appendage we receive be free from all traces of decompo-
sition. Careful application of any one of the number of
methods of preservation of limbs (past experience has
shown that freezing the limb is not an adequate method of
preservation) will assure you of receiving full credit for
the proper surrender of the limb.
We await your prompt compliance and expect to receive your right arm within the specified thirty days.

Respectfully yours,

---

Father’s Occupation

by Peter Barrett

during the day
what he does is draw
lines:
storm sewers & pipelines
& at night he gets up
off his stool:
& goes home
we are all there
on the perimeter
& in the end
what he does is fall
asleep in the chair:
holding a plumbing fixture
She said she
had a canary once
& its name was
Steve but
one day it
(Steve)
had a fly on
it so
she sprayed it
(the fly)
with Flit
& it
(Steve)
died. a
horrible.
gasping.
death. I
don't know why
she swallowed the
fly per-
haps she'll
die.
The Pink Inheritors

by Roland A. Champagne

Having inherited the netlike complexity of human nature, the "noble savages" of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* seem to support the theory that man is both innately good and innately evil. This theme would be like a black-and-white Van Eyck portrait were it not for the atmosphere which Golding has created through his vivid sense impression. Just as the Van Eycks used ruddy oil colors to translate the various serene and sprightly moods of their subjects, so does William Golding dexterously wield his paintbrush in his rose-colored portrayal of civilization.

Through the "pink squareness that underlay the structure of the island," Golding suggests, on the literal level, that the new habitat of his characters is an environment involving both the peace and serenity which such a soft color seems to delegate. However, Golding's true artistic merits are revealed when one examines the color "pink" on the level of semantics. Being between red and white on the color spectrum, pink seems to be a compromise between these two colors. Furthermore, on a secondary level of meaning, white represents innocence while red, the color of blood, is associated with anarchy and evil. Therefore, Golding's pink island seems to be symbolic of the meshlike existence of good and evil in man.

Golding further exemplifies this theory with the juxtaposition of red and white among the "noble savages." At first, Jack's red hair among the white skins of all the other boys seems to be a foreshadowing of the coming conflict. Then, Golding deftly paints the pink, sunburned
skins of the “littl’ uns” as they begin to join Jack’s anarchists. This transformation (from white, pure skin — to pink, sunburned skin — and then to red, painted skin) parallels the evolution from goodness to evil on the island. However, a complete metamorphosis to red never does occur on the island. Even at the death of Piggy, probably the chief exponent of goodness in the novel, the water “boils red and white,” and hence, symbolizes that goodness still remains. Furthermore, the guano, which is referred to as icing on a pink cake, is also an example of the continual, although imperfect, existence of goodness in society.

Golding’s Van Eyck dexterity lastly appears at the end of the novel when the red anarchists are about to dispose of the last remaining symbol of goodness — Ralph. Then, Jack “opens a pink mouth” prior to his discovery of the deus ex machina which preserves Ralph’s goodness for another pink society. Thus, Golding’s chromatic portrait unites the Calvanistic and Rousseauvian views into a complex pink society which can be completely dominated by neither the red anarchy of Jack nor the white goodness of Ralph.
on the dank cypris board
lay a man
not sick but pained
his youth burned away
the wisdom of his age
his short cut beard
(a Berkeley man?)
was black with blood
and spittle
the sweat dropped
on his closed eyes
a carpenter by trade
he was used to weariness
and good sweat
but he hated to think
it would be over soon
there would be no more
sawing, hammering, intricate
fitting of boards
no more shop talk
The Last Time of Day
by Steven Gumbley

the darkness pushes
the children
off
the swings
down
the
slides
for the last time of day
slowly the sun
walks homeward with the laughter of the kids
kicking bottle caps and dribbling the ball for one last time
as the stars and streetlamps replace the shouts of youngsters
which light the day
the balls are thrown in the corner and everyone flops noisily
in front of the TV
swings
hang
still
draping the ballfield in a silhouette of chains
the help-me-push-this merry-go-round waits silently knowing the stars can’t push like kids can
the streetlamp stands guarding the play things till the kids come back
You know the stars — they’d steal anything.
The Anchoritical and the Cenobitical Christian

by Thomas Thomson

In the monastic tradition there are many major divisions; one of which is the distinction between the anchorite and the cenobite. An anchorite is one who withdraws from the world and sets out on his own as a hermit — this was most frequent in the Eastern Tradition. On the other hand, the cenobite is the monk that lives in a religious community — this is a situation where the monk’s religious state is not one of absolute isolation from others but rather one in which the community plays an important role. All monasticism is a withdrawal from the world, but in this distinction the important aspect is that the anchoritic approach sees withdrawal from the world as complete in the withdrawal from all other men and factors of existence so that one might commune or relate directly to God; while the cenobitic approach proposes a root to God through a religious community where, ideally, each member approaches God through his inter-relation with the other members of the community.

