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EDITORS

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GUEST EDITOR for the TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL
ENGLISH GRADUATE SYMPOSIUM

H. R. Stoneback

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The *Shawangunk Review* is the journal of the English Graduate Program at the State University of New York, New Paltz. The *Review* publishes the proceedings of the annual English Graduate Symposium and literary articles by graduate students as well as poetry and book reviews by students and faculty. The views expressed in the *Shawangunk Review* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of English at SUNY New Paltz. Please address correspondence to *Shawangunk Review*, Department of English, SUNY New Paltz, New Paltz, NY 12561.

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From the Editors

Volume XXVIII of the *Shawangunk Review* features the proceedings of the 2016 English Graduate Symposium, “Poems, Ballads, Songs,” directed by *Shawangunk Review* co-editor H. R. Stoneback. On behalf of the Graduate Program, we want to thank all of the participants (our two keynote speakers/performers, student presenters, honored guests, featured Hootenanny performers and surprise visitors) for making this symposium an extraordinary event. We are especially grateful to Jim Rooney and Happy Traum for their generous permission to publish here for the first time their interviews and Traum’s essay that presents the core of his keynote performance. And heartfelt thanks to Nancy Johnson, for her encouragement of the conception of this symposium and, as English Department Chair, her enthusiastic support during the two years of making the program.

The 2018 English Graduate Symposium, on the topic of translation, will be directed by Professor Michelle Woods. Look for a call for papers from Prof. Woods in the fall.

The submission deadline for Volume XXIX of the *Review* is December 15, 2017. We welcome poetry, book reviews, and critical essays concerning any area of literary studies. Please see submission guidelines on page 199. Students writing a thesis in 2017 (ENG590) are also encouraged to submit an abstract for publication in next year’s volume.

In this issue we have restored our *News, Notes & Call For Papers*. See this section for news of our former graduate students, as well as for CFP information regarding upcoming conferences (e.g., the *XVIII International Hemingway Conference* in Paris in July 2018; the *VI International Imagism/EMRS/IRAS Conference* in the South of France, immediately following Hemingway in Paris.) We note that international conferences require earlier abstract deadlines and advanced planning; we urge our graduate students (and faculty) to consider participating in these conferences, joining many current and former New Paltz students and faculty who will be in France in July 2018 for these conferences.

Special thanks to Joann Deudicibus and Colleen Stewart for their assistance in gathering materials for this volume, and, as always, to Jason Taylor for typesetting and production supervision.

POEMS, BALLADS, SONGS

XXVIII ANNUAL ENGLISH GRADUATE SYMPOSIUM

State University of New York
at New Paltz
Tuesday, April 12, 2016
1:30-9:30PM
College Terrace

****Free Admission, Open
to the Public****
For information contact
SUNY New Paltz English
Department or
Symposium Director
H. R. Stoneback
****Sponsored by the
Department of English****

Presentations on & Performances of Folksong, Ballads & Poems
1:30 PM: **Welcome Remarks & Introduction of Graduate Student Speakers,**
Symposium Director H. R. Stoneback

Gregory Bruno, Mickey D'Addario, Vincent Fino, Christopher Paolini, Alex Pennisi, Daniel Pizappi, Victoria Prashad & Colleen Stewart

-Musical Interlude by Mystery Guest Performer-

4:10 PM: **Featured Performance— Kathy Johnson "From Small Town Girl to Great Big Dreams"**

**~Keynote Speakers/Performers~
Two Legends of the Folk Music World**

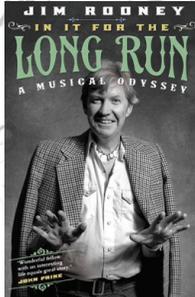
4:45 PM: **Jim Rooney, "In It for the Long Run: A Musical Odyssey"**

*****Dinner Break @ 5:50 PM*****

6:15 PM: **Happy Traum, "Coming of Age in the Greenwich Village Folk Revival & the Woodstock Scene (1954-1971)"**

7:45 PM till Closing Time: **Hootenanny & Sing-along**

Songs & Poems: Hootenanny performers include Greg Bruno, Joann Deidreibus, Dennis Doherty, John Langan, Joe McNulty, Jes Nickel, Matt Nickel, Chris Paolini, Fiona Paton, Alex Pennisi, Dan Pizappi, Kappa Waugh, Dennis Winter and whoever else signs up, time permitting, before closing songs with Robert Waugh & H. R. Stoneback & chorus of all present



I | Introduction

Poems, Ballads, Songs: The 2016 Graduate Symposium

H. R. Stoneback

In this issue, Volume XXVIII of *The Shawangunk Review*, we present the proceedings of the 28th Annual English Graduate Symposium—“Poems, Ballad, Songs.” That is, we present as far as mere print can proceed—without the music that filled the air during the eight-hour program at the College Terrace on April 12, 2016—a record of what transpired during an extravaganza that included a total of 26 listed speakers and singers. And two extraordinary keynote speaker/performers, Jim Rooney and Happy Traum. Both of our keynoters are legendary figures in the history of American folksong and music, with deep roots in the Urban Folk Revival and vast experience in that arena, a journey that began for both of them in the 1950s. For over 60 years, Rooney and Traum have played key roles in the world of American Folksong—as performers, singers, songwriters, record producers, music publishers, writers, editors, and teachers. The editor of these symposium proceedings considered including in this issue complete bibliographies and discographies that would list the manifold achievements of Rooney and Traum over the past six-and-a-half decades—but such an inclusion would have made this issue twice as long. Thus I direct readers to their websites: Jim Rooney—www.jimrooneyproductions.com; Happy Traum—www.homespun.com.

The first keynote presentation, Jim Rooney’s “In It for the Long Run: A Musical Odyssey,” entranced his audience with its seamless interplay of anecdote and performance of songs as he looked back over his long life in American music that began in the early 1950s. Readers may recapture the spirit of Rooney’s keynote by reading his 2014 memoir from the University of Illinois Press *In It for the Long Run: A Musical Odyssey*. That volume amounts to a love letter to Americana, to American roots music, from folk to country, blues to bluegrass, in which Rooney evokes his history as performer and calls the roll of the famous names he has worked with as a Grammy-winning producer and recording engineer—from Iris Dement to Nanci Griffith, John Prine to Townes Van Zandt and many others. One graduate student was overheard saying this after Rooney’s talk: “I cannot believe I just listened to and met the man that produced most of my favorite singers!”

After a dinner break at the College Terrace temple of gourmandise, our second keynoter, Happy Traum, took the stage and held listeners spell-bound with his presentation: “Coming of Age in the Greenwich Village Folk Revival

& the Woodstock Scene (1954-1971).” Traum’s talk combined memoir and performance with visual imagery and slides that illuminated the history of American song from the Washington Square folksong protests to the Woodstock Renaissance in music, from Traum’s early folksong group *The New World Singers*, the first artists to record the songs—“Blowin’ in the Wind” and “Don’t Think Twice, It’s All Right”—written by Happy’s friend, Bob Dylan, the unknown young folksinger newly arrived in New York in the early 60s. After Traum’s performance, one of our graduate students said: “I can’t believe I just talked with the greatest guitar teacher of our time. I want to play guitar like Happy Traum.”

It would be impossible to capture in print here the splendid musical memoir keynote presentations by both Rooney and Traum. Moving from song to anecdote, from musical performance to *lived* history, these two gifted storytellers and entertainers summed up between them over 120 years of American musical experience. Perhaps the best summation of our symposium keynotes was provided by our own graduate students. Along with the comments cited above, after the event was over several grad students said almost in the same words: *Amazing! We heard the whole history of American music today!* Both Rooney and Traum agreed to do interviews for this issue of *The Shawangunk Review*. We are pleased to publish here Jim Rooney’s interview with Christopher Paolini and Happy Traum’s interview with Gregory Bruno. And we are particularly pleased to publish Traum’s essay, “Music From Home,” which presents the core substance of Happy’s keynote.

Full disclosure: the symposium director and the author of this introduction, H. R. Stoneback, sang as a teen-aged folksinger at Jim Rooney’s famous *Club 47*, the quintessential Boston coffeehouse of the 1950s and 60s. Both before and after the symposium, Rooney and Stoneback talked about those old folksong days but could not be sure they actually remembered meeting nearly 60 years before. And this—when Happy Traum sent me his publicity photo of his informal performance at the celebrated Washington Square folksong gatherings in the Village long ago, I was startled to see myself in the crowd of onlookers at Happy’s performance in Traum’s photo that was used for the symposium poster and publicity. As a teenager, I had listened and learned and played and sung at those Sunday afternoon Washington Square songfests at least half a dozen times. And I was there that infamous day in April 1961, when what the press then called “The Folksong Riot” occurred. Since, in 1961, we, the kid folksingers, were often called “Beatniks,” the media also referred to the event as “The Beatnik Riot.” The City of New York had decided to stop the folksong gatherings in the Square and many were arrested and hauled away in paddy wagons. And we were only singing. It is often cited as the event that marked the beginning of the real 1960s, the 60s that ended at the “Woodstock

Music & Art Fair—An Aquarian Exposition—3 Days of Peace & Music,” or simply *Woodstock*, the mythic festival that was in progress when I moved to the Hudson Valley to begin my teaching career at SUNY New Paltz in August 1969. Then a few months later the 60s definitively ended at Altamont. But the long 1960s are still not over. (And, by the way, that is not a *dove* perched on the guitar in the original Woodstock poster—it is a *catbird*, just like the feisty fussy catbirds that have watched me work in my garden the last 47 years.)

Happy Traum and I could not remember for sure if we had met and talked during the Washington Square singing and protests long ago. But we remembered singing on the same program of several Catskills Folk Festivals in Woodstock and Andes, New York in the 1980s, folkfests organized by our mutual friends and gurus of Catskills lore and song, Herb Haufrecht and Norman Studer. I had not seen Happy since the 80s but I often heard news of his well-being and ongoing work as a musician from the likes of my Hudson Valley neighbor Pete Seeger, from my friend and former student Ed Renehan (who, at age 20, recorded an album with Seeger, did shows with me and also sang with the Traum brothers), and from Happy’s brother, the late Artie Traum (longtime musical colleague of Happy’s) when I dined with Artie shortly before his death in 2008. So it was natural for me to invite Happy Traum to be one of our keynote speakers and a particular delight to see him again, still going strong, after so many years.

And one more vignette in the full disclosure category. “Stoney & Sparrow” (as my late wife Jane Arden and I were known for over 40 years in our on-again-off-again career as a singing-songwriting duo at the edges of the folksong and country music worlds) were in the mid-60s the anchor-performers, managers, and partial owner-operators of a Philadelphia area coffeehouse—as we called folk clubs in the old days—named *the dulcimer*. Our club was not as famous as Jim Rooney’s *Club 47*, and it did not last very long after we sold it to move to Hawai‘i in 1965. (See my 2016 book, *the dulcimer: The Story of a 1960s Coffeehouse*, from Des Hymnagistes Press). At *the dulcimer*, we could not afford to pay invited performers anything but a percentage of the uncertain door, but high on our list of potential invitees were Jim Rooney and Happy Traum, already well-known in the larger world that was the *Village Called Folksong*. I cannot recall whether I actually issued invitations or not, but it was very satisfactory that my 1965 intention was realized at our 2016 symposium.

The symposium began with eight graduate student papers that grew out of my *Poems, Ballads, Songs* seminar. The papers covered a broad range of poetry and folksong topics, including Gregory Bruno’s analysis of “degeneration and refinement” in American folk ballad variations; Mickey D’Addario’s study of the crossroads of The Blues and poetry; Vincent Fino’s suggestions

for reviving folk ballads and oral recitation in secondary schools; Christopher Paolini's examination of the complexities of the American Cowboy Song; Alex Pennisi's interrogation of matters of "ownership and originality" in folksongs of the Catskills; Daniel Pizappi's discussion of "folksong and solidarity" in the songs of Appalachian mining communities; Victoria Prashad's consideration of "form and musicality" in Emily Dickinson's poetry; and Colleen Stewart's study of swan imagery in Irish folksong and poetry. The perennial challenge of literary study of folksong is the difficulty of discussing text without tune, songs without the music that transforms mere words, but all of these papers navigated admirably the treacherous waters of folksong study. We are pleased to publish here these eight graduate student essays.

Following the presentation of these papers, the next item on the symposium program was billed as a "Musical Interlude by Mystery Guest Performer." To the surprise and delight of everyone, Evan Hulick our recent MA and TA, received a standing ovation as he *walked* up to the stage, his first appearance—after months of hospitalization, multiple surgeries and a long recovery process—at a departmental activity since his near-fatal car wreck. Unable to present a paper on folksong he had hoped to write for the symposium, Evan gave a rousing performance of "The Irish Rover." One of his recent poems is included in the poetry section of this volume.

The next speaker/performer was Kathy Johnson, who journeyed all the way from Ohio to join the all-star cast featuring Jim Rooney and Happy Traum. There is a story behind Kathy Johnson's appearance at the symposium. One of the joys of teaching is the letters we get from former students telling us how our teaching changed and shaped their lives, and how the inspiration lingers for years. Usually, these letters come in the decade after students took courses with us, before the frailty of long-term memory sets in. I was preparing my lineup of distinguished symposium speakers/performers when a letter from Kathy Johnson arrived in the mail, filled with memories of the courses she had taken with me more than *forty years ago*. She was just writing to thank me and she had no idea I was organizing a folksong symposium. One course that she took with me in the mid-70s was one of the two folksong courses I regularly taught then—*Anglo-American Balladry and Folksong* and *Ballad Revivals*, immensely popular courses that sometimes reached an enrollment of over 50 students, back in those days when music and folksong echoed all over campus and it seemed every other English major wanted to be a songwriter.

Kathy mentioned in her letter the topic of her term paper/report in my folksong seminar—"The Cruel Mother" (Child Ballad #20)—and yes, after more than four decades, I still remembered her superbly researched and flawlessly performed presentation. Memory is fragile, but excellence endures. Kathy's letter also mentioned that after a long career as a teacher of English

she was well along in her second career as a singer-songwriter, with CD releases dating back to the 1990s. I wrote back, asking where I could hear her recordings. She promptly sent me four of her CDs. Before I finished listening to her recordings, I promptly invited her to be a featured speaker/performer at the symposium, where in addition to singing “The Cruel Mother” and reminiscing about her balladry course at New Paltz, she performed several of her own compositions. Along with other songs composed by symposium participants, two of Kathy’s songs are included in the songwriting section of this issue. Readers may *hear* her songs on her website, www.kathysongs.com.

The closing event of the symposium was the “Hootenanny & Sing-along,” featuring these scheduled performers (and a few impromptu contributors) of songs and poems: Greg Bruno, Joann Deiudicibus, Dennis Doherty, John Langan, Joe McNulty, Jes Nickel, Matt Nickel, Chris Paolini, Fiona Paton, Alex Pennisi, Dan Pizappi, H. R. Stoneback, Kappa Waugh, Robert Waugh, and Dennis Winter. It was a true Hootenanny (not, please, “open mic”—that debased contemporary term) and the real Hoot began with Dennis Winter (MA New Paltz 2001 and writer of several books on Irish folksong) and Joe McNulty (BA New Paltz, well-known regional singer-songwriter and Associate Music Editor of the forthcoming *Stoney & Sparrow Songbook: Volume One*). Then all the others performed, including New Paltz faculty and twelve former and current New Paltz graduate students (MAs ranging from 1989 to 2017). Some of the songs written by Hootenanny performers are included in the songwriting section of this issue. The Singing Circle of the Hootenanny ended only when we had to vacate the premises at closing time.