Appropriating these two terms from the monastic tradition, I hope to apply them to approaches to the Christian experience taken by men as a whole. Consequently, the anchorite will be that man who seeks God strictly through introspective participation with the Divine: the man who through reflection on his being or through the apprehension of an individually endowed faith sees himself in direct relation to God: this is the solipsistic man — the man whose universe is simply his being and that of God.

On the other hand, we have the Christian who approaches his God through his relations with the beings of
others: the man who, like the student of literature, studies many poems of an author before he has any real relation to the author himself. This is the loving man; the outward man; the man who approaches life in the way Shelley suggests in his “Defense of Poetry:”

The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our nature, and in identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own... he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pain and pleasures of his species must become his own.

This cenobitic man is contrasted strongly, and perhaps over strongly, in the words of the great romantic critic William Hazlitt; but, the difference between the two sensibilities does become immediately apparent when Hazlitt says of the anchoritic man:

He tolerates only what he himself creates; he sympathizes only with what can enter no competition with him... He sees nothing but himself and the universe.

It is obvious here that Hazlitt does not sympathize with the anchoritic approach. While the anchorite cannot be held in total disdain because contemplation and meditation do certainly have some real value, the basic split between the two approaches should now be apparent.

Modern man, in the face of the swirling tensions of his everyday life, may approach God in either of these two ways. Man may search for meaning or attribute meaning to existence or himself through either the anchoritic or cenobitic. In an attempt to opt for either one of these approaches, let us examine a representative of each end of the polarity we have constructed and draw some conclusions from their thought. For this purpose I will set at polarities Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Buber.
Kierkegaard is the solitary man; he is the anchorite. This principle is nowhere better illustrated than in his discussion of the nature of Faith in his book *Fear and Trembling*. Kierkegaard was the great renouncer: he even renounced the woman he loved, Regina Olsen. For him Faith requires the total withdrawal from the universal, the ethical world, and the consequent complete resignation to God. Man, for him, has to remove himself from everybody and everything else — even nature — and become the solitary individual: he must stand totally and completely alone as if there were no physical world around him. Man must become totally singular so that he might come to have an absolute relation to the absolute, who to Kierkegaard's mind would be the most singular being of all — God. Man's Faith comes when he rises above the universal, his existential situation, to an absolute relationship with the Divine:

Faith is precisely this paradox, that the individual as the particular is higher than the universal, is justified over against it, is not subordinate but superior —yet in such a way, Be it observed, that it is the particular individual, who, after he has been subordinated as the particular to the universal, now through the universal becomes the individual who as the particular is superior to the universal, for the fact that the individual as the particular stands in an absolute relation to the absolute.3

For this reason, in the act of Faith that Abraham — the model of Faith — made, Abraham was gladly willing to kill his son because God had so instructed. He did not question the command of his Lord. He was completely and totally resigned. He could perform an act that went directly against the universal — the ethical — and kill his son because he was above the universal and in an absolute relationship with the absolute.4

From the example of Abraham, we see that Faith makes man abandon the Ethical, and thus, other men. In fact, Faith demands that we do this. This, however, is no
easy task. It is not easy for man to make the leap out of his existence and into this absolute relationship with God. It is a fearsome thing to abandon human existence in life for some strictly spiritual and solipsistic union. When Kierkegaard reflects on this leap of Faith he is filled by a “horror religiosus.”

However, the man who finally can come to grips with this fantastic and fearsome journey to God does achieve an absolute relationship which allows of no other values and is totally incommunicable to anyone else. Man will live, then, solely between himself and God. For example, Kierkegaard interprets Luke 14:26 literally:

If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his own father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

His Faith requires man to stand alone with absolutely no relation with or sentiments toward the world at large: his man of Faith has to stand stark naked upon nothing and with nothing except infinite resignation: the man of faith must become individual, solitary, and related only to the absolute:

The knight of Faith, on the contrary, is the paradox, is the individual, absolutely nothing but the individual, without connections or pretensions.

This is the fear and trembling involved in Faith, Courage is the keynote to this anchoritic approach to God. In the eyes of one of Kierkegaard’s followers, Paul Tillich, courage becomes that which allows men to continue to live.

This is the modern anchoritic approach: an approach which demands courage above love; and obedience, resignation, and singularity above all. Kierkegaard’s road is a hard road to travel and perhaps, as we shall later see, unnecessary and certainly undesirable.
Opposed, in our dichotomy, to Kierkegaard, we have Martin Buber who finds that the only way to live fully and approach the Divine is through the cenobitic approach or community and interpersonal relations. Buber’s basic insight is to be found in his book *I and Thou*. He points to the fact that there are two ways in which a man relates to any other. First there is the *I-It* mode of relation where the I relates to the other as an object: secondly we have the *I-Thou* relationship where there is nothing as object but where the whole subjective I relates or sets itself in relation to the whole of the other — it makes no difference what the other is; it may be a tree, rock, or person:

> When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing for his object. For where there is a thing there is another thing. Every *It* is bounded by others; *It* exists only by being bounded by others. But when *Thou* is spoken, there is no thing. *Thou* has no bounds.9