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME.

Now a word on history, roots, and the ur-symposium that predated the 2016 symposium by 42 years. Many things get lost in the mist and drift of memory and history, and I had almost forgotten certain symposium matters. In 1974 I was a young untenured professor at New Paltz and I had to decide whether I would stay in Paris, where I was a Visiting Professor at the University of Paris (1973-74) and a regular Parisian club performer, or return to New Paltz. I decided New Paltz was a fine place with wonderful students and I came home for the 1974-1975 academic year. That year I produced and directed the first graduate symposium—“Faulkner and Music.” It was the obvious topic for me, since I had been hired to teach Faulkner & the Southern Renaissance, Joyce & The Irish Renaissance as well as folksong and balladry. (Hemingway came later—when our Hemingway specialist, Sam Shaw, was incapacitated in the first week of his Hemingway Seminar and, as the young untenured kid on the block I was told—*told not asked*—that I would take over the Hemingway

class. Without extra pay, a *fifth course* that semester. The compensation came in reading and rereading all of Hemingway, discovering the iceberg of his work that I had missed in my teen-aged Hemingway encounters.) Thus that first graduate symposium focused on Faulkner and song. Robert Thornton, English Chair at the time, was a folksong enthusiast and one of the world's leading Robert Burns scholars who loved to sing old Scottish ballads, and he encouraged my symposium notion as did other senior colleagues, especially Alfred Marks who loved Catskills lore and song and together we served as co-founders, Director and Associate Director of the Carl Carmer Center for Catskill Mountain & Hudson River Studies, a now defunct institution that put on many college and community programs in the 70s and 80s that featured folksong and folklore; and Arthur Cash, the world's leading Laurence Sterne scholar who sang a mean ballad and sang folk, blues, and country songs with me for three decades at many public and private events in New Paltz. R.I.P. Dear Colleagues.

The printed program of the 1974 *Faulkner and Music Symposium* has long vanished in the dustbin of history. A number of graduate students presented papers dealing with music in Faulkner's work—especially folksong and gospel (or *spirituals*)—and several of them sang the songs Faulkner deployed in his fiction. And all of us together sang *Go Down Moses* and *Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho* (Faulkner's brother Murry had recently told me they were Bill's two favorite songs). And I talked about and sang the old blues song "I Know You Rider," which I had been singing as my signature-song since my days as an entertainer on Bourbon Street in the early 60s. From that came my first publication in a prominent academic journal—"Faulkner's Blues: 'Pantaloons in Black'" (*Modern Fiction Studies* XXI Summer 1975).

From the moment I conceived the notion of a "Faulkner and Music" Symposium, I knew that I wanted Joseph Blotner, Cleanth Brooks, and Robert Penn Warren as keynote speakers—all three of them if I could get them through the *friendship discount*. I knew we could not afford their usual speaker fees and there was little institutional funding available. I knew Brooks and Warren well from my Vanderbilt days and I had shared a podium with Brooks and Blotner at a Faulkner event. Red Warren was out of the country; Cleanth Brooks was unavailable, but Joe Blotner said *Yes*. Blotner was, of course, a leading Faulkner and Southern Literature scholar-critic, authorized and definitive biographer of both Faulkner and Warren, and in 1974 his massive *Faulkner: A Biography* (two volumes, 2115 pages) had just been published. Joe was very active on the well-paid worldwide speaking trail and he must have been amused by the paltry honorarium I promised. Yet, out of friendship, he came and delivered a superb keynote to our New Paltz audience.

As it happened, in the interval between Blotner's acceptance of my in-

vitation on the terms I had promised—lodging and a meager honorarium, no travel expenses—and the time of the symposium, the loosely pledged institutional funding was cut almost in half. Thus I had to keep my word by paying the honorarium shortfall out of my untenured empty pocket, and Joe’s lodging and meals were at my house. But, in memory, this was all good since out of his visit came many stories. For example, I do not know if Joe was allergic to cats but we had three cats when he stayed at my house. When he said good-night and closed the door to our guest-room he did not know, and neither did we, that the cats were under his bed. Thus he was startled and perhaps a little spooked when he was awakened by all three cats curling up in bed with him. We always laughed about that in later years, but mostly we recalled good conversation fueled by Faulkner’s favorite elixir, many good war stories—after Joe’s bomber was shot down in World War Two he was a German prisoner of war. And Faulkner war stories, too. Blotner, the man that Faulkner called his “spiritual son,” had many good Faulkner stories.

That symposium was such a success that I proposed making the graduate symposium a yearly event, and with it the creation of a journal that would publish, among other things, the annual symposium proceedings. It did not happen then due to lack of funding. Some years later, I tried twice again to start up an annual symposium and journal built around the occasions when I brought to New Paltz Mary Hemingway and Malcolm Cowley. They both gave spell-binding talks to large standing-room-only audiences in Lecture Center and they both came on *the friendship discount* ticket. Mary, Hemingway’s widow, thought my annual symposium and journal notion was an excellent idea and offered to contribute a piece to the new journal. But by the time she gave her talk at New Paltz, her last public speech, the usual plague—lack of support and funding—had cursed the terrain.

Likewise, when I invited Malcolm Cowley to New Paltz he praised my symposium-journal notion and offered a piece I could publish in my planned journal. Again, support was non-existent. But again many good stories came out of their visits here. The Mary Hemingway stories I have published elsewhere. But here’s one good Cowley story. When Cowley, the Grand Old Man of American Letters, came to New Paltz to give one of his last public talks he was 90 years old. I had known Malcolm for about 20 years then and we had many mutual friends, so he stayed overnight with me. I drove him back to his place in Connecticut the next day in my old pickup, my fishing truck. Malcolm had been an American Field Service ambulance driver in World War One. As my old truck rattled over rough back roads to his place, he said: “This contraption reminds me of the old ambulance I drove on the French Front in the Great War. Maybe rougher.” But he said it was a good memory for old bones and we talked literary history and told good fishing stories all

the way home.

Finally, in 1989, I built the First Annual Graduate Symposium around the visit to campus of the distinguished literary critic Irving Howe. Six of our graduate students presented symposium papers based on analysis of Howe's literary criticism and his studies of such writers as Faulkner and Hemingway. And finally, with the support of Larry Sullivan (English Chair then), we published the symposium proceedings, with Sullivan as my first co-editor, in the first volume of the *Journal of English Graduate Studies*, later renamed *The Shawangunk Review*. It was certainly an act of optimism and faith in the excellence of our MA program and our graduate students to envision that the symposium and journal would continue as annual events; and hard but necessary to imagine that we would arrive where we now are—in our 28th year of the symposium and this journal. To be sure, our existence—financially—the first few years was tenuous at best.

If memory serves, annual budgeting to support the symposium and the journal was not regularized until the time of the Fifth Annual Symposium. For that program, entitled “Sacred Space, Sacred Time: The Literature of Sport,” I secured Floyd Patterson and Gay Talese as keynote speakers. Maybe it was Patterson, the former Heavyweight Champ, who delivered the knockout blow and victory for funding, since there were many administrators in the large standing-room-only auditorium where Patterson and Talese gave their superb and moving keynote addresses. In any case, I am grateful for the enlightened support of all those who supported the symposium and this journal through all these years. The history of the Annual Symposium and *The Shawangunk Review* in later years, especially the many years when Daniel Kempton was my sterling and assiduous co-editor, is more accessible and vivid in memory; and archiving of the journal is now in progress.

To return to the 2016 Symposium: I had thought that the Robert Penn Warren Centennial Symposium that I directed in 2005 would be my last. After all, I had directed six of the first sixteen symposiums and I firmly believed from the start that the symposiums should cover the entire spectrum of our course offerings and could also be used as a device to show off the talents of newly hired colleagues and their students. Since the Warren Centennial would be my last—or so I thought in 2005—I pulled out all the stops, cashed in all the chips, called in all my *friendship discounts*, and presented a two-day two-night symposium that brought to campus *eight* distinguished visiting speakers, from the two leading Warren scholars who gave the keynotes, to the many renowned visiting poets and writers who came to pay homage to Warren. And many of those speakers, including Chinua Achebe, came for free. During my second stint (the first was in the 1970s) as Director of Graduate Studies from 1989-2005 I had presided with welcomes and introductions

at sixteen Annual Graduate Symposiums, and directed six of them, and the Warren Centennial symposium and the ensuing Warren issue of *The Shawangunk Review* (by far the heftiest issue ever published, since there were so many visiting speakers and also because I secured permission to publish previously unpublished Warren manuscripts) would be my farewell to arms.

And then along came Johnson, our beloved Chair Nancy, suggesting that I direct the 28th Annual Symposium in 2016 and center it on folksong. It was her idea and I liked the notion, first because there is a strong interest in folksong among our current and former students and some of them are talented singer-songwriters. I also liked the notion that it would take me full circle back to the first graduate symposium I organized, on “Faulkner and Music” back in the forgotten 70s. From the beginning, it was Nancy’s enthusiasm for the “Poems, Ballads, Songs” symposium that encouraged me to make it happen. We had many co-conspirator discussions of the shape the program might take, what we could afford, who the visiting performers might be. I said *I’ll try for Bob Dylan and Jerry Jeff Walker.*

I hadn’t talked to Dylan since 1961 when both of us, little-known kid folksingers of the same age, sang short sets at Gerde’s Folk City. In 1961 I thought he was very humorous. In 2016 I tried to get him to come to New Paltz. I tried but—well, Dylan was and is Dylan. Jerry Jeff Walker, my old troubadour-road buddy from the 60s, I still see and talk to every now and then. We couldn’t come close to his usual fee, but then maybe he’d come on the *friendship discount* out of old loyalty since he made me the subject of “Stoney,” his second-best-known hit ballad after “Bo Jangles.” Must owe me something for that. When I talked with Jerry Jeff on the phone, we reminisced about the old days when he did some shows at New Paltz in the 70s, about the time he did an outdoor concert in front of the library and before he would sing the requested “Stoney” he sent students out across campus to look for me—*Go get Stoneback!*—and they found me in class, teaching, and eventually I was on stage with Jerry Jeff and he sang “Stoney.” But in 2016 Jerry Jeff did not feel like traveling much beyond Texas and so he could not come.

Together, Nancy and I discussed other singers we might invite. I already had Jim Rooney and Happy Traum lined up and they would make a terrific program, but we wanted more. Nancy had a favorite singer she contacted but he was busy and booked. For a while, I had the legendary Ramblin’ Jack Elliott on the line. I’d talked on the phone with him but I hadn’t seen Ramblin’ Jack since the last time we sang on stage together (with Jerry Jeff) at The Chance in Poughkeepsie in the 80s and he stayed several days at my house. Maybe that deserved a *friendship discount*. Still, if he said *Yes* I was afraid we might bust the budget. But Nancy just smiled. As things turned out, Jack, still ramblin’ and going strong in his mid-80s, was booked in California and could not

come to New York in April. It was a great singing symposium and I record here my profound gratitude to Nancy Johnson for her enthusiasm and support; and my thanks to all supportive faculty and students, to all speakers and performers, to everyone in the Singing Circle of the Hootenanny.

And this last note: there was a post-event gathering for symposium participants at my house, where Jim Rooney was staying. Jim and I sang and played for hours, challenging each other to remember *all* the words to *all* Hank Williams songs, as graduate students watched and some of them sang along when they knew the words. And in the non-singing interstices, Jim Rooney's advice to some young English major singer-songwriters, based on his 60-year career in the music business, echoed in my kitchen: *music is a tough gig, requiring persistence and endurance, and largely a matter of chance and location—being in the right place at the right time.* Maybe, after all, it is better to write and to teach literature.

II | Keynote Addresses and Interviews

Jim Rooney: An Interview with Christopher Paolini

Christopher Paolini: How would you define “folk music”? What do you think is its main appeal? Would you consider it a unique form of expression? How has its objectives and its import--as entertainment, as art, and even as a form of social or political protest--changed over the years?

Jim Rooney: Lots of people have spent a lot of time and energy trying to define “folk music,” and I doubt if we are any closer to figuring it out than we were when we started. I grew up in a suburb of Boston, Dedham, Massachusetts, and came to hear what I now call “roots” music, black and white, as a result of finding a bookstore in Boston that also sold interesting looking records put out by a label called Folkways Records. I heard the music of Leadbelly, Big Bill Broonzy, and singers and players from the Appalachians. I became aware of the work of people who recorded music mostly in the Southern states like Alan Lomax, Frank Warner, Diane Hamilton, and Mike Seeger. Lomax described his work as a way to give voice to the music of the “people” as opposed to the commercially produced music of the day. However, as in all aspects of life, it was more complicated than that, because the major record companies had early on recognized the commercial potential of both black and white music starting before the 1920’s. Record executives went around the country on a regular basis, advertising locally for singers and musicians who they recorded. Robert Johnson, Mississippi John Hurt, Jimmie Rodgers, Clarence Ashley, The Carter Family all were recorded this way. Some of the recordings sold in the hundreds of thousands. So this music was “commercial” in that way. I discovered many of these recordings through a collection of albums on Folkways called *The Anthology of American Folk Music* organized by a man named Harry Smith. This anthology became a source of material and inspiration for those of us in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s who were discovering this music for the first time. I think what we were responding to was the energy and vitality of the music, which served as a powerful antidote to the blandness of life in the suburbs.

CP: How was your passion for American music (folk, country, bluegrass, blues, etc.) first cultivated? How did you first get involved in the scene?

JR: Of course, for me, before “folk” music came “hillbilly.” I was told by a friend to listen to this radio show called “The Hayloft Jamboree.” This was in late 1951 when I was 13. This is where I first heard the music of Hank Williams—in my mind one of the great all-time American singer songwriters of any kind. He had a mixture of blues, western swing, humor, and gospel in his music, which went right into my heart. In addition to Hank, I was exposed to what we now call “bluegrass” every night when I listened to the Confederate Mountaineers—brothers Everett and Bea Lilly on mandolin and guitar, Don Stover on banjo (they were all from West Virginia) and an incredible fiddler named Tex Logan, who was really from Texas. All of this music spoke to me in a way I can’t really explain. I’d never heard anything like it before, but before long I was learning the words to the songs, started playing the ukulele and then the guitar, and by early 1954 I auditioned for the radio show and became one of the “stars” on the weekly stage show of the Hayloft Jamboree. My “stardom” was short-lived, because the radio station changed formats, but I was hooked on singing and playing even if I had to wait a while for another outlet for my music to come along.

CP: How did your academic career in the Classics (at Ivy League schools, no less!) influence your understanding of, or future career in music?

JR: The opportunity for that came, strangely enough, while I was at Amherst College. There I met a fellow named Bill Keith, who was just learning how to play the 5-string banjo. I started to recall some of the songs I had heard the Lilly Brothers do and told Bill about Don Stover. So Bill and I started playing together, doing a mixture of bluegrass, Appalachian folk songs and hillbilly (or as it was coming to be known, “country”). Of course, I was at Amherst to study and my field was Classics. Some might find it strange that my musical life and my academic life were so different. But I was being made aware that there was a long tradition of oral poetry and song starting with Homer that continued on into modern times in places like the Balkans and the Middle East. As a singer I was often taking older songs and reshaping them to suit myself, so I just thought that in my own way I was carrying on a very old and valid tradition. In time I came to Cambridge to do graduate work at Harvard in Classics. The “folk revival” was getting underway. Joan Baez was performing every week at a coffeehouse called the Club 47, as was a blues singer named Eric Von Schmidt. Bill Keith joined me in Cambridge after he graduated from Amherst and we started playing there ourselves. Soon there were a number of us performing and playing. We all had different interests and we educated each other. Eric Von Schmidt had the Harry Smith Anthology as well as Alan Lomax’s Library of Congress field recordings, which were a treasure trove of

material. Jim Kweskin was into jug band music; Geoff Muldaur country blues; Robert L. Jones the songs of Woody Guthrie; Bob Siggins old-timey music; Carol Langstaff Appalachian ballads. It was a very exciting time to say the least. Bob Dylan would show up from time to time. Joan Baez got on the cover of *Time* magazine. All of a sudden we were caught up in a musical movement.

CP: As both a songwriter and a publisher, what do you think a “good song” should have? What’s your favorite song you’ve written? Do you think effective songwriting is a skill that can be learned by abiding to a set of rules? Who, or what songs, would you place at the pinnacle of songwriting?

JR: All of these musical influences formed the foundation on which my musical life has been built. I started out trying to copy my musical heroes like Hank Williams or Leadbelly or Lester Flatt. It took me many years to grow into my own singing voice, but those influences have never left. Early on I would try to do songs pretty much as I heard them, but some songs I got out of books like Carl Sandburg’s *American Songbag* and for some reason I felt that it was OK for me to make up my own melodies to them. One of those, “One Morning In May” wound up getting recorded by James Taylor, which was my first experience as a published songwriter. Of course, Bob Dylan opened the songwriting floodgates and before long lots of us who had been singing “roots” music started writing and adding our songs to the tradition. All through this time I never lost touch with the commercial country music world. Artists like Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Buck Owens, and Merle Haggard were all doing excellent work, singing their own songs or those of songwriters they admired. I became aware of writers like Harlan Howard (“Busted”), Roger Miller (“King of the Road”), Jack Clement (“Ballad of a Teenage Queen”), Allen Reynolds (“Dreaming My Dreams”), Billy Joe Shaver (“Old Five and Dimers Like Me”). This led me to try my own hand at writing (thanks to a “mid-life crisis” where I quit my job, divorced my wife, bought a motor home and blew off a lot of steam.) Out of this came my song “Only the Best” which got me to Nashville and to Jack Clement himself and opened the door to Nashville for me. A year after I arrived in 1976 it was a chart single for George Hamilton IV, produced by Allen Reynolds, and I felt that I was being accepted into an amazing musical community.

CP: What kind of environment and experience do you strive to cultivate when you’re in the role of producer?

JR: Connecting with Jack “Cowboy” Clement was the key to all of whatever success I have enjoyed. I had known about Jack ever since the “Hayloft Jam-

boree” days. He was on the show a few months before I was, playing in a trio called The Bayou Boys with a wild mandolinist and singer named Buzz Busby and an incredible bluegrass fiddler named Scotty Stoneman, a member of the Stoneman Family, one of the original string band groups. When Jack left Boston he went back to Memphis where he was from and before long I saw his name on songs by Johnny Cash like “Ballad of a Teenage Queen” and then “A Girl I Used to Know” by George Jones and “Miller’s Cave” by Hank Snow. Then he produced all of Charlie Pride’s big hits, making waves in Nashville by recording the first black country artist. In 1975, the year before I arrived, he produced Waylon Jennings’ breakthrough record *Dreaming My Dreams*. At the same time Don Williams’ very acoustic, intimate sounding records were coming out on Jack’s record label, JMI Records—produced by Allen Reynolds, who also wrote some of Williams’ signature songs like “I Recall a Gypsy Woman” and “Wrong Road Again.” So this was the world I was entering—a world where hillbilly music, folk, bluegrass and modern country music all came together. Jack’s music publishing company “Jack Music” has had nearly 10 of its writers entered into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame. Before long I was meeting these people and the musicians who had been playing on all of the records produced by Jack and Allen. It was like a big happy family of very creative people—and Jack was at the center of it. He put me in his band—Cowboy’s Ragtime Band—as a rhythm guitar player and singer; he started using me to play on song demos; he had me make a digital copy of his entire publishing catalogue (which meant that I heard all of the songs by great writers that were never hits as well as the ones that were—the odds of success weren’t great). A great learning experience for me. Eventually Jack persuaded me to learn how to run the recording control board and I became his house engineer, recording everyone who came in the door for 4 or 5 years. Another invaluable learning experience. Because I was a player, singer and writer myself I knew how I wanted a recording session to go. I came in early and checked everything out myself—mics, headphones, music stands, pencils, legal pads. I wanted everyone to be comfortable and happy so they could just focus on making music and helping support the singer and the song—which was the focus of everything. Jack’s approach was very collaborative. We were all pulling together, doing a good job and having fun while doing it. One of his famous sayings was, “If you’re not having fun, you’re not doing your job right!” Because I worked cheap and efficiently I recorded several artists’ first albums, including Alison Krauss and Edgar Meyer. Eventually, because Jack was happy to let me use the studio when he wasn’t, I grew into the role of producer. I now knew how to communicate with an engineer and how to run a recording session efficiently. This resulted in my work with artists like Nanci Griffith and John Prine. I found that I really enjoyed bringing an art-

ist and their songs together with a group of musicians in a collaborative and relaxed way. I liked to let the musicians and the artists find their way with a song rather than imposing my own preconceptions on them.

CP: What are the benefits and/or drawbacks of thinking about music in terms of genre? Did your involvement in the club scene or in coordinating festivals shape these opinions in any way?

JR: I didn't want to put the music in a box called "country" or "folk" or whatever. I think every artist needs to be themselves. It is our job to help them realize that goal. Some of these recordings are 30 years old now and they don't sound dated to me for that reason. Back when I was managing the Club 47 in Cambridge or working as one of the Directors of the Newport Folk Festival in the '60s I did my best to include a wide variety of artists, from Mose Allison to The Lovin' Spoonful, from Son House to the Butterfield Blues Band, from Hobart Smith to Bill Monroe and His Bluegrass Boys, from Eric Von Schmidt to Joni Mitchell. I loved it all. I understand the desire to label music, to help people find a radio station or a way to navigate the Internet marketplace. So now "folk" has given way to "Americana." And so on. It's all an attempt to help artists find an audience for their music. I don't have a problem with that. 20 years ago an album I produced by Nanci Griffith, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, won a Grammy as the Best Contemporary Folk Album. This year it might have been entered in some one of the "Americana" categories. The music is the same either way.

CP: What sense of communion or community have you developed throughout your decades of involvement in the music business, both on stage and behind the scenes?

JR: I consider myself to be part of the music community, which includes the folk music community, the bluegrass community, the country music community, the jazz community, the blues music community and so on. There is no question that all of these communities have played a role in bringing American "vernacular" music out to the greater world. Some would say that it is America's greatest contribution to world culture. Alan Lomax's goal of giving a voice to the American people has succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams. Attempts to wall these communities off from each other is pointless. "Purity" in all of its forms is highly overrated.

CP: You've produced John Prine's *In Spite of Ourselves* & (just recently) *For Better, or Worse*, as well as Nanci Griffith's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* & *Other*

Voices, Too (A Trip Back to Bountiful). These two Prine albums consist almost exclusively of covers of classic country duets, featuring Mr. Prine in the company of some of the greatest female vocalists of American music. Likewise, both of these albums by Ms. Griffith are composed of material penned by singer-songwriters who have influenced her, and feature another highly impressive cast of guest musicians. All of these albums have been lauded by critics and commercially successful, and *Other Voices, Other Rooms* even landed both you and Ms. Griffith a Grammy. Both Mr. Prine and Ms. Griffith had already long been established and recognized as top-tier singer-songwriters when these albums were recorded. What was the idea behind and driving these projects? That is, what did they want to achieve personally, and what message did they want to convey to their audiences? Beyond the incredible artistry and musicianship, why do you think these albums were so well-received? What do these albums mean to you on a personal level?

JR: Artists like John Prine and Nanci Griffith are known as great songwriters, but they are also great listeners. They are always aware of other writers, other singers. They both had a desire to let their audiences hear the “other voices” which influenced them. This resulted in Nanci’s *Other Voices* albums and John’s duets albums with various female artists, young and old. It’s a way of passing the music on, which is what I think is what I have been doing as well. Our music has a past, a present and a future, like a great river flowing to the sea. We’re all hopping on a raft as it passes by, taking it as far as we can go, and handing it over to new hands to continue the journey.

CP: Seeing as you’ve arranged (and subsequently recorded) a handful of traditional songs, do you believe this is a more significant way to honor and pay homage to the music than recreating it exactly? Is there any artistic or cultural merit in playing traditional music as it was originally conceived or recorded?

JR: Sometimes when we record an old song it can be a temptation to try to copy the recorded version we learned from. A group like the New Lost City Ramblers introduced a young audience to songs from the ‘20s and ‘30s and did their best to recreate the original recordings, but inevitably they added their own personalities to the material. When I started out I did my best to stay close to the original recordings I learned from, but 50 or 60 years later I sing those songs in a different way. There is no way (or point) to putting music in amber. It wants to live, to change, to breathe. Those Homeric poems took hundreds of years and probably thousands of singers to create before they were written down. We can’t even guess what they were when they were first created, just like we can’t reimagine the first singing of a ballad like “Pretty

Polly.” That being said, I do believe that songs have a place where they live, where they shine. Our job is to find that place and match it up with our own abilities as singers and musicians. That is a very exciting and endlessly interesting quest.

CP: In your experience from the past few decades, how has technology most significantly affected the music industry (business, recording, expectations, content, etc.)?

JR: All of the music I have been involved with has a lot to do with human creation and interaction. As a producer I am known as someone who likes to get a singer in a room with some musicians and record some songs live. Of course, with today’s digital technology we have the ability to edit, to fix mistakes, and do many technical tricks to affect the recording, but I don’t want that knowledge to infect our process. I want to record a *performance*, because I think that’s what people want from an artist. That artist has a gift that the rest of us don’t have. It is special and unique. The musicians as well have their personalities and skills, which set them apart from the rest of us. If we can capture the interaction of an artist and those musicians it is something the rest of us will treasure—like I treasure the recordings of Hank Williams or Billie Holiday. I am well aware that my approach is no longer feasible for many artists. They can’t afford to pay for a studio, all those musicians and a producer because there is very little hope of them getting their money back, because everyone has become used to basically getting music for free through downloads and digital music services. For 15 years I was in the music publishing business as partner in Forerunner Music, which we modeled on Jack Music. We had a family of nearly a dozen wonderful songwriters. We had a lot of fun and a lot of success, because at the time people were still buying CDs (Garth Brooks sold more than 100 million!!). However, in 2000 we sold the company while it was still worth something, because I saw that in the brave new digital world there was no way for us to get paid for what we did. If I had been younger I might have hung in there and tried to figure it out, but to date no one has figured it out, and my judgment from a business point of view was, sadly, the right one [. . .]

CP: Do you believe that place—and here I mean its spirit, or even the physical landscape, more so than its communities—can have any bearing or influence on music? If so, do you think this special sense—and consequently, creative musical efforts worldwide—have been affected, or even corrupted, by the Internet? More generally, spirit and sense of place aside, do you think that the potential of influence enabled by the Internet has been, and will continue to

be, a blessing or a curse for music, specifically in regards to creativity and originality?

JR: [. . .] However, I still have to believe that the human spirit will prevail. At the moment it looks like the onslaught of technology is overwhelming our humanity, but every giant wave that comes in also has to go out. We might get beaten up in the process, but I still believe that people will always crave music and songs which lift their spirits, talk about who they are, where they come from, the difficulties in their lives, the injustices in their world, their hopes for the future. The technology which can deny our humanity can also connect people in ways not possible before, so that young people all over the world can listen and share music with each other in a way that can bring them together. We all come from somewhere and our music can be shaped by that, but then we share it with people from somewhere else and something new can come out of that. Not unlike the way that all of us in Cambridge, from our different backgrounds, with our different musical interests influenced each other and out of that came a new music which was our own.

CP: I'll leave this one open so you can take it where you'd like—What are your thoughts on Bob Dylan being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature?

JR: Perhaps a partial recognition of this process of bringing American vernacular music out to the world at large was the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Bob Dylan this year. It was no surprise that many in the literary world were taken aback by this. However, I don't think it can be denied that the songs which are the inspiration for Dylan's lyrics, as well as his own songs, as well as the songs which have been inspired by his work, have had a lasting and profound effect on our world in the past half century. This is what all poets aspire to. As I mentioned earlier, it started with the Homeric poems. For centuries they were mistakenly studied by scholars as solely written texts. They were *oral* poems—sung. So, finally, the literary world is catching up with the fact that we have another body of work which deserves our praise and respect. In a similar development the New England chapter of the literary society PEN has also decided to honor lyricists, starting with Chuck Berry (!) and most recently John Prine and Tom Waits & Kathleen Brennan. As the man said, "The times they are a-changin'." It will ever be so.

Music From Home

Happy Traum

Woodstock has always had a musical resonance to me, ever since I came to play at the old Cafe Espresso on Tinker Street one wintery night in 1963. I took the bus from New York City and was picked up by the proprietor, Bernard Paturel, French and suave with his brushed mustaches and vaguely Gallic accent. He took me to his apartment above the club to meet Marylou and their small children, and then down to the Cafe, which was warm and cozy after the long, snowy bus ride. The room was already crowded with local folk who had come more to get out of the cold than to see a young unknown folksinger from the city, but everyone was as welcoming as the room itself. That summer I was invited back to perform at a much larger venue, the first of many appearances I made over the years at the Woodstock Playhouse. As before, many Woodstockers showed a keen interest in the folk music that I loved, and I began meeting more of the colorful citizens of the art colony.

My wife Jane and I knew several folk musicians who lived in the area. On a memorable summer weekend in 1965 we swapped songs with banjoist Billy Faier in his hand-hewn Lake Hill cabin and visited folklorist Sam Eskin at his home on California Quarry Rd. John Herald, who had transplanted himself from Greenwich Village a couple of years earlier, introduced us to the magical experience of swimming in Big Deep. Hooked on the aroma of pines, the looming mountains and the presence of fellow guitar pickers, we decided that this was the place in which we wanted to raise our three kids.