The concept of the *Thou* is a very difficult one to communicate because once we look at it objectively, it changes from a *Thou* to an *It* — we objectify it; we contemplate it. The full grasp or feeling for this concept can only come from the poetic presentation of Buber; however, in a very oversimplified and inaccurate way we can say that the *I-Thou* is like the subjective I relating or sensing the totality of the other. Perhaps several more examples from Buber will serve to give one a better sense of the meaning of this word:

> If I face a human being as my *Thou*, and say the primary word *I-Thou* to him, he is not a thing among things and does not consist of things . . . I do not meet with him at some time and place or other.10

In this set-up, the way a man approaches the Divine is by constantly relating to other *Thou’s* and thus relating to the eternal *Thou*, which is God.11 This relation is love. Love lies between *I* and *Thou*. The *Thou* is not loved as
an object but rather it is part of the relationship which makes love.\textsuperscript{12}

Of course man is not always in the \textit{I-Thou} situation. Man is also reflective; thus, there is a constant swing between \textit{I-Thou} and \textit{I-It} relations. Man receives meaning, in this viewpoint, as he relates to the other in both \textit{I-Thou} and \textit{I-It} fashions — the \textit{I-Thou} is the higher mode which is explained, as much as is possible, to the rationale by the \textit{I-It}.

In this view man must relate to the world around him. He must be outward as opposed to walling himself in himself. This is the cenobitic notion of the Christian community — one must have a community to relate with.

To demonstrate the practical application of this basic insight, Martin Buber wrote \textit{Between Man and Man} which proposes “the life of dialogue.” In this “life of dialogue” man must be always outward turned swinging between the \textit{I-Thou} and the \textit{I-It}; this outward turning combined with a “mutuality of inner action” between the relators is the basic thrust of the “life of dialogue.”

For Buber, this is the way that man should live, approaching God through His creation and through the love that springs up in the \textit{I-Thou} relationship. This is the road of love and communion. In marked contrast to the fear and trembling that surrounds the solitary figure of the naked Kierkegaard, standing before an all-demanding tyrant-God who constantly threatens him with non-being, stands Buber who can stop and describe his relational process of love where the \textit{I} and \textit{Thou} relate and meet and become one and are love:

\begin{quote}
A man caresses a woman, who lets herself be caressed. Then let us assume that he feels the contact from two sides — with the palm of his hand still, and also with the woman’s skin. The twofold nature of the gesture,
\end{quote}
as one takes place between two persons, thrills through the depth of enjoyment in his heart and stirs it. If he does deafen his heart he will have — not to renounce the enjoyment but — to love.13

Faith is found here in the relationships which allow one to approach the eternal-Thou. Faith is the relation with the eternal-Thou and the concrete realization of this relation presented by the I-It relation. Since Faith is the I- eternal Thou relation which is love as is any I-Thou, then Faith too is love — many people who cannot reflect on the I-eternal Thou still have a type of Faith and should be classed with what is commonly called “The Faithful” because they operate on the principle of love. Strictly speaking, however, Faith still requires a certain amount of concrete awareness through the reflective power of the I-It, at least if each individual is to be able to say that he or she has Faith.

I-Thou and love are the keys, and for the Christian who adopts this point of view, Jesus Christ would be the exemplar of the I-Thou and, as He is Divine, He would also be its perfection.

We have now looked at examples of both the anchoritic and the cenobitic approach. Obviously the cenobitic approach of Buber is the more attractive than the prospect of fear and trembling. However, simply because it is the more attractive outlook, does not necessarily mean that it is the best.

Frankly, however, Buber still seems to have the more viable position and the one that better meets the problem of existence. Kierkegaard asks man to give up his existence: he asks men to step out of their existence in the world and give up all the ethical and interpersonal and simply physical factors which define man’s earthly existence. He wants men to continue existing in the world but he also asks
them to give up their earthly existence. In short, he wants
men to exist without existence. Attempting to do some­
thing like this would no doubt cause a great deal of fear
and trembling because in this way man is split apart and
torn in two by having to exist without an existence. Here
of course, we border on the metaphysical question of what
the existence of man is; however, without going into a long
metaphysical presentation we shall postulate that as man
exists on earth he has an earthly existence which requires
that man have as much a physical as a spiritual existence.
Kierkegaard splits the two and causes great fear and
trembling.

Buber and the cenobitic approach allow man to
exist in the physical and spiritual together. In fact he sees
these two modes of existence working together to make the
whole man. From this point of view man can live in the
world and not have to step out of it. Man can relate to his
fellows in love and through them to his God who is love.
Although this affirmation of Buber may sound a bit im­
passioned or prayer like, the emphasis of the beauty and
joy which surrounds his position only adds to the logic
which slays Kierkegaard. But yet, logic and beauty are not
the only two things which slay Kierkegaard, because in his
almost complete lack of consideration for Christian love of
God and man, he seems to deny or at least move completely
at odds with the Christ of the New Testament.