At about the same time, several of our friends and acquaintances from the Village music scene were drifting into town, primarily under the aegis of Albert Grossman, the renowned music business manager who had already achieved international fame by guiding the careers of Peter, Paul & Mary, Odetta, Bob Dylan, and (later) Janis Joplin, Richie Havens, the Butterfield Blues Band, Gordon Lightfoot, and many others. Jane and I had known Bob Dylan from his earliest days in New York City. (The group I was in at the time, the New World Singers, were the first to record “Blowin’ In The Wind” and “Don’t Think Twice, It’s Alright”). Now Bob was about as big as one could get, and his presence in Woodstock was like a magnet to others in and on the fringes of the music industry. There was a buzz about the town that extended from Greenwich Village and Cambridge, Mass. to LA, San Francisco and even London. Other well-known musicians started to visit or move to town, and by the end of the sixties the sounds of folk, blues, jazz, soul, rock and bluegrass was reverberating off the surrounding hills. One could walk

down Tinker Street in those days and run into Van Morrison, Tim Hardin, Jimi Hendrix, Bonnie Raitt or Joan Baez. You could shop at the Grand Union or A&P with the Band, Maria Muldaur or Dylan himself. By 1969, when the Woodstock Music and Art Fair took place, the town and its music were world famous, despite the fact that the huge music and mud-fest took place more than 50 miles away.

By the seventies Albert Grossman's Bearsville Studios were going strong, and you could hear world-class music at the Cafe Espresso, Joyous Lake, Sled Hill Cafe, Woodstock Playhouse and other venues in and around town. I teamed up with my brother Artie (who had joined us in Woodstock in '68) and we played them all, including the newly transformed Elephant Café (now Emporium) and the original Woodstock Sound-Outs on Pam Copeland's farm off the Glasco Turnpike. There was a feeling that Woodstock was the center of the musical universe—at least folk, rock and jazz—and it was a terrifically exciting place to be. Where else could you hear Charles Mingus, Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry, Richie Havens and Paul Butterfield's extraordinary blues band (with Dave Sanborn on sax and Buzzy Feiten on guitar), all in the space of a week? Not to mention any number of terrific locally-known rock bands and folk singers.

Our own circle of friends and neighbors included refugees from the folk music scenes of Cambridge (Geoff and Maria Muldaur, Jim Rooney, Bill Keith) and New York (John Sebastian, Eric Andersen, Eric Weissberg, Rory Block). In addition, Roly Salley arrived from Illinois, Pat Alger from Georgia, Paul Siebel from Buffalo, and Eric Kaz from...well, Woodstock. Artie had the idea of pulling together all this musical energy into an informal recording group, and in 1972 we all got together in a studio to make an album for the fledgling Rounder Records, now the largest independent label in the country. The result, "Mud Acres: Music Among Friends," became a classic of sorts, and the first of four LPs that we produced with the loose aggregate of singers, instrumentalists and songwriters that we had been playing with at picnics and parties. At the heart of that group was the idea that each member could make a contribution to the whole, and that informal, home-made music (performed by a talented cast of players) had a sound and feel that differed greatly from the pop and rock music that was making all the money. Each member of the group was striving for a career of his or her own, and this was a way of letting down our hair (which was pretty long in those days) and playing music that wasn't commercially viable. Despite this, the group, which had a core of about eight players and a revolving cast of about a dozen others, lasted nearly a decade. A performing ensemble formed, called the Woodstock Mountains Revue, and we went on the road, eventually playing club dates, concerts and major folk festivals in Europe, Japan and parts of the U.S. We even made a

two-CD live concert recording, produced at the Bearsville Theater, that was released only in Japan. Wherever we went we patiently explained that, no, we didn't live in a muddy field on Yasgur's Farm, but in a beautiful little town in the shadow of the Catskill Mountains that had a long history as an arts colony and gathering place for creative people of all kinds.

When Jane and I moved from New York City with our three small children, I gave up a full schedule of guitar students, our primary source of income in those days. Although Artie and I started to tour more widely with our small group (which included Woodstocker Eric Kaz and Michael Esposito, who had recently retired to the area after touring with the hit band the Blues Magoos) we needed more than weekend gigs to feed our family. So, I hit on the idea of putting some guitar lessons on tape and selling them by mail order to the students I had left behind. That modest idea has since grown into a business, Homespun Tapes, which has sent learning materials from Woodstock to hundreds of thousands of aspiring musicians throughout the US and around world.

My first instructional tapes were recorded in our living room on an inexpensive home recorder. Once they were on tape, it seemed like a natural idea to offer them to a wider audience, so we placed some classified ads in a few music magazines to see what would happen. The response took us by surprise. Not only were people ordering the lessons, but they started to request instruction in other styles and instruments. To accommodate them, I recorded a few more series myself, then enlisted the help of my brother, Artie, banjo picker Bill Keith, blues/rock pianist David Cohen and other Woodstock musicians to record courses for us. Before we knew it, we had a small but growing catalog of music instruction on tape.

The name "Homespun" was an apt one. We recorded the lessons in our living room on our inexpensive reel-to-reel tape recorder. After dinner Jane and I would clear the table, hook up a daisy chain of recorders, and start making copies. It must have been a comical sight to see us then. We'd start the master player, then race down the line to get each recording machine going. At the end of the tape we'd turn each machine off, flip the tapes over, then start the process again to record the second side. The next day, after the kids caught the school bus, Jane would wrap up the tapes we recorded the night before and take them to the Woodstock Post Office. We started converting to the brand new—and more convenient—cassettes a couple of years later, and by the early seventies we finally purchased a tape duplicating machine, a necessary investment for us.

By 1978, we had moved the office out of our home and into a rented space on Tinker Street, and a couple of years later we purchased and renovated a building of our own. We continued making new lessons, and when

VCRs started to enter the picture in about 1983, we pioneered the concept of music lessons on video cassettes. This revolutionized the home learning process: Now a student could see and hear the teacher, right there in his or her living room, showing the details of musicianship and technique in close-up detail on the family TV set. It was as close as we could come to putting a “live” instructor right there in the home with the learning player. This new innovation was a major turning point in the success of our company.

No longer a two-person operation, by the mid-seventies we had to start hiring area residents to help with the myriad chores it took to run a growing business. Our first full-time employee, Susan Robinson, started working in our home office nearly thirty years ago. She has seen all the changes that went down, from the time we were hand writing our mailing list in notebooks, duplicating one reel-to-reel tape at a time, and pasting labels on boxes with rubber cement. Today, we have about a dozen dedicated staff members in-house (Susan Robinson is our office manager), plus the video technicians, audio engineers, designers, editors, printers, duplicators and other outside people in the community who help us develop and distribute our product.

As of this writing we have over 500 video/DVD titles in our catalog, and our still-popular audio lessons are now on Compact Disk. We send out half a million catalogs a year to “students” in every state of the U.S. and in 37 countries around the world—all of them learning to play a wide variety of instruments and musical styles. We’ve had reviews and articles about us in *Time*, *People*, *Forbes*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Playboy* and in dozens of daily newspapers around the country, as well as feature TV stories on NBC’s *Today*, CNN’s *Entertainment Tonight* and the Discovery Channel’s *Monitor World News*.

One small indication of the impact we have had in places far-flung from Woodstock was brought home to us several years ago when Jane and I were on a trip to Ireland. We went to see the Cliffs of Moher, a spectacular natural sight and tourist attraction on the west coast in County Clare. Sitting on a low stone wall at the entrance to the cliffs, playing for spare change from the tourists, was an Irish fiddler. He looked the part perfectly, with his red hair, tweed jacket and cap, and he played his fiddle tunes expertly. This was one of the things I came to Ireland for—to hear the real Irish music played by a true traditional player! After listening a while, I requested that he play “The Cliffs of Moher,” a fairly obscure tune that fiddler Kevin Burke teaches on his “Learn To Play Irish Fiddle” series for Homespun. The fiddler obliged, and when I asked him where he learned the tune, he said, “From some cassettes by Kevin Burke that I got from America. I learned many of my tunes from those tapes.”

Jane and I started Homespun after moving to Woodstock as a way to help feed our growing family, and out of the conviction that making music

is a positive and beneficial activity that can be done by people at all levels. We wanted to help struggling novices learn to play to entertain themselves, their family and friends, as well as inspire advanced players with professional aspirations. We never dreamed where this would lead us. We now have a roster of more than two hundred world-class musicians—artist/instructors from around the country and other parts of the world. A good number of them, though, live in and around Woodstock, and are a vital part of the community. (These include Artie Traum, Jack DeJohnette, Warren Bernhardt, Donald Fagen, Bill Keith, Harvey Sorgen, Jay Ungar and Molly Mason, John Sebastian, Cindy Cashdollar, Rory Block, Penny Nichols, Mike DeMicco, Vinnie Martucci, Levon Helm, Rick Danko, Jim Weider, David Torn and Frederick Hand.) So, it has been, in large part, the musical and creative energy of the Woodstock community that has propelled us on our path. It's been a long and wonderful musical adventure for us for three decades, and we intend to continue the journey, exploring it from our home base in Woodstock to wherever it leads.

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Happy Traum: An Interview with Greg Bruno

Greg Bruno: What was your most important first experience with music, and what role did folk song play in your early development as a musician?

Happy Traum: My first experience with folk music was going to a Pete Seeger concert in Brooklyn with some classmates from the High School of Music and Art. Pete was undoubtedly the biggest single influence on my early musical life. It was because of him that I started playing the guitar and banjo as a teenager, and it was through his concerts and recordings that I learned my first repertoire of songs. Most importantly, through his example I gained a deep and abiding appreciation for the fact that music - especially folk music in all its varied forms - can stand for something besides commercial gain. Pete always championed “living room” music over mass-market formats; amateur song-swapping over professional accomplishment; home-made songs over Tin Pan Alley hit-makers. It is this inspiration that made me want to teach others to play music right from an early age.

GB: The oral tradition is the substance of folk song, passed down through time from singer to singer. Was your first encounter with the oral tradition in Washington Square Park and Greenwich Village in the 1950's?

HT: Yes, I started learning songs in Washington Square, and from my M&A classmates, before I listened to them on records. So, the oral tradition was in full swing and is the reason that some of the songs I sing to this day differ from any of the recorded versions. Either my friends or I changed them in subtle ways in the true folk process.

GB: What was Woodstock like when you first moved there? How have you seen it change over the decades? Why did you choose the Hudson Valley as your home to create music for the majority of your life?

HT: Woodstock has always had a musical resonance to me, ever since I came to play at the old Cafe Espresso on Tinker Street one wintery night in 1963. I took the bus from New York City and was picked up by the proprietor, Bernard Paturel, French and suave with his brushed mustaches and vaguely Gallic accent. He took me to his apartment above the club to meet Marylou and their small children, and then down to the Cafe, which was warm and

cozy after the long, snowy bus ride. The room was already crowded with local folk who had come more to get out of the cold than to see a young unknown folksinger from the city, but everyone was as welcoming as the room itself. That summer I was invited back to perform at a much larger venue, the first of many appearances I made over the years at the Woodstock Playhouse. As before, many Woodstockers showed a keen interest in the folk music that I loved, and I began meeting more of the colorful citizens of the art colony.

My wife Jane and I knew several folk musicians who lived in the area. On a memorable summer weekend in 1965 we swapped songs with banjoist Billy Faier in his hand-hewn Lake Hill cabin and visited folklorist Sam Eskin at his home on California Quarry Rd. John Herald, who had transplanted himself from Greenwich Village a couple of years earlier, introduced us to the magical experience of swimming in Big Deep. Hooked on the aroma of pines, the looming mountains and the presence of fellow guitar pickers, we decided that this was the place in which we wanted to raise our three kids.

GB: You have had enormous success as both a musician and a teacher of music. Do you feel your background in folk music and the thriving music culture in Washington Square Park gave you an advantage to be a successful teacher?

HT: For some reason, unknown to me, I have always had the impulse to teach. Even when I was a relative newcomer to the guitar I was showing others how to play it. Eventually I made teaching my career for many years, to bring in an income in between performances and touring, which I never made a lot of money from. That said, there's a generosity and camaraderie among people who like folk, bluegrass, old-time music and the like that seems to be part of its culture, so teaching is a natural outgrowth of that.

GB: With Bob Dylan's historic Nobel Prize award, do you feel that folk song has been legitimized as a high art form?

HT: Not necessarily. Dylan is unique and the word "folk" has rarely been used by people talking about his Nobel. I do think the folk music movement, if you want to call it that, spawned many great songwriters and poets too numerous to mention, but including Eric Andersen, John Prine, Loudon Wainwright, Patti Smith, Phil Ochs, Tom Paxton, Janis Ian, Joni Mitchell... the list goes on and on. Which of these you'd attribute the words "high art" to is very subjective.

GB: When you were recording "Blowin' in the Wind" with The New World Singers and sang a duet with Dylan in 1963, did you know then you were en-

countering a special songwriter?

HT: Yes, we were very aware even then that Bob was truly unique and special. It was a thrill to be in the recording studio with him even when he (and all of us) were quite young.

GB: That album, *Broadside Ballads Vol. 1*, records many folk ballads and protest songs. What was the intention going into recording that album? How did it come together?

HT: We were asked to record songs that had been published in *Broadside Magazine* as a benefit to them. The publishers, Sis Cunningham and Gordon Friesen, were old-line leftists who wanted to disseminate the songs that were being written currently about peace, civil rights and other social issues of the day. They gathered some of the prime writers and singers of these songs, and I was very lucky to have joined the *New World Singers* just a few months before, so I was included in that august group.

GB: Why do you think folk music coincided with and directly influenced the protest songs of the late 50's and 60's?

HT: It all came directly from the old left, mainly communists and socialists, who made up the Popular Front movement of the Thirties and Forties. They took on American (and other) folk music as expressions of "the people" and were the ones who brought it to public acceptance. Think Woody Guthrie, the *Almanac Singers*, *People's Songs*, Pete Seeger (of course), *Sing Out! Magazine*, and numerous others with progressive, pro-labor unions and other left wing agendas. That all seems a little quaint these days but it was powerful stuff from the Depression onward, through the peace and civil rights eras. This outlook, although not universal among folk singers of the day, informed everyone's consciousness right through the Fifties and Sixties.

III | Symposium Essays

From Ravens to Crows and Riddles Revised: Degeneration and Refinement in American Folk Ballad Variations

Gregory E. Bruno

The quality and value of the English-speaking tradition of the American folk ballad as folk art is a widely disputed subject in folk ballad scholarship. The dominant position asserts that *all* ballads consistently suffer during their transatlantic transmission to the American folk. Consider the scholarship of Albert B. Friedman, an influential perpetuator of the degeneration position: for Friedman, the traditional folk ballads, especially those found in Francis James Child's paradigmatic collection *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, degenerated as they came under the possession of the American folk. Friedman's criticism is also condemnation as he goes as far as to refer to the American variations as "the dullest doggerel" (xxv). However, this notion of American ballad degeneration is polarizing and simplistic in its assumptions about continental folk, American folk, and the very definition of the folk ballad. Instead, American folk ballad variations undergo a complex alteration process, firmly rooted in the values of the American folk, that results in a variety of changes that range from refinement of the ballads to their "emotional core" to complete ballad degradation. Focusing my study on multiple variations within the Child collection of "The Three Ravens" (Child 26) and "Captain Wedderburn's Courtship" (Child 46), I will explicate the range of degeneration and refinement into folk art that occurs across the American folk ballad tradition.

The notion of American "degeneration" has a distinct, elitist characterization and rationalization that consistently devalues the American folk and their ability to create compelling and original variants. The concept of degeneration is established by several notable pioneers of Anglo-American folk scholarship. Phillips Barry refers to the American folk tradition as a "period of decadence" (Wilgus 71). Henry M. Belden admits "the lack of literary quality in American folksong" as though it were a sad truth of the American folk (Wilgus 71). Following in their critical wake, Friedman, a former Harvard Professor of English Philology and folk lore, concisely posits the conception of American "degeneration" in his introduction to *The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English-Speaking World*, one of most influential anthologies of folk ballads composed during the height of the folk scholarship revival. Fried-

man's criticisms of the American folk are as biased as they are scathing, boldly assuming that the entirety of the "American ballad repertory," whose "core" consists of "imported ballads," lacks aesthetic value in comparison to the European folk (xxviii). Friedman attributes the degeneration and the American folk's lack of literary ballad texts to aesthetic failures: "Their [American folk] tastes rather have been contaminated by the style of school poems and stages; they have thus tended to produce mediocre art poetry which is folk poetry only because it is in possession of the folk" (xxxi). Notice Friedman's clear underlying assumption that the American folk are inherently less than the European folk—Friedman even hesitates to use the term folk poetry to refer to their work.

The one quality that remains respected by scholars of American folk music is their ability to maintain fidelity to the traditional tunes. Yet, that musicality is at the forefront Friedman's characterization of American degeneration. Friedman concurrently praises and derides the American folk tradition when discussing the Child collection: "Music is especially important to the American versions of the Child ballads, since the texts have suffered badly in transmission and are often the dullest doggerel, whereas the music had maintained its quality even better than British singers" (xxv). As the musicality of the American folk ballads becomes the center of the ballad, the plot elements are stripped away—especially supernatural elements. According to the terms of Friedman, "American singers rationalized" the content of the songs and eliminated the elements that they are incapable of believing in (xxviii).

The American rationalization and loss of original supernatural plot elements distances the ballad from its earlier variations, permanently altering its aesthetic value as folk poetry. American folk are assumed to be less occult and less religious than the European folk because these supernatural elements disappear. During their transatlantic transmission, vital plot elements are lost from the variations, and the American folk are believed to contaminate the verse with their "poetic lameness" (Friedman xxxi). Friedman, despite his bias against the American folk, is not wrong when he insists that degeneration does occur among their ballads.

The variants of "The Three Ravens" (or "The Twa Corbies"), Child 26, are exemplary of transatlantic transmission that results in a clear degeneration of the plot and meter of a folk ballad text. One of the most well-known texts of "The Three Ravens" is from 1611 and found in Ravenscroft's *Melismata*, which is also version A in the Child collection and one of the most popular ballads amongst the folk, according to Child's notes (253). Ten verses survive that detail the tender and haunting plot: three hungry ravens sit on a tree discussing where they should eat their breakfast; they look onto a field where a

knight is slain where his hounds lie at his feet and his hawks circle above; they notice a doe, assumed to be the soul of his lover, who carries his body on her back and buries him by a lake; after his burial, she dies of sorrow. The core of the plot is the lament of the knight and the fidelity of his “haukes,” “hounds,” and “leman” (beloved) filtered through the narrative discussion between the three ravens whose only interest is where to satiate their hunger (Friedman 23).

Version A establishes not only the plot elements but also the structure of the ballad that survives in almost all variations, including the degraded American texts. All verses are two lines, except for the first that has four lines, and they are separated by the repetition of the nonsense refrain: “downe a downe, hay down, hay down / with a downe derrie, derrie, derrie, downe, downe” (24). The brutal tenderness of the hounds, the hawks, the burial of the knight and the death of the doe is offset by the alliterative trance of the nonsense refrain.

The ballad clearly degenerates in the Indiana text from P. G. Brewster’s 1940 American collection. The only plot element kept from the 1611 version is the birds’ hunger: ravens are turned into crows and the knight is turned into a slain horse that they determine to “sit upon his old dry bones / and pick his eyes out one by one” (25). The American text not only lacks the majority of the original plot elements, but the melancholic nonsense refrain is turned from “downe derrie, derrie, derrie, downe, downe” into “O Billy McGee, McGaw / And they all flapped their wings and cried/ Caw! Caw! Caw!” (24-25). The nonsense refrains alone demonstrate that the American version is degradation and lacks literary value. However, despite this clear display of textual degradation, the notion of degeneration should not and cannot be the only method of assessing the American ballad texts as folk art. Even the previous example is faulty when considering the American variations of “The Three Ravens” studied by Tristram P. Coffin, who claims in his book *The British Traditional Ballads in North America* that there are a few remaining variations that maintain the spirit and plot elements of the original versions (54).

The Anglo-American ballads require reassessment of their aesthetic values when evaluating their texts as literary folk art. Coffin boldly reacted against the trending notion of American “degeneration” in his ground-breaking essay, “Mary Hamilton and the Anglo-American Ballad as an Art Form,” by claiming that “these texts [the American ballads], compris[e] the greatest single art form that oral tradition has produced” (245). Coffin is the first folk scholar to reclaim the value of the American ballad variations, and, in achieving this reclamation of value, he establishes a framework to accurately assess the American variations. Coffin argues for the decentering of plot from the primary criteria of value judgment. For Coffin, “plotting is vestigial, rather than vital, in the make-up of Anglo American ballads” (246). Even without

plot as the primary basis for judging the ballad, the worth of American ballads can still be accurately judged.

Coffin's reassessment of the ballads adheres to the values of the American folk, values that break from the European folk: "Plotting is honored by the tradition in which the Anglo-American ballad is born, but there is little evidence to support a contention that the folk, in whose oral heritage the ballad lives, care very much at all for unified action" (246). Instead, the American folk elevate the "emotional core," the textual element most directly connected to the musicality of the ballad, above all other elements. According to Coffin, the "Anglo-American ballads stress impact over action and retain, in the long run, only enough of the original action or plot unity to hold this core of emotion in some sort of focus" (246). The "emotional core" should be placed at the forefront of the criteria to judge the American folk ballad texts as folk art since the ballads exist in the oral tradition of American communities.

The communal component is central to theories of ballad genesis. Although the "Throng" theory—that ballads originate from a singing throng—has been disproved, a sentiment shared by Coffin and Friedman, the community is the substance of oral tradition, and it is communities that shape and alter the ballads through the filter of their values and beliefs. Comprehending the American ballad requires a deeper analysis of the genesis of folk ballads: D. K. Wilgus expresses his mentor Phillips Barry's influential theory that folk ballads are "a phenomenon rather than an entity... a process rather than an event" (69). The process of the folk ballad is subject to the passage through numerous minds, the memory of the singer and the reception of the audience. To return to Coffin's "emotional core" theory is to accept the ballad as process and as "song, not poetry" (247). The ballads are words to be sung in a communal setting, and the judgment of these songs should reflect the values of the American folk who were often poor and valued "gossip" (Coffin 247). As Coffin asserts, "A ballad survives among our folk because it embodies a basic human reaction to a dramatic situation" (247). The emotional core, directly tied to the music and the dramatic situation of the ballads, presents ballad scholars a method to assess the ballads as folk art.

To illustrate a prime example of a ballad maintaining its status as folk art through the transatlantic passage from the European folk to the American folk, consider the two variations of the riddle ballad "Captain Wedderburn's Courtship" (Child 46). The riddles, which are "the emotional core" at the center of the plot of "Captain Wedderburn's Courtship" are, as Friedman states, "ancient," and used in numerous riddle folk songs, most notably in "Riddles Widely Expounded" (Child 1). The most studied British variation, version B in the Child collection, from 1857 is sung in 18 verses and consists of the dialogue between a lord's daughter and Captain Wedderburn who wants to lay with

her. For 18 verses the plot is simple: Wedderburn comes across the unnamed daughter on his travels and asks for her hand insisting on the honor his family name; the lady defers to her household duties for care of her father; Wedderburn insists and the lady poses six of the ancient riddles for him to answer; Wedderburn quickly answers them all correctly; she lays with him and they marry.

The plot of “Captain Wedderburn’s Courtship” reflects the values and folk history of the British folk. The riddle courtship is as ancient a trope as the riddles themselves. When the ballad is transferred to the American folk, the ballad becomes the three-verse folk song, “The Riddle Song.” Patrick W. Gainer recorded this version in his collection of folk songs from the mid 20th century, *Folk Songs from the West Virginia Hills*. The typical pattern of American “degeneration” occurs: all the elements of the courtship are eliminated except for the riddles, and the riddles themselves are revised according to the American folks values. Yet, “The Riddle Song” is exemplary of the distillation of a ballad to its “emotional core.” The plot elements are cast aside, because the American folk of the West Virginia mountains have no attachment to the courtship of a lord and a lady. “The Riddle Song” becomes a distillation of “Captain Wedderburn’s Courtship” into a stunning love song that I, as a scholar and a musician, believe transcends even the finest cultural boundaries, and possibly gender binaries, as the text presents a universal courtship through a dialogue between anonymous voices. Although Friedman and other elitist scholars of his ilk may posit that the riddles of “The Riddle Song” are whimsical and frivolous, the alteration is not synonymous with degradation; rather, it signifies the birth of a separate folk art of English-speaking America.

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I Looked East and West: Examining the Crossroads between Blues Music and Poetry

Mickey D'Addario

In institutions of higher learning, the blues receives fairly little attention compared to other musical genres. Among the thousands of courses listed in the Berklee College of Music's 143 page catalog, there are only thirteen different classes about the blues ("2017SP Undergraduate").¹ To put that number in perspective, there are three courses dedicated solely to the Beatles and over eighty courses about jazz music. In humanities departments, where music is becoming a more accepted field of scholarly interest, certain genres and their corresponding subjects of study are more or less commonplace in the liberal arts classroom: folk and rock songs as agents of counterculture protest throughout the twentieth century, traditional ballads as narrative poems, and operas as political tools. Even at SUNY New Paltz, for example, the two undergraduate music history courses that count for liberal arts credit are History of Jazz and History of Rock. Both at New Paltz and at institutions across the nation, the blues is often nowhere to be found. In the rare instance that blues music does receive critical attention, academics generally examine the genre for its social protest undertones (which is a whole different debate itself), limiting the blues to a tiny, one-dimensional box. Implicit in all of these preceding examples is a prevailing notion that blues music is basic, simplistic, rudimentary, unoriginal, and primitive. I contend that, despite its general neglect, the blues is much more intricate than it appears; the genre embodies the complexities of craft and form, making it worthy of study in the literary classroom. To demonstrate this notion, I will analyze the lyrics of Robert Johnson's 1936 track "Cross Road Blues," one of the genre's seminal songs, as a case study to argue that the blues, like poetry, "embodies the human effort to arrive—through conflict—at meaning" (Brooks and Warren xiii).

Due to the importance of lyrical repetition to the blues, the reader/listener does not receive a lot of material to analyze, but the all too common surface-level-only examination of blues lyrics misses layers of meaning. To analyze the blues, one must adopt a mindset that runs counter to the conventional European or "white" perspective. In traditional African music, rhythms are syncopated and melody lines slide between pitches, never attacking the "correct" note directly. This purposeful tendency to hover around the true point exists in blues lyrics as well through a practice called circumlocution. According to writer and ethnomusicologist Ernest Borneman, "the direct statement is...crude and unimaginative" in African tradition (17). Instead,

veiling the truth with the intent of the audience figuring out the meaning or purpose is “considered the criterion of intelligence and personality” (17).

Adopting circumlocution as chief narrative device makes sense for twentieth-century black Americans. In addition to providing a connection to African roots, the technique allowed blues singers to express their frustrations and sorrows in a society where they were refused the right to speak out. Blues pianist, singer, and bandleader Memphis Slim summarized the blues as “signifying, and getting your revenge through song,” with that revenge directed at powerful and cruel figures, such as bosses or police officers (Riesman 129). Additionally, circumlocution provides a sense of audience participation in the work—a tradition that harkens back to the call-and-response work songs that eventually gave birth to the blues. Just as the leader and chorus exchange lines of verse in order to sing a full song in the field call tradition, the audience must interact with blues lyrics in order to arrive at a deeper meaning or message contained within a seemingly simplistic song. Finally, circumlocution allows singers to discuss taboo subjects without the risk of censorship. According to Guy B. Johnson, “relatively few symbols for the sex organs are found in the blues, but these few are worked to the utmost” (173). So, when a blues singer says that he loves his woman’s jelly roll or her cabbage, he is not talking about a home-cooked meal, despite the seemingly innocent and tame nature of such terms to a casual listener. As evidenced by all these aspects of the circumlocution tradition, blues lyrics are inherently imbued with double meanings, greater implications, innuendo, euphemism, symbolic iconography, and multiple layers of depth, making them worthy subjects for close reading.

While a surface-level examination of the lyrics to “Cross Road Blues” produces a simple narrative of a man going to the crossroad, failing to get a ride away from the crossroad, and staying at the crossroad until it gets dark, a deeper analysis of the lyrics through the lens of circumlocution demonstrates that the song “take[s] some bare facts and treat[s] them so that they have both an emotional and an intellectual interpretation,” like a narrative poem (Brooks and Warren 34). It conveys a complicated experience for the speaker and the audience that is both emotional and physical.

Turning to the lyrics themselves, specific word choices and symbols demonstrate the emotional crisis that the speaker experiences. After arriving at the crossroads, the speaker “[falls] down on [his] knees” and “[asks] the Lord above” for mercy and salvation from the current situation (Oszajc). Clearly, the speaker is experiencing distress. The choice of “fell down on my knees” instead of “knelt down” demonstrates desperation rather than piety. Similarly, when the speaker tries to “flag a ride” to get away from the crossroads, “nobody seem[s] to know [him],” and he is ignored (Oszajc). The fact

that those driving by the speaker show indifference to his plight contributes to this speaker's sense of helplessness and alienation. The speaker's calls for help are ignored by the Lord in the first stanza and then by other people in the second. The image of the "risin' sun goin' down" in the third stanza mimics how the speaker feels like he is "sinkin' down" at the crossroads (Oszajc). Again, the lyrics convey a sense of desperation and darkness; this time, the nature imagery expresses the speaker's inner feelings. The final two stanzas bring the speaker's dilemma to a more personal level. God, humanity at large, and the natural world are addressed or acknowledged in the first three verses, but the fourth and fifth center around the speaker's friend, Willie Brown, and the speaker's lack of a "sweet women" during his time of distress (Oszajc). The key for each of these stanzas is that the speaker's personal relationships cannot assist him in his time of need. Willie Brown is not present, eliminating any help that he may provide, and the speaker does not have a wife, girlfriend, or lover to come to his aid. God may not answer the speaker's cries for help and strangers may ignore him, but, even on a micro level, the speaker does not receive any assistance or mercy; he only experiences alienation and isolation.

While each consecutive stanza contributes another layer to the speaker's distress, the third stanza also appears to provide the reason for why the speaker experiences an emotional crisis. According to George Lipsitz, in "West African cosmologies, crossroads can be sites of danger and of opportunity. Where paths come together, collision and confusion may occur, but also decisions need to be made and choices matter" (120). Thus, the crossroad is a place of choice and opportunity "across physical and metaphysical worlds" (Lipsitz 120). The crossing of paths (both literal and figurative) provides options for decisions to be made physically, mentally, and spiritually. Essentially, then, the emotional core of this song lies in the fact that the speaker cannot act; he cannot choose a path, so he simply sinks down at the crossroads. Crossroads are opportunities for "transforming immediate circumstances and conditions," but the speaker's inaction and inability to make a choice results in a failure to transform anything (Lipsitz 120).