NOTES

2 Perkins, p. 640.
3 Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling and Sickness Unto Death, p. 66.
4 Kierkegaard, p. 72.
5 Kierkegaard, p. 71.
The Short and Happy Education of Americus Publius

by Austin Sarat

(Based on The Clouds by Aristophanes)

List of Characters — In Order of Appearance

Narrator
Samius Tricolorus, famous uncle of Americus Publicus.
Americus Publicus, trusting young man in search of peace and truth.
Birdius, wife of Lyndus Baines.
Lyndus Baines esteemed head of the College of Longhornios.
Other Youths, fellow students of Americus Publicus.
Dovius and Hawkius, sons of Samius Tricolorus.
Ruskus and Namarios, faithful servants of Lyndus Baines.

SCENE ONE

NARRATOR: Welcome to the house of Samius Tricolorus. I am sure you have all heard of him.
for he is a good and noble man well loved in these parts. Today he is confronted with making a most important decision. His orphaned nephew, Americus Publicus, is soon to be enrolled in a school of learning. Today Samius shall decide which school.

(Exit NARRATOR. Enter SAMIUS, hands clasped behind his back, begins pacing across the stage.)

SAMIUS: Ah, me. In such crucial times is is so hard to guide the footsteps of our young. The time has come for my beloved nephew to study under one who is most able in the art of leading men on paths of grace and good.

My boy shall learn of peace. Yes, peace. That is the only way now open to men of sanity. If only he may see the truth and learn to hold it dear . . . he shall have wisdom greater than I have ever dreamed.

(Calls offstage.) Americus come hither. Come sit by me and let us speak of matters of substantial weight.

(Enter AMERICUS, flipping a coin.)

AMERICUS: What is it, Uncle. Have I in some way displeased you?

SAMIUS: Oh, no, my boy. It is with great pride that I have always thought of you. You do nothing to displease me.

The time has come, my nephew, to speak of the future and of your schooling needs. I have in these past months heard much of the two great teachers whose schools I must choose between. Each is eager to undertake your tutelage. You know of these men;
often have they spoken hereabouts. Have you an opinion of them?

AMERICUS: Well, uh . . .

SAMIUS: Of course, of course. I knew you would agree with me. On the twentieth day of the new year you shall be off to the lodgings of Lyndus Baines to inaugurate your studies. From him you shall learn the ways of peace and happiness.

AMERICUS: You have chosen, my dear Uncle Samius, and I shall attend the College of Longhorners. May I ask you why you did not choose the other, the school of Baries, which stands among the birches?

SAMIUS: My nephew, Baries, while in his heart he knows he is right, moves too swiftly towards the brink. The slow, safe ways of Lyndus will show you peace.

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

NARRATOR: Yes, this is the Log Cabin which houses the school of Lyndus Baines. Americus will arrive here tonight. Birdius, the wife of Lyndus, is busily beautifying the cabin while awaiting the new student.

(Exit NARRATOR. Enter BIRDIUS, wearing large and colorful flowered hat, dusting room.)

(Knocking is heard offstage.)

BIRDIUS: Come in!

(Enter AMERICUS.)

Hail and a good evening to you, Americus Publicus.
AMERICUS: Thank you gracious lady. I seek your husband. Is he free to speak to one who comes to learn of peace?

(Enter LYNDUS.)

LYNDUS: Ah, I have heard my name spoken. Greetings, Americus, you are welcome here. The way to peace is good and right. Tomorrow you shall begin a study which will show you the true way to love and kindness. Sleep well tonight, rest for your induction in the morn.

(AMERICUS bows.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE THREE

NARRATOR: Morning comes to the Log Cabin and Lyndus is about to begin the lessons for the day. Americus has already been given a small green hat which marks him as a pupil of Lyndus and is now almost indistinguishable from the rest of the group.

(Exit NARRATOR. Enter LYNDUS, AMERICUS and OTHER YOUTHS. LYNDUS, in purple trimmed toga and clerical collar, mounts platform. AMERICUS and OTHERS sit in semi-circle around him.)

LYNDUS: We are gathered here that we might reason together and find together the path of peace. We must strive for the union of men in brotherly love and devotion under the protective guidance of Olympus. Today we have welcomed a new student of our ways. He is a young and noble man
who abhors the violence of war-like ways as we do. Yes, we welcome him and salute him, our new brother!

OTHERS (shouting): Welcome!

LYNDUS: Now, we must begin our lesson for the day. Each of you has before him a carefully crafted spear and shield. Yes, these tools were made with infinite love and patience by warm and human hands. They are the tools that we shall now learn to use with equal love and patience. Until my two beloved assistants, Ruskus and Namarios, arrive to support my position, we shall practice the proper way to care for these delicate instruments.