The reason that the speaker sinks in at the crossroads instead of making a decision is most likely "conditioned...by the experience of the poet" or, in this case, lyricist (Brooks and Warren 517). During this time period, African Americans like Robert Johnson experienced little agency due to the "brutal police officers, lynch mobs, and labor exploitation [that] combined to shape the contours of [their] existence" (Lipsitz 125). Thus, the song wrestles with the torture and torment of the disconnect between the appearance of choice for black Americans with the reality that such opportunities were simply illusions. The blues may "celebrate life and the ability of man to control and shape his destiny," like Larry Neal claims, but Robert Johnson demonstrates that the

truth of this dream is far from simple (36).

A physical desperation to escape from the crossroads may compliment the emotional and spiritual turmoil experienced by the speaker in “Cross Road Blues.” Beginning in about 1890 and continuing until 1968, specific American towns sought to eliminate all non-white individuals by driving out black populations and posting sundown signs (Loewen 4). These so-called “sundown towns” prohibited all African Americans from entering after dark; those who did not comply with the rule were harassed, beaten, and even killed (Loewen 4-5). In this context, it is no surprise that the speaker is desperate to flag a ride before the sun goes down. His feelings of despair are intensified because there is the imminent prospect of bodily harm if he cannot find a way to get far from the crossroads. Thus, American institutional racism can be another contributing factor to the speaker’s mental state. However, there is also a very real, visceral fear that permeates the lyrics on another level.² By giving the lyrics this combination of emotional and physical danger, Johnson does more than simply relay the facts of a story. Instead, he is able to “[provoke] a certain reaction” from his audience about the situation he describes (Brooks and Warren 75).

Since “Cross Road Blues” is a song, its rhythmic and metrical attributes deserve special attention. When analyzed on this level, the form of “Cross Road Blues” enhances the effectiveness of its content.³ The song’s five verses can be examined like five separate poetic stanzas. While there is no overarching meter for the entirety of the song, each of these stanzas follows its own pattern with important variations. The first verse consists of the line “I went to the crossroads, fell down on my knees,” twice, followed by “Asked the Lord above ‘Have mercy, now save poor Bob, if you please’” (Oszejc). The first two lines are generally anapestic, providing a rollicking feel that lulls the reader/listener into some regularity. The final line of the verse, however, contains a choppy and irregular mixing of iambs and anapests. This sudden break from the steady rhythm of the first two lines conveys to the reader that the speaker is in a dire situation and mimics his distress.

The rhythm in the second stanza is very different from that in the first; the verse is almost entirely iambic. The way that Johnson sings the final line, “Didn’t nobody seem to know me, babe, everybody pass me by,” shortening “didn’t” to one syllable, “nobody” to two syllables, and inserting the word “babe” into the line, gives it an odd number of syllables and results in an anapest amid the iambs. This lengthening of the line that breaks the stanza’s regular rhythm adds a sense of waiting and anticipation. Such feelings for the reader/listener mimic the speaker’s eagerness to find someone to give him a ride away from the crossroads. The third stanza may be the most interesting regarding its meter. The first two lines are iambic but end with anapests. The

final line is anapestic but ends with two iambs. The first two lines, then, extend as they go on. This increase in length mimics the passage of time that leads to the “risin’ sun goin’ down” (Oszajc). The reversal of the last line (anapests followed by two iambs) conveys the opposite effect: urgency. The speaker needs to find a way to flee from the crossroads as soon as possible because, as previously mentioned, physical harm may be imminent once the sun sets.

One final important level of this case study is how the song handles the two aspects of theme and tone in tandem. Brooks and Warren note that “the theme of a poem...amounts to a comment on human values, an interpretation of life,” (342) while “the tone of a poem indicates the speaker’s attitude toward his subject and toward his audience” (181). The worldview expressed by the lyrics is inherently linked to Johnson’s implied black audience. A defining characteristic of the blues is its ability to bring African Americans together by distilling the chief emotions of the black experience in twentieth-century America, or, as James Cone puts it, “the trouble of the blues [is] the history of a people” and their “struggle for existence” (240). This struggle for existence connects back to a common ancestry of slavery. Therefore, according to Stephen Henderson, the “*theme* of [African American art] is Liberation or Freedom, even when statements are personal” (25). Thus, the blues contains a special speaker/addressee relationship rooted in a common history and common social conditions between singer and listener that allows both parties to understand and empathize with the sentiments conveyed in the song.

Combining the ideas of Brooks and Warren with Henderson, “Cross Road Blues” conveys a sense of universality in the African American experience. Johnson’s pronoun usage contributes to this idea. In the song’s fourth verse, the pronoun switches from “I” (used in the other four verses) to “you” (Oszajc). By switching the addressee, the speaker acknowledges that his plight extends beyond himself; the sentiments he expresses reverberate with his black audience. Also, by saying “you can run, you can run, tell my friend Willie Brown,” the speaker invites the reader/listener to help save him from the crossroads (Oszajc). Implied in this line is a familiarity between Johnson and his listener because Johnson assumes that the listener knows Willie. He does not give any details about Willie aside from his name, so the listener must already know who and where he is. Essentially, Johnson inserts his listener into the song, saying “hey, I know you understand what’s happening here, so help me out by telling my friend Willie Brown what’s happened to me.” Johnson plays with the speaker/addressee bond by recognizing how listeners can understand his speaker’s situation and how they can help.

Additionally, the use of circumlocution allows for direct audience participation, further contributing towards the connection between speaker and addressee. Johnson can only accurately depict such a complex and intense

topic through an art form where the audience members have to put the big picture together by themselves. The audience is called upon to recognize that the speaker cannot simply say how he feels and why he feels that way. In turn, they are called upon to recognize this same struggle in themselves. Possibly, this special speaker/addressee relationship offers some hope as well. When the audience members arrive at their own crossroads, they can recall the conflict in “Cross Road Blues.” However, they may realize that taking some action (physical or mental) is the only way to escape the fate of the speaker in the song.

With all of that said, I must concede that, on one hand, accusations against blues music’s simplicity may not be entirely baseless. The most basic building blocks of any blues song—a I-IV-V chord progression (the tonic, subdominant, and dominant chords of the key) and a lyrical formulation of statement, repetition of statement, and resolution—*are* extremely simplistic. However, neglecting to delve beyond the surface of blues music robs the reader/listener of achieving a type of sacred intimacy with the singer that is, importantly, not dependent upon race. While classic blues does convey the early twentieth-century African-American experience, the same core issues—abandonment, mistreatment, entrapment, loss, struggle—and their corresponding emotions exist across time, place, and skin color. “Cross Road Blues” is a poetic experience that not only expresses the emotions and trials of a specific people at a specific time, but of the universal human experience of dealing with adversity. Blues music deserves a place in academia because it makes fate comprehensible. Until the blues becomes an accepted medium of literary study, its beauty, power, and ability to distill and express the rawest human emotions will be entirely lost to too many “educated” individuals. That loss is something to sing the blues about.

Notes

1. Of the thirteen unique courses listed, the breakdown is as follows: four performance ensembles, one vocal ensemble, four guitar style/technique labs, one piano style/technique lab, one music and society course, one social science course, and one performance improvisation course.
2. Interestingly enough, Cream's well-known cover of the song, found on the band's 1968 album *Wheels of Fire*, does not include this verse about the sun going down. Instead, Eric Clapton substitutes it with a verse from "Traveling Riverside Blues," another Johnson song.
3. Of course, it is extremely unlikely that Johnson counted iambs or anapests. However, seeing that I am analyzing the song like a piece of poetry, authorial intent is not as important as the inherent effect that the song's lyrical meter conveys.

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Between the Classroom and the Countryside: Reviving Folk Ballads and Oral Recitation in Secondary Schools

Vincent Fino

In the 1960s English classroom, one would find students scanning Frost's "Out, Out—" or the ballad "Frankie and Johnny" in Warren and Brooks's didactic text, *Understanding Poetry*, breaking down meter, rhyme scheme and word choice. In this methodical examination of "precision," form and purpose became ingrained in students, which, in turn, encouraged young scholars to try their own hand at the long-standing tradition of verse. Now, fast forward to April 2016. For the past three school days, I have proctored the laborious and highly intensive Common Core ELA exam. As I paced around the room for the billionth time, I noticed students answering questions on a non-descript poem, the only one on the exam. The verse was simple, bland, and inessential-- or, in the age of "high-stakes testing," the consummate combination. With President George W. Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2001 and President Barack Obama's subsequent *Race to the Top* program in 2010, conventional poetry reading, writing, and recitation were expunged to adhere to the new Common Core State Standards, focusing instead on literacy and writing skills to prepare students across all content areas, with the end goal being college and career readiness. As most New York State citizens witnessed with last year's testing opt-out movement, changes to the public school education have been met with disdain, and rightfully so. In many charter, pay-to-play schools, "teaching to the test" has taken precedence over creative-based learning. Being in the field of English education, I have heard teachers bemoan the issue of fitting creativity in the rigid, standard-based system. Consequently, students do not see English Language Arts class as an empathy-building, creative space.

Poetry is, in its essence, writing about human nature. It is a creative process that provokes "inquiry, analysis, and in some instances, we hope, compassionate embrace" (Gilyard 344) or in other terms, a constructivist activity. When poems are introduced in an accepting, holistic environment, students have the opportunity to create individual meaning, independent of the "effective" or "ineffective" Pearson/McGraw Hill system of success. Twenty-first century students are missing this bedrock of curriculum. While the pedagogical theorists behind Common Core have, as of late, adopted standards to incorporate poetry and creative writing, additional curriculum--specifically the study and recitation of folk ballads--is essential to students' continued emotional, cognitive, and creative success.

The implementation of national, standard-based learning dramatically shifted the public education classroom. Critical-thinking and skill based objectives promoted by New York State and federal standards have reinvented the English Language Arts curriculum. From post-World War II through the 1960s, poetry was a boon to both English instruction and student engagement. The effort to reform the study of literature and make student active participants in the English classroom arose in the early 1940s, when students scanned poems from Petrarch to Pound. Teachers and students focused on the “poetic function” of language, which led to the creative writing or progressive movement in schools. This dramatic shift from passive readers of poetry to active lyricist was heralded by poets and pedagogists alike. The Early 1940s poets, C. Day Lewis and James Reeves were early advocates for poetry-intensive units in education. Lewis stressed the “pleasure” of reading poetry in the classroom while Reeves called the “enthusiasm, liveliness, and variety” demonstrated in collaborative writing and reading as “key factors in teaching poetry” (Lockwood 2011). Teachers were now “treating literature as if it were a continuous experience rather than a mere corpus of knowledge—as it were a living thing, as if people intended to write more of it” (Myers 280). Educators viewed the dramatic shift as an opportunity to not only create creative, critical-thinking writers, but also to sharpen students’ scansion of meter, rhyme scheme, and other poetic techniques. At its fundamental core, “the writing of verses was one means to achieve exactness in literary study.” (Brooks; Warren). Rather than having separate creative writing and poetry classes, the two were entwined as a “method of enforcing precept by practical illustration” (Myers 280). Practical illustration extended across all forms of poetry, including the enduring tradition of ballad reading and writing. Poets such as Ted Hughes and American Kenneth Koch encouraged this read-and-write principle, writing their own books on the teaching of poetry. One cannot overlook Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks’ influential text, *Understanding Poetry*, a didactic staple across all high school and college literature courses. Because of its careful consideration to the craft and content of poetry, the hegemonic text sold millions of copies across the country. The didactic work created lovers of the art form, not test-taking machines. Yet, the rise of state and federal policy-making altered this long-standing tradition.

In 2010, the Common Core Standards were established so that all states would adhere to the same standards across all grade and content areas. The objective was to “level the playing field” for economically impoverished schools. Reformers argued that the “disparity between the test scores of white students and students of color” is proof that public schools are failing (Ravitch 57). Under President Obama’s *Race to the Top Program*, state education departments were incentivised to “buy-in” to federal testing of students from grades

3-8 and subsequently use those scores as part of teacher-evaluation. If states failed to comply to these demands, which included adopting Common Core Standards, they did not receive as much federal aid. Needing federal funding, the majority of states complied to these demands and the high-stakes testing movement flourished. In the content area of English Language Arts, educators panicked and began to “teaching to the test,” which focused on students’ ability to read informational and fictional texts and use evidence to support their inferences and claims. While these skills are necessary for both college and career readiness, the tests have delayed the kind of progressive practices that held great promise throughout the later 20th century. At the heart of “teaching to the test,” is a loss of student engagement. Though the federal government has not enacted required curriculum, states across the country have purchased curricula from education-based companies such as Pearson, which helped develop the Common Core tests. These high-stakes tests now control student writing and thinking, which, again, is focused on students’ ability to read and pull evidence from informational and fictional texts (Barrel et al. 16).

As a middle school educator, I know adhering to standards and focusing on test preparation is a massive effort for teachers and students alike. Consequently, a qualitative approach to writing, which promotes revision and peer evaluation, is often overlooked. Creativity is strenuous work, which requires “pondering, practice, and the pursuit of novel ideas” (Vance 27). Regrettably, those ideas fall by the wayside in a high-stakes testing environment.

In terms of leveling the public school playing field, the racial and economical achievement gap has been “slow and uneven” (Davitch). Moreover, with the minute progress came a loss of control at the local, district level. For English teachers and their students, that meant a loss of reading and writing of poetry as a core empathetic and meaning-making experience. Under *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top*, poetry has become a component of test preparation rather than an empathy-building, critical-thinking craft.

In addition to state and federal regulations, technological advances--specifically in the age of social media--have detracted students away from poetry reading and writing. A Kaiser Family Generation M2 study from 2012 found that “8-18 year-olds had over four hours of screen time daily and an additional hour of computer screen time” (Vance 27). As many teachers and scholars know, creative development, specifically poetry-writing, requires many hours of deliberate practice and revision. If students are not exposed early on to poetry as a meaning-making activity, one of purpose and precision, they will not see its extracurricular use. Moreover, if educators are obligated to “teach to the test” for the majority of the school year, it is no wonder students are distracted by Facebook and texting once they are met with the task of writing a villanelle or reciting a Scottish ballad. Studies will

continue to show that, when students consider a subject-area “low-interest,” they are more susceptible to Facebook and social media distraction (Gupta; Irwin).

A Poetry reading, recitation, and writing renaissance is needed to bring students back from the instant gratification era. Firstly, poetry is a skill students need to know. Poetry can help with their “vocabulary development, close reading, understanding of metaphorical language, and ability to process meaning from text” (Duffy). The aforementioned skills are embedded in the new Common Core Standards, but they are focused in informational texts rather imaginative literature. By putting the emphasis back on poetry as a skill-based practice, schools would adhere to state standards while also having students embark on a meaning-making, empathy-building experience. Many educators have begun adding poetry that deals with non-fiction themes, which is a major component of the standards. For example, many schools, including mine, teach Karen Hesse’s *Out of the Dust*, a book of poetry that deals with The Dust Bowl and Thanhha Lai’s *Inside Out and Back Again*, a book of poetry focusing on the Vietnamese refugee experience in the late 1960s. Yes, critics may say these are simplistic, free-verse poems and do not supplant Whitman or Warren. Nevertheless, teachers are able to satisfy a number of standards and instruct on meter, personification, and literary techniques with these simple, Common Core aligned texts.

Aside from the works of Hesse and Lai, teachers can incorporate ballads to satisfy a number of standards. Traditional, broadside ballads could be incorporated to look at sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English history. ELA educators would deepen students’ understanding of the time period while also looking at form and poetic techniques, such as hyperbole, which is very prevalent in Child ballads and ballads of a similar time period. Folk and modern ballads, works that focus on early American life, can also be exercised in the English Language Arts classroom. For example, students could analyze Woody Guthrie’s “Dust Bowl Blues” for historical content while also examining the significance of word choice and figurative language.

The teaching of ballads can also lead to additional creative writing opportunities. “Sing and Shout! The History of America in Song” a course at the University of Connecticut, focuses on “the history and culture of America through immersion in the creative expression-- American folk songs, games, and dances associated with population movements and critical moments in our country’s past” (Junda). In addition to American folk songs, the class has a project modeled on the mid-16th century broadside ballad of the British Isles. These broadside ballads served to “foster commentary on current events” while also spotlighting core human issues of love, betrayal, and death (Junda). The class started the project by studying American broadside ballads written

during the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, The Dust Bowl, and other periods of natural disaster or social unrest. After students surveyed both form and content of American ballads, students had to create a broadside ballad about a current event, situation, idea, or concern that would captivate a large group of people, much like the broadside ballads of the past. In their small groups, students studied form, tempos, meters, and rhyme schemes, as well as the emotional aspects of traditional broadside ballads. At the end of the project, students introduced the social commentary surrounding their ballads and subsequently, recited their works. While this example is at the university level the program can be modified to fit the secondary classroom. Public school educators would satisfy collaborative, reading, and writing standards across Social Studies and English Language Arts content areas.

The ballad-writing program at The University of Connecticut highlighted the need for creative writing in education. Reading informational texts does not offer the emotional and social growth that poetry reading and writing yields. When poetry is solely used as a vehicle to prepare for a test, poetry becomes a feared and despised genre to many students. In a study that monitored the writing practices of 20 fourth- and fifth-grade boys in a low, socioeconomic urban school, analyses revealed that it was possible to create an environment in which elementary-aged boys felt willing and eager to read and write poetry. First, the boys were offered a choice of poetry. Poetry can easily be differentiated and tailored to student ability and interest, something that a “one-size-fits-all” novel cannot do. The freedom and choice afforded by poetry gave the boys a sense of ownership. Additionally, the group of boys collaborated with visiting poets, their teacher, and fellow students to create poems which incorporated sophisticated language and literary devices. The outcome was very positive. The boys created poems that were emotionally and creatively engaged, poems that referenced--to varying degrees and in complex ways--other “texts, voices, and styles” (Hawkins; Certo 200).

As with the boys in the aforementioned study, poetry can be a freeing, empathy-building, and imaginative experience. Unlike the data-driven, artificial poems used during state exams, an authentic curriculum that includes a wide range of poetry--from Child ballads to Dickinson’s verse--provides students an opportunity to learn meter, metaphor and other literary techniques while also connecting to the human experience. In the Common Core day and age, student experience and engagement must return to the forefront of education. Poetry’s form and verse must return to the classroom as a craft--not as test-prep material.

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“Bury Me Not on the *Known* Prairie”: (Authentic)
Origins, Endings, and Resurrection in the American
Cowboy Song

Christopher Paolini

Whether or not the tuned-in audience of today has ever found the rollicking joy, moaning sorrow, or twangy spirit-heave in the glory of AM country radio, or have even gotten a sense, however degraded, of the country music aesthetic from contemporary, popular FM phonies, there is a strong chance that, in contemplating the genre, the mythic figure of the American cowboy presides horse-high over the cattle range of our subconscious. He may be right up rope-length silver-screen close, or he may be a speck against a vast prairie expanse, a distant glimmer as a ray of sun catches his spurs—but he is there. In a 1945 investigation of the American frontier, *Cow Country*, historian and professor Edward Everett Dale maintains the popular argument first proposed in 1893 by Frederick J. Turner, Dale’s mentor and thesis advisor at Harvard, that the idea of the frontier *in fact* defined the American ethos. In Turner’s words: “This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the great West” (200).

Cow Country’s central concern is the American cowboy, or cowpuncher, whom Dale refers to as “that most picturesque of all the sons of the Great West” (Dale 115), that romanticized subject of countless films and fiction pieces, both pulp and proper, going as far back as the mid-1800s. He identifies and quickly dispels the two dominant myths, both, he notes, as “equally untrue” representations (115). First is the cowboy “as a kind of Sir Galahad, a knight without stain and a champion without reproach, who rode about over the prairies frequently rescuing blondes in distress and maybe occasionally doing a little work” (115). The other is that of the “wild semi-outlaw, quick on the trigger, ready to fight at the drop of a hat and to drop it himself, a roistering roaring hellion who spent most of his time in saloons consuming bad whisky and playing poker...with low and dissolute companions” (115). The cowboy mythos was significantly impacted by the dramatized tales of the Western genre, and even more so by the public’s conflation of archetypes within this genre. Finding solidarity in gun-toting, horse-riding, Stetson hat- bandana-boots- spurs- and buckskin- donning, as well as upholding an attitude of fervent individualism, the distinct characteristics that separate the cowboy

from the outlaw were often overshadowed by the alluring mystique of the American frontier—the mythic “Wild West.”

Decades before the medium of film had been established and transformed into a popular art form, many of the characteristics of the Western genre were developed in print. Frontier fiction of the early- to mid-1800s, such as James Fenimore Cooper’s celebrated *Leatherstocking Tales*, worked towards materializing many of the thrills and dangers of the uncultivated landscape, defining many of the skills and values required of any man who wished to participate in the experiment of its cultivation and prevail in the face of its savage defenses. The latter half of the century found the Western genre achieving specialized status and reaching a nationwide audience through often sensationalized pulp fiction—serialized stories and dime novels. These publications helped to immortalize certain historical figures, such as Jesse James, Billy the Kid and Buffalo Bill, within the American mythos. In the early decades of the 20th century, Western novels, namely Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* in 1902 and Zane Grey’s *Riders of the Purple Sage* in 1912, brought the genre into booming popularity. Regardless of whether or not the fiction of this time began garnering serious literary merit, much of it nevertheless operated through romanticized notions of the Western figure. In response to such unrealistic accounts of frontier life, and specifically the image of the cowboy, Andy Adams penned 1903’s semi-autobiographic *Log of a Cowboy*, an account of a cattle drive along the Great Western Cattle Trail, often considered literature’s most realistic account of the cowboy.

Merits of authenticity aside, representations of the cowboy and his trials derived from the facts of his occupation could not suffuse popular consciousness to the same degree as sensationalized accounts, especially in light of the quick rise of the film industry. Edwin S. Porter’s 1903 film *The Great Train Robbery* is generally considered the first Western for “set[ting] the pattern—of crime, pursuit, and retribution—for the...genre” (Fenin & Everson 47). *Stagecoach*, a 1939 film by popular, critically-lauded, and highly influential director John Ford, helped to herald in a Golden Age of Western cinema, as well as secure actor John Wayne as a hard-boiled portrait of rugged masculinity and Hollywood icon. *The Lone Ranger*, brandishing a strict moral code, overtly virtuous in the clean cleavage of good versus evil forces on the frontier, found mass popular appeal both on the radio from 1933 to 1954 and on television from 1949 to 1957.

Whether upright, criminal, or riding the line, what many of the recognizable figures that littered both film and fiction had in common was their nomadic mystique. Many commentators on the genre have noted a parallel with the “knight-errant” archetype of Arthurian Romances—wandering, seemingly rootless, on the back of a trusty steed, fighting villains and bound

to no social constraints save their own strict moral and heroic code (Fishwick 92). More importantly, for the sake of this brief investigation, though, is the widely unanimous disconnect between their personae and a *clear* grounding in *real* cowboy culture. In romanticizing the cowboy figure to make him emblematic of the Western *genre* and its implied mythos, the *historical* cowboy, and with this notion a more feasible opportunity to begin understanding the cowboy as an *individual*, is jeopardized.

Perhaps more so than the Hollywood film or the literary record, folk-songs, as living, breathing, and forever adapting to the joys, sorrows, values, hopes, aspirations, and immediate concerns of its community, present a more authentic portrait of the actual individuals participating within the tradition. Through the somewhat ritualistic incantations of folksong, the “lays of the common people,” in the words of Bentley Ball, “live and seem destined to live”—as well as, I would add, the unphraseable spirit of the people from which the songs came and into which they continue (Ball 2). The first significant collection of cowboy lyrics, *Songs of the Cowboys*, compiled by Jack Thorp and published in 1908, was not only the result of the first person to travel the mythic West specifically to collect cowboy songs, but the project of someone who had lived a handful of years working the range. Compare this to Ivy League schooled folklorist John Avery Lomax’s *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, the second major collection of cowboy songs, first published in 1910. Although both men bowdlerized the lyrics of some of the songs they included, sacrificing an authenticity in the profane, it was Lomax who, curating the collection under the guise of scholarship, faced the real scrutiny. Not only, in his own words, was he “violat[ing] the ethics of ballad gatherers...by selecting and putting together what seemed to be the best lines from different versions” of the songs, his true sin was in failing to credit sources for the songs he reprinted, a number of which were *suspiciously* similar to ones first appearing in Thorp’s collection. Even beyond the obvious ethical issues implied in this accusation of plagiarism is a plagiarism that strikes at the heart of the folk tradition—that issue being, namely, that it is a *folk* tradition. By failing to credit sources, Lomax ultimately snatched the claim to ownership from the working and singing communities of which the songs and their traditions were both respected and even had distinct function, appropriating them as mythic curiosities for a popular audience lacking the means or desire to extend proper reverence.

Compared to Thorp’s humble promotion of a culture he actively partook in, Lomax began looking more like an imposter on the range and along the trails, with potential to exploit the people of the West and their culture in the same vein as Hollywood or pulp fiction. Taking note of the backlash, both men noted the songs’ sources in their reprinted collections—Thorp more

generously both in a prefatory “Acknowledgments” section and as individual introductions to each lyric, Lomax more begrudgingly in footnotes.

Here I would like to devote brief discussion to two of these cowboy songs included in both Thorp’s and Lomax’s second editions of their collections, “The Dying Cowboy” and “The Cowboy’s Lament,” and how they relay notions of life and death—the songs’ origins; the *literal* death of the cowboy; the apparent death of authenticity; and a subsequent resurrection of merit through poetry and poetic ideals. Both songs also happen to be included in *The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English-Speaking World*, edited by Albert B. Friedman, one of many commentators somewhat notorious for their accusations of degradation in folksongs and ballads.

“The Dying Cowboy,” or “O Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie,” is, as Jim Bob Tinsley notes, “perhaps the best known of all cowboy songs” (Tinsley 81). On top of this distinction lie a few more worth noting. The ballad was the first cowboy song to see the light of a proper publication—Annie Laurie Ellis submitted it, tune included, to the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, who published it in 1901. The song also played its hand in some “firsts” of the recording industry. Typewriter salesman and concert singer Bentley Ball, known for his programs of patriotic and traditional songs, was the first to record cowboy songs, laying down “The Dying Cowboy” and “Jesse James” for Columbia Records in 1919. But it was Carl T. Sprague and his recordings for Victor Records, including “Bury Me Not,” that, according to Bill Malone’s *Country Music U.S.A.*, “may have done most to generate an immediate interest in the recorded songs of the cowboy” (Malone 139). “Com[ing] out of genuine cowboy experience,” ranching in South Texas with his singing uncle, Malone claims Sprague’s recordings “mark him as one of America’s first singing cowboys” (139).

Tinsley’s notes, as well as those of countless others, rightfully assert that “The Dying Cowboy” “is not a cowboy original” (Tinsley 81), as its complicated origin story delves back into both song and poetry circa the mid-1800s. The cowboy ballad, expressing the final, overwhelming plea of a dying cowboy and his companions’ inability to honor his last request, mimics both the sentiment and the insistence of the mariner in Reverend E. H. Chapin’s “formal and lachrymose” (Friedman 436) poem “The Ocean-Buried” (not “The Ocean *Burial*,” as Friedman has it), published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1839, who cries “Bury me not in the deep, deep sea!” (Chapin 615). The poem was later rearranged and set to music by George N. Allen, sung on the concert stage, printed in songbooks, and even briefly entered oral tradition. Friedman’s biggest complaint with the cowboy ballad is with the line “No sunbeams rest on a prairie grave,” a line that is neither present in the 1901 publication of the song nor Thorp’s or Lomax’s versions, but occurs, as Fried-

man notes, in a version from H. M. Belden's *Songs Collected by the Missouri Folk-Lore Society*, published in 1940 (436; 437). Although the earlier compilations do not include this line or the verse variant it comes from, they are nothing close to definitive records, and, due to the cowboy's retaining of many passages of the mariner's song, sea imagery traded in for frontier imagery, there should be no reason to doubt that the line was often sung in the ranching and trail riding heyday of the American West. Friedman claims that the line is "a manifest untruth, but comparison with 'The Ocean Burial' shows that singers *slavishly* borrowed this line without realizing that it is applicable only to a grave at sea" (emphasis mine; 436). Such harsh criticism demands recompense.

A variation of Reverend Chapin's poem, E. B. Hale's "O, Bury Me Not," published likewise in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1845, has the speaker *requesting* to be buried at sea, rather than "the lone, lone tomb/ all shrouded in darkness, and mantled in gloom" (Hale 511). This positive inversion finds its cowboy referent in two songs. The first, "Bury Me Out on the Lone Prairie," collected from Kenneth Clark's *The Cowboy Sings Songs of the Ranch and Range* and included in Lomax's volume, relays the story of a cowpuncher caught on the wrong side of the law when he shoots a man who insulted his sweetheart. Gunned down by a ranger, he wishes to be buried out on the prairie in solitary defiance and as a testament to the trouble women can cause. The second, "Carry Me Back to the Lone Prairie," penned and recorded by Carson J. Robison, is more of a direct inversion of the classic cowboy ballad. Robison, described by Kurt Wolff as "a 'citybilly,' a pop-oriented singer who successfully adapted his urban-trained style to the burgeoning hillbilly market," presents the prairie with sentimentalized detachment; he grew up in Kansas, but never worked the land like those who sang the popular cowboy ballad (37).

To the rancher or the rider of the cattle trails, a prairie burial represented the exact *opposite* of what was desired in death. There is a reason the cowboy could so easily relate to the mariner's plea—vast, anonymous, and incredibly far from family and loved ones, the prairie was an apt symbolic terrain for the sea, or perhaps vice versa. The funeral rites conducted on the frontier very rarely saw a religious figure presiding over the ceremony, and the lost cowboy's companions in labor, always of the mindset of "the show must go on," would often hastily and uncomfortably perform whatever respectful service they could muster up, as crude as whatever grave marker may, or may *not*, have been put up to commemorate their fallen comrade. The markers were often monuments merely for the moment—burial sites were wherever a convenient place to bury a body seemed to be, and the idea that any loved ones would ever seek the grave, and furthermore, actually *find* it, was wishful thinking. The graves were generally shallow, with cloth wrappings taking the

place of coffins, leaving the bodies as easy bait for the elements and wildlife, especially coyotes (Dale 63; Gard 139). That Friedman could not imagine the cowboy to have a sense of poetic pathos, retaining the image of “no sunbeams rest[ing] on a prairie grave” as symbolic of a lost, lonely, and greatly undesired life after death, speaks multitudes to who he was as a ballads critic.