(LYNDUS circulates among students and demonstrates the polishing procedure for the shining metal.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR

NARRATOR: Three years have passed since Americus went to the College of Longhornios. He now returns to the home of his uncle for the celebration of the thanksgiving rites of the holiday season. Two of his cousins, Dovius and Hawkius, sons of Samius, are also present.

(Exit NARRATOR. Enter SAMIUS, AMERICUS, DOVIUS, and HAWKIUS.)

SAMIUS: Ah, it is so good to have you with me at this time of thanksgiving. It is so very nice. Tell us, Americus, tell us of your studies
with Lyndus Baines. I have heard a most distressing report from a student who recently left the school . . . a tall man most knowledgeable in the subject of children . . . Spoctus, I believe that was his name. He ranted so about Lyndus teaching war and bloodshed to his followers. Tell me, dear Americus, is this true?

AMERICUS: My uncle, it is unfortunate that you heard of such a tale from such a source. You must put aside your fears and doubts and know that these are the gross falsehoods from one who tries to equate diapers and diplomacy.

HAWKIUS: Yes, Americus, what you say is true.

DOVIUS: While I see more of what may be learned from the study of diapers than you, my friends, I must agree that this is the judgement of a most unenlightened man.

SAMIUS: Yes, it is hard to believe that Lyndus would betray a trust given to him by those who support his school. I do not wish to believe he teaches war.

AMERICUS: Oh, my dear master Lyndus is a good and peace-loving man. Why just a few short weeks ago he escalated the scope of his quest for peace. There is a land to the south and east of here that has great need of our help in attaining peace. I am honored to say that Lyndus has chosen my most humble self to travel for one year to this land and help these people by studying their problem.
HAWKIUS: It is in such stories that we see the great courage of our men and women who struggle against all hazards to open new roads of civilization to the primitive frontier.

DOVIUS (aside): Sounds like boraxo to me.

HAWKIUS: Ah! My brother from Massia... or is that Yorkia?... did I hear you comment on my opinion?

DOVIUS: Your ears are sharp, Hawkius. If you care to step down from your mule, I shall tell how I feel about your idea of aid...

HAWKIUS: No! Not my idea of aid. No, Lyndus does not enough to help our friends to suit me!

DOVIUS: Is that so, Hawkius? It is a wonder you do not start your own school and try to lure some of Lyndus' pupils from him.

HAWKIUS: You scare me when you talk like that.

SAMIAUS: Enough! I do not wish to hear such bickering here. How is one to know the truth when three members of one household cannot agree on what is right? I am befuddled by all this talk.

AMERICUS: We shall agree, Father. Lyndus will bring us the truth.

DOVIUS: It seems to me he speaks very little of the truth, Methinks he knows not the color of the animal.

AMERICUS: Methinks you need a haircut!

SAMIAUS: Again I say it —— enough! Let us not widen the gaps between us by argument. It is
time to begin the sacrifice to the gods.
(They begin to carve the turkey and pass the vegetables.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE FIVE

NARRATOR: Another year has passed. Americus is now returning from his year abroad. He wants very much to spread the gospel he has been taught by Lyndus.
(Exit NARRATOR. Enter LYNDUS, AMERICUS, RUSKUS, and NAMARIOS.)

AMERICUS: You have taught me well, my master.

LYNDUS: We have followed a course that is wise and true. We sought no wider violence and worked only to end such a threat.

RUSKUS and NAMARIOS (in unison): Yes.

AMERICUS: Oh, I know, I know.

LYNDUS: You have learned well.

RUSKUS and NAMARIOS (in unison): Yes.

AMERICUS: Thank you, my friends. You have already honored me to excess by awarding me a scroll magna cum societe!
(Enter SAMIUS.)


AMERICUS: I have learned, Uncle, I have learned!
AMERICUS hurls spear and pins SAMIUS to floor.)
AMERICUS: Now he too knows.
LYNDUS: Yes.
RUSKUS and NAMARIOS (in unison): Yes.

(LYNDUS pats AMERICUS on the back and they walk off smiling. RUSKUS and NAMARIOS are close at heel.)

CURTAIN.

Plowman

by Chris Durney

Beneath the blazing sun, burning, burning, in the empty middle of grassless field. Pair of horses, flanks wet, straining under taunting pull of blade through ground, unyielding. And plowman, bare arms braced on rough-hewn handles; back, bronzed and glistening; calloused feet plodding through crumbing dry earth; face dusty; cheeks taut; body wearied. A plowman, in shimmering day, gazing at sky; plowman in rocky soil, longing for shade; plowman, red-faced; plowman, blister-handed. Beneath the eternal sun, burning, blazing, in the empty middle of valleyed field, Plowman alone.
Drops of Blood

by Chris Durney

Drops of blood falling from trees wounded by summer's passing. Along the once shadow-path, the autumn sun snow patterns the ground through twisted branches, bare against the wind, the wind that flays the tortured leaves clinging, somehow, dry and brown. And thick grass, flaring green, in pained attempt to loosen the death grip of the morning frost. The warning of the cold, that seeping cool that (even while the sun arches across the sky in hazy air, filled with the heavy, decaying smell of fallen members of the arboreal army) seals the fate of the dying. And so the shell of the solid phalanx of the wood remains behind; and the ragged limbs rise in prayer to the autumn sun, which patterns the trees with pallid rays and lights a drop of blood upon the ground.
The Newsboy