A more “playful” number, “The Cowboy’s Lament” concerns a young, suffering cowboy, fond of drinking and gambling, shot in the chest and awaiting death in either Tom Sherman’s barroom of Dodge City, Kansas, or the more popular streets of Laredo, Texas (Tinsley 77-78). Whatever the variant, there is almost always a request for a military funeral. Lomax cites this chorus as such: “Oh, beat the drum slowly and play the fife lowly, / Play the dead march as you carry me along; / Take me to the green valley, there lay the sod o’er me, / For I’m a young cowboy and I know I’ve done wrong” (Lomax 74). Again, Friedman’s dismissive criticism allows for easy recompense. Although he notes that some versions of the song—he does not specify who or where they’ve come from—replace the military jargon with the more appropriate “drag[g]ing your rope slowly...rattl[ing] your spurs lowly, / and giv[ing] a wild whoop as you carry me along,” he chastises the more popular refrain as being a “discrepancy,” “absurd,” and “a holdover from the songs in which a soldier was the victim” (Friedman 424-25). These may be the earliest origins—“The Unfortunate Rake,” “sung in Ireland as early as the 1790s,” recounts the afflictions of the Irishman dying of syphilis—but they are not the most local (Friedman 424). Cowhand Francis Henry Maynard is said to have written the words to “The Cowboy’s Lament” in 1876 as “a poem that could be sung to the tune of ‘The Dying Girl’s Lament,’ ” a popular cowboy ballad at the time (qtd. in Tinsley 77). Maynard’s verses show some distinct variation from the lyrics in Thorp’s and Lomax’s volumes, but the “muffled drums” and “dead marches” of the military funeral still preside over the refrain. The product of a single author, composing with poetic intention, is shaped within a more deliberate process than the communally organic nature of folksongs; this intention submits to the discipline of diction with a stable product in mind. It could perhaps be argued that Maynard’s military funeral is the respectful and appropriate ceremony for a cowboy who prided himself on his past military service. Likewise, it could perhaps be argued, again, against Friedman’s judgment, that cowboys were not simply “all work and no poetry,” that some poetic sense made an allegorical connection—in bravery, danger, service—between cowboys and soldiers, justifying the “inappropriate” request.

The intersection of poetry and song, however subtle, is always an interesting study, and the lyrics and lines of the cowboy are no exception. In the face of sensationalized fiction and film, ensuring the survival of the true cowboy of the American west becomes the burden, or perhaps the opportunity, of

the “folk” themselves and the folk-art they create as a community. In her introduction to Thorp’s revised and enlarged volume, Alice Corbin Henderson, assistant editor of Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry* magazine, calls for a reassessment of the cowboy mythos and the merit of his verse:

It is quite true that the world of the cowboy songs is less imaginary than actual. It was a concrete world the cowboy lived in—he couldn’t escape too much into the world of the imagination...His world is not...peopled with fairies or ghostly apparitions or knights in steel armor [like in English ballads]...His life is—cattle; but those who think this life prosaic overlook the hidden romance, the lonely and tragic and humorous events of the round-up, the long trail-drive, or the night-watch. (xxi-xxii)

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Still Walking: Ownership and Originality in Folk Songs of the Catskills

Alex Pennisi

The Catskill folk tradition is steeped in rich musical history; this is obvious to anyone familiar with the massive compilation of songs and annotations found in *Folk Songs of the Catskills* (1982). Compiled from a wide variety of folk songs sung by bluestone miners, lumber workers, and all other varieties of Catskill inhabitants, this monumental achievement is the result of over two decades of research that involved the collecting, organizing, and annotating of 178 individual songs. As with any folk scholarship, the researchers and compilers were faced with the difficult task of determining the origin(s) of each particular song. While for some songs the provenance may be easy to identify, or at least straightforward, others are harder to track. One song that has been particularly difficult to pin down, and perhaps the most popular in the Catskill collection, is “I Walk the Road Again.”¹ Once thought to be an original composition from the Catskill region, significant scholarship eventually revealed that the song, like so many others, shares similarities in tune and text with a number of close but distinct relatives. While most of these relatives have been considered and used to reevaluate the origin of the song, one in particular has been grossly discredited. The discrediting of any relative, however, is reckless if it also denies the oral tradition, or the foundation of the folk process. Redeeming this account, though, will not direct us to the end of any roads, nor will it suggest any point(s) of origin; instead, it will remove a barricade over an old and crumbling road, one that has aged with misuse and is waiting eagerly to be walked again.

Before walking down that road, however, we must first become familiar with the song at hand. A testament to its popularity and distinction as a Catskill Mountain song, “I Walk the Road Again” is the last song discussed in *Folk Songs of the Catskills*. As is exemplified in its title, “I Walk the Road Again” is a typical hobo song. The singer is a self-described “poor unlucky chap” with sore feet and torn clothes. At the end of each verse, the singer gets up and hoists his “turkey,” the folk term for a waltzing Matilda, or the pack of belongings a traveler carries on a stick over his shoulder, and sets off on the road again. Compelled to abandon job after job for the call of the road because of poor wages (best expressed in the line: “toiling hard to make a living, boys, I hardly think she pays”), the itinerant singer finds himself travelling up and down the region from “New York” to “Buffalo” to the “Susquehanna Yard.” Thanks in part to its local scenery, the song has been described by Norman

Cazden, co-editor of *Folk Songs of the Catskills*, as “the most typical example of Catskill mountain music” (*The Abelard Folk Song Book* 4).

The lyrics, chords, and tune of “I Walk the Road Again” collected in *FSC* are transcribed from the version sung by George Edwards, arguably the most recognizable figure in Catskill folk tradition (*FSC* 18). While the song was the one “he repeated most often” and “most associated with him,” Edwards’ provenance over it was perhaps crystallized in an often-cited incident that not only describes his “self-reliant” nature, but has also become something of a legend in Catskill folk history (*FSC* 640). During a recording session and singing workshop at Columbia University in 1939, Edwards left his hotel for a pack of cigarettes. Quickly losing his direction and having no memory of the name of his hotel, Edwards spotted the George Washington Bridge, oriented himself to the Hudson River, and set off walking. Past 60 at the time, in poor health, and with little money or food, Edwards walked 125 miles, sleeping in “brickyards and old log barns” along the way, before finally arriving at his home in the Catskills over two weeks later (*FSC* 640). While this incident gives personal meaning to Edwards’ relationship with the song, he would be the first to deny that it was the origin.

As Cazden reminds us throughout his commentary on “I Walk the Road Again,” George Edwards said himself that the song “had been made up by his father...and that it was based on his father’s personal experience” (“IWRAA” 12). While he initially attributed the entirety of the composition to Jehila Edwards in his notes to *The Abelard Folk Song Book* (1958), Cazden would revise his attribution in a presentation to the sessions of the Society for Ethnomusicology, held in Toronto, Ontario on December 2, 1972, in which he argued that the *words* were of original composition, not the *tune*:

Judging from the many local references of the text, the true-life details, the mode of living vividly described, and judging also from the negative evidence that no trace or portion of this text has turned up thus far in relevant places, there’s good reason to accept this statement [that the song was composed by Jehila Edwards] as valid, with respect to the words of the song. But as regards the tune...the traditional singer does not use the expression “made up” or even “composed” to mean the creation of an original melody. In his conception it means the setting or the fitting of the words to an appropriate traditional tune, with whatever adaptations and adjustments seem necessary. (“IWRAA” 12)

The rest of Cazden’s presentation goes on to provide detailed evidence for the incorrectness of his initial judgment that the song, at least in regards to the tune, was an original composition (*AFSB* 4). Pointing out similarities in songs such as “The Good Old State of Maine” (recorded by Larry Gorman) and “The Turfman from Ardee” (recorded by Margaret Barry), Cazden con-

cedes that “the supposedly unique melody of ‘I Walk the Road Again’ was, like so many others of the lumbercamp repertory, a ‘general utility tune.’ . . . , probably of Irish origin, as had appeared from its internal style, and likely to turn up with numerous texts” (“IWRAA” 19).

After detailing the evidence of his incorrectness, Cazden goes on to humbly assert an alternative purpose to his presentation, in which he states:

For it became obvious, from the number and the variety of sources of these undeniable tune relatives, that there must have been yet others of at least comparable family resemblance that I had previously overlooked. Hence to achieve proper correction I was forced to walk the road again, so to speak, and if need be to walk the same road again and again, carefully examining afresh much ground that I had previously passed over in haste. I am glad to report, just as I am also ashamed to report, that I had been guilty of numerous oversights. (“IWRAA” 23)

Since Cazden’s paper, a variety of versions and variants have sprung forth, ultimately justifying his willingness to report such incorrectness. More importantly, however, this newly uncovered evidence has also revealed further oversight in Cazden’s research, specifically in his judgment regarding the originality of the text, or words of the song.

Ten years after his presentation, multiple accounts of textual similarity would surface to be examined and discussed in *Folk Songs of the Catskills* (1982). Cazden, co-editor of the collection, was probably not surprised to find himself walking down the same road yet again. Of the recently unveiled pieces of evidence, two are unique in that they cannot be traced directly back to George Edwards. The first, turned up by Joseph Hickerson, was found “[a]mong Robert Winslow Gordon’s columns for *Adventure Magazine*” in which a “fragmentary stanza and refrain appear in . . . 1923” (FSC 640). The stanzas that Cazden provides are as follows:

Oh, the National Line, it ruined me,
It caused me grief and pain;
So we’ll h’ist up on the turkey
And we’ll welt the road again.

(Chorus):
We’ll welt the road again, my boys,
We’ll welt the road again;
We’ll h’ist up on the turkey,
And we’ll welt the road again. (640-641)

“So many elements in the text,” Cazden writes, “are unmistakably similar to those in *I Walk the Road Again*, including the verse form and its timing, the

reference to railroad work, the image of the “turkey,” the rhyme, and the key title words, that the likelihood of accidental resemblance is negligible” (FSC 641). What is “tantalizing” about this evidence is that it appears to have no identifiable connection to the Edwards text. According to Cazden’s report on Gordon’s fragment, the song “was collected in California from Henry Miller Rideout [who] had learned it when a child from ‘a very disreputable drunken sailor’” (FSC 641). While the song indicates “neither a setting nor a provenance in California...Gordon includes...that the incident took place at Palermo Center, Maine, during the 1880s,” from which “the Grand Trunk division of the Canadian National Line lies not far away” (FSC 641). Cazden concludes his discussion regarding this particular text relative by welcoming “any further information about that song,” opening the door, as he has done in the past, for further evidence to enlighten the conversation.

In the second text relative, however, Cazden is less receptive. “Another version,” he writes, “given by Jay Edwards in 1966, is declared to have been taken ‘from the singing of Jerry Ferris, who learned it from Harry (Stoney) Stoneback, who reportedly got it from a hobo’” (FSC 641). He goes on to dismiss this account as a “fourth-hand report” that is “less convincing because the text it accompanies is so similar in detail to that of #178, which has been available in print since 1942” (FSC 641). He further discredits the account by regarding the tune as “garbled badly,” declaring that “it must be judged an in-expert note-reader’s rendering at the *n*th hand from a performance” and that “[t]here is simply no other way this particular text form could have arisen independently” (FSC 641-642). Cazden’s dismissal here, however, undermines the kind of research that he so warmly received only moments before. While Cazden welcomes Hickerson’s fourth-hand account (Hickerson reads in Gordon who collected from Rideout who learned from a “disreputable sailor”), he simultaneously dismisses Jay Edwards’ (who heard from Jerry Ferris who learned from Stoneback who learned from “a hobo”). This begs us to ask the question: what makes one fourth-hand account more reputable than another? Or, we might wonder, how a “very disreputable sailor” can, in fact, be more reputable than “a hobo”?

In an excerpt from the first Volume of the unpublished *Stoney & Sparrow Songbook*, Harry (Stoney) Stoneback responds to Cazden’s discrediting. “I learned this song,” he writes, “from oral tradition, made some changes to the tune, and radical changes to the words” (1). Stoneback recalls that he “learned a version of ‘I Walk the Road Again’—not *reportedly* but *actually*—from a man in a hobo jungle in Cincinnati, Ohio in the summer of 1962” (1-2). Stoneback cannot recall the name of the hobo, but neither can Rideout recall the name of the “disreputable sailor” (2). He notes the significant changes he made to the text, like modifying *the* road into *that* road, replacing the “turkey”

with the “guitar,” transforming *I combed my hair* into *never comb my hair*, and replacing certain upstate New York references like “New York” and “Buffalo” with ones more familiar to the singer, like “Norfolk” and “Lexington” (2-3). Further, he took liberties with the tune that was “definitely too light and lilt-ing” for the “harder, rougher, more driven country edge” that he was going for (3). All of this is not simply to say that the changes Stoneback made were his own, but that they were the inevitable result of the process of oral transmission. Stoneback writes,

I know nothing about where the Cincy ‘Bo learned his version of the song—maybe from another ‘Bo, maybe from anywhere, even Camp Woodland—but he cannot be judged an “inexpert” note-reader. Nor can anyone else in the stream of oral transmission of this song be so judged. And, to be sure, there are simply *many* other ways that *many* versions of “I Walk the Road Again” could come into being. (4)

To deny this account as “less convincing” is to deny the process of oral tradition. By discrediting the Cincy ‘Bo’s version of the song, Cazden barricades a possible road that might have lead closer to a point of origin, or, at the very least, a point of interest. While tracking the oral transmission of a song is a complicated process that requires a great deal of attention, dismissing this history on the unspecified grounds of a “4th hand account” being unreliable is to do the tradition a disservice. Or, to put it in Stoneback’s terms, “where the hobo’s songs came from and how they remained living songs and went through change is a matter best understood through cautious *prescription* not general *proscription*” (2, author’s italics).

In the final notes on the song, Stoneback remembers being approached by Cazden and agreeing to do an interview about “I Walk the Road Again.” Unfortunately, due to scheduling conflicts, the interview never took place (4). What might have been discussed can never be known: perhaps Cazden would have scoffed at Stoneback’s hobo history. More likely, though, he probably would have admitted to yet another oversight. Perhaps communication would have imparted nothing new and we would be where we are today. But there is also the possibility of a new path being found, or new evidence turning up on an old road. The point is: we do not know—but hasty dismissal always limits possibilities. I want to conclude here with a quote from Cazden’s conference presentation that perfectly reflects this idea:

My task here is not to pretend nor to attempt a new answer to these fundamental questions, which will not come to pass quickly, but rather to illustrate how the pitfalls abounding in this insufficiently explored field have impeded the task of tracing a particular tune, hoping thus to blaze a somewhat larger trail to eventual insights by travelers yet to follow. Let me walk the road again. (Cazden, “I Walk” 25)

Obviously, Cazden was a culprit of the same thing he spoke out against. While this essay has detailed one specific failure in the man's research, it does not disqualify his reputation as a scholar. We should remember that the man was a dedicated folk-scholar who, despite hasty judgments, humbly admitted to his oversights. His contributions to the preservation