by Paul F. Ferguson

The dog first appeared like a vagabond in the railroad yard behind J.T. O'Connell's. Ribs showed through a yellow matted coat splotched with bits of clotted tar, and a slow arthritic gait indicated that any days he may have spent as a hunter were long past. Wrinkles furrowed his brow, and concealed beads of mucous underlined his sad eyes. The right eye was veiled in blue and frequently caused him to bump into the loading platform as he ambled in search of a next meal. The frayed collar about his neck, minus the serial-numbered fire hydrant, bore a metal strip which announced in all but obliterated letters: "Cy". In the heat of the shimmering asphalt he seemed a mirage.

The boy, regarding the dog as he nosed about the loading platforms and lumber piles, shifted the weight of newspapers to his left hip while the summer sun cast down spears of heat. Sweat rolled down from his armpits into the elastic of his underwear. Reaching into his bag, he withdrew a sack of potato chips and called to the dog.

The dog's ears went back as he lifted his head, and with his one good eye he looked at the boy, trying to decide whether or not to answer the summons. Padding over, he sniffed warily at the extended hand holding the two golden chips and, having decided that the offering held nothing treacherous, accepted, crunched the chips between his teeth, swallowed them, then sniffed at the boy's knees and feet until two more chips were offered. When the sack was emptied he licked the boy's hand in gratitude, gathering the last salty vestiges with his hot tongue.

Rising, the boy crumpled the bag into a tight little ball, cast it under one of the loading platforms where it
remained, and resumed his journey through the railroad yard toward the fire station on Marlborough Street. The dog followed, expecting nothing more than his youthful company.

Every day thereafter the two met in the railroad yard behind the warehouses. Normally the boy went first to the railroad yard before he finished his deliveries to the bars on Long Wharf so that he would have a travelling companion when he entered those strange and forbidding lands. They spent a great deal of time among the piles of lumber and the gaggle of deserted boxcars, the boy throwing rocks or sticks, the dog retrieving whatever was thrown.

The city maintenance yard was at the end of Long Wharf, and adjacent to it, in the harbor, floated a dock where the boy came daily in search of some minor adventure. The dock, which rose and fell with the tide, was in reality a raft that floated on empty fifty-five gallon metal drums and was secured to the pilings by long, thick ropes to prevent it from floating away. It was accessible by a ramp which was on rollers and which also rose and fell with the tide. Fishermen occasionally used the dock to load and unload their boats, and the harbormaster used it when he wanted to patrol the harbor. Piles of lobster pots as well as several wooden platforms used for dunnage were stacked on the asphalt roadway adjacent.

During the summer, jellyfish floated like raw eggs around the dock. The boy threw rocks at them or tried to stab them with a pointed stick long enough to reach them. He had once captured one in a paper cup and emptied it upon the splintered wood but did not touch it for he knew it would sting him. The gelatinous creature had shimmered in its own ooze, and when he returned the next day, had been dried up by the sun into an ugly yellow mass.
On days when no one was around the waterfront, he would procure a plank of wood from a trash can, place bits of dried seaweed, empty potato chip bags, and crumpled paper cups on it, ignite the tinder with matches he had found in the mouths of cigarette machines, and set the blazing plank afloat on the harbor, watching the spectacle until the fire went out and the last wisp of smoke vanished on the green water. It made him think of pirates and Spanish galleons, of ships with hideous dragons carved on the prow driven by powerful winds and sturdy oarsmen dressed in thick animal fur, bound, unaware of their destiny, for the rocky New England coast.

A strange old man frequented the dock during the summer months carrying a fishing line and a small package of bait, which seemed odd to the boy since the harbor water was polluted and yielding nothing but choggies which were scavengers and bait-stealers and of no value to anyone. But the old man came day after day in a faded ragged pair of blue jeans and a rumpled brown jacket covered with stains from the tobacco juice that dribbled from the corner of his mouth and down his chin, cast his line into the murky green water, and within twenty minutes had a dozen choggies thrashing about by his side. When his bait ran out, he cut up the choggies he had already caught, casting the heads and the guts into the water, fastened the remaining bits to his hook, and caught more choggies. The entire process seemed absurd, but the boy never questioned it and quietly watched the fisherman perform his ritual, day after day, until the weather turned cold and the choggies no longer bit.

By this time the jellyfish had also gone somewhere for the winter. But no matter how cold the weather became, the sacrifice of dried seaweed, discarded paper cups, and
crumpled potato chip sacks set ablaze on a floating plank continued.

The boy was accompanied daily on his rounds by his shaggy, silent partner and they were generally welcomed together — or at least nothing was said — in all the taverns along the wharf. But the welcome and apparent hospitality was short-lived as they discovered unpleasantly one afternoon.

They had entered a tavern opposite the floating dock, and while the boy was collecting a nickel from the bartender, a balding man in his forties, the dog lifted his leg and emitted a hissing yellow stream of urine against the barstool. The enraged bartender, seeing this over the boy's head, grabbed an empty bottle and hurled it at the dog who streaked yelping out the door. The bottle shattered against the frame, scattering bits of amber glass across the floor and beneath the pinball machine where two surprised sailors had been playing. The yellow puddle, mixed with stale cigarette butts and congealed grease from the floor, oozed beneath the stool.

"You keep that mangy son-of-a-bitch out of my place. You understand that kid? I ought to call your boss and have you fired."

As the boy left, shaken, the bartender grabbed a mop and began cleaning up the puddle as the two sailors chuckled and made an obscene remark about the incident.

Outside the boy scolded the dog in the twilight.

"What did you have to go and pee on his floor for? Can't you behave or anything?"

The dog whined, repentant, and looked up sorrowfully as the last rays of daylight sparkled against the blue veil of his eye.
The days began to grow shorter and the warmth of summer disappeared into the cold dampness of November. Night came quickly, now, and the boy frequently returned home in darkness long after the whistle blew from the fire station and the bells of Trinity spire chimed six. No owner had been found for the dog; no one had reported him missing in the newspaper and the dog constable had never seen fit to impound him, so the boy concluded that he was ownerless, existing only as a scavenger on Long Wharf. When the boy went home at night, the dog, declining to cross at the light, remained on the corner of Long Wharf and Thames Street until the boy was out of sight. Then he turned back toward the waterfront and disappeared.

Neither did the boy know how the dog sustained himself. He started bringing dog biscuits or saved half a sandwich from his lunch to give to the dog. But the dog never became any more substantial than he had been on that day during the summer when he first appeared in the railroad yard. His thin ribs were still very much in evidence. The boy thought that if it were not for himself the dog probably would have starved to death by now.

Moreover there was a growing concern for shelter. Where did the dog sleep at night? If he were ownerless, as the boy concluded, he obviously did not have the benefits of a warm house in which to sleep on these increasingly cold nights. Perhaps he slept in an abandoned doorway somewhere, or perhaps underneath one of the loading platforms in the railroad yard. He might have found shelter on one of the fishing boats that frequently tied up at the floating dock by the city maintenance yard. This was a possibility, although not very likely. It was even possible that he slept in the dispatcher’s office at the city yard, but there had never been any indication from the brawny men who
worked there or crippled Billy, the janitor, that this was true.

Consequently, as the weather grew colder, the boy tried to coax the dog to come home with him so that he could at least sleep in the cellar by the furnace where he would not be subjected to the elements. But the dog preferred to leave him at the corner and return to the coldness and dampness of the wharf.

On a Friday evening in mid-November the sky was overcast and the autumn wind had blown dead brown leaves from the park on Washington Square so that they swirled and danced in the gutter along the wharf. The harbor monotonously tossed the dinghies and abandoned fishing boats back and forth in the water. As the boy carried his load of newspapers past the Bohemian Gardens and the Silver King toward the Anchor, an occasional blast of wind threw icy needles of sea-spray into his face. He drew up the collar of his pea-coat and wished he had brought a pair of gloves, for his hands were stinging and red.

Inside the Anchor, the voice of Hank Williams bleated "Your Cheatin' Heart" from a juke box while a half drunk sailor cried on the shoulder of a gravel-voiced prostitute. The boy made his delivery and sold a paper to the prostitute who paid no attention to the sailor who was now manipulating her breast. Outside there was no one, only the waves and the fishing boats in the harbor and a crumpled brown paper bag that tumbled past as he walked out the door.

The dog appeared from the alley beside J.T. O'Connell's and sidled up to him. The boy crouched down, withdrew a biscuit from his pocket, and offered it to the dog. The blue veil looked like an unpolished jewel.
"What are you doing out here today? You'll catch pneumonia."

He picked up a stick from the alley and tossed it down the sidewalk with the wind. The dog bounded after it and brought it back to the boy who repeated the action.

It did not seem as chilly as before, but the wind and sky remained unchanged.

He made his deliveries to the remaining bars on the wharf, to the oil company, to the men in the city yard, stopping frequently to toss a stick which the dog retrieved for the reward of a biscuit or a pat on the head. He decided to go first to the floating dock and see if there were any bottles to be broken before going to the fire station.

The wind had abated somewhat as they walked down the ramp, but the air was cold and the harbor still showed signs of restlessness. Reaching the edge of the dock, the boy bent down and, lying on his stomach, peered over the side and into the depths below. The tide was low and on the bottom he could see old tires, broken bottles, fractured crates, pages from some old comic books, the skeleton of a horseshoe crab barely visible in the polluted sea-wrack, and what appeared to be decayed remains of choggies the old man had cast overboard during the summer. But of the latter he could not be certain. Above him the city workers left noisily in their cars until the sounds dwindled to an echo, then faded altogether. Crippled Billy shuffled past, and the street was empty.

There were no bottles to be broken, no jellyfish to be prodded with a pointed stick or to be captured and left to dry in the sun. The weather was much too cold for that.

Standing, the boy searched around and saw only the dog gazing at him in anticipation. He reached into the pock-
et of his pea-coat and withdrew a biscuit, holding it at shoulder height so that the dog had to stand clumsily on his hind legs to reach it.

The dog snatched the biscuit, crunching it in his jaws, and when he had swallowed the last morsel, sat, expecting another. But the boy only looked at him, smiling, and without warning, approached and hugged him close, ruffling the dog's ears, then planted a kiss on his forehead.

"You want to play some more?" the boy asked. "Do you?"

The dog wagged his tail and barked once as a distant seagull squawked at the approaching darkness and the wooden pilings groaned at the ceaseless undulations of the harbor.

It was game time. The boy withdrew another biscuit and tossed it. Jaws snapped, but the biscuit landed untouched on the deck and the dog approached cautiously, as if stalking a rabbit, sniffed at it, then lapped it up quickly.

The boy chuckled, and when the dog had consumed the biscuit, threw a second which landed at the edge of the dock and might have fallen into the murky waters had not the dog retrieved it in time. The dog barked in victory and returned for another.

The next biscuit was tossed high, arching smoothly in the salt air, became suspended momentarily at its apex in defiance of gravity, and as it began its descent was caught by a sudden gust of wind and borne unceremoniously into the harbor. The dog leaped high after it in the same arching motion and landed, sending a spray of salt water into the boy's face.
He rubbed the stinging salt from his eyes, and when he opened them, saw the dog thrashing arthritic limbs about in the water, heard the alternate whines and gurgles emitted by the sinking beast. For a moment he was frozen in panic, but grasping the enormity of the situation, he emptied the bag of its newspapers, dropped to his stomach, and made two or three passes at the dog whose thrashings became sluggish and finally ceased altogether. On the fourth pass the bag caught the dog around the haunches, and straining with all his strength, he lifted the carcass from the water.

The dog's body was slimy and clots of sea-wrack clung to the matted hair; the tongue rolled limply from his jaws and, with a final shudder of resignation, he expired, the dull blue unseeing eye staring into the face of the boy.

The boy closed his eyes tightly. His body trembled and a ball of nausea hardened in his stomach. A solitary drop of water rolled from the seam of his eyelid, tumbled down his cheek, and splashed noiselessly on the snout of the dead dog.

The air seemed to be getting colder and night was stealing up behind the clouds.

For several minutes he knelt unmoving, then stood, slowly, reverently, studying the harbor and the boats and the dock and the lobster pots that were piled in a pyramid above him, returning at last to the lifeless form that lay at his feet, paws extended, tail drooping stiffly between the hind legs.

He left the bag and the newspapers, most of which were now strewn about the dock and harbor by the wind, mounted the ramp and went to the pile of lobster pots, chose two of them as well as one of the wooden platforms
large enough to hold the dog's body, and carried them all, in three trips, down the ramp and arranged them on the dock. Slowly, meticulously, he broke apart the lobster pots until nothing remained but a pile of neatly stacked wood beside him. The wood was still damp from drizzle and sea-spray and would not burn very easily, so after a moment of consideration he rose and ran the short two or three hundreds yards to the city yard, searching in corners and trash cans until he found two empty Coke bottles. While the dispatcher blindly read the newspaper, his back toward the window, the boy drained enough gasoline from the pump hose to fill the two bottles and carried them back to the dock where everything remained undisturbed.

He set the bottles beside the pile of wood, then lifted the platform, placed it in the water, and carefully lowered the carcass of the dog onto it. For a moment he thought the platform might not hold its burden, but he shifted the body slightly so that the weight became more evenly distributed.

The boy instinctively covered the body, all but the head, with a pall of wet newspapers and formed with the wood from the lobster pots a roughly shaped teepee to house the dog. When this was done, he doused the bier liberally with gasoline from the two bottles, drew a match from a pocket containing only biscuit crumbs, set the structure ablaze and shoved it into the harbor. The flames leaped skyward, reflecting uncertain patterns on the inky surface of the water and the wind whipped the flames into a holocaust. There were no ships or gallant men — only fire.

Gradually the flames diminished, and as the last embers flickered and died, the charred remains rolled from the platform and sank below the surface.

The boy stood, retrieved the still damp, empty newspaper bag, and burying his now chapped hands deeply into
his pockets, climbed the ramp to the street. The fire station would have to wait. He shuffled up the wharf toward Washington Square, not looking behind him, watching only his feet as they moved one in front of the other. Two sailors brushed past him toward the Anchor and the Friday night revels as Hank Williams whimpered from the juke box inside.

The fire whistle moaned in the distance; the chimes of Trinity spire sounded six.
providence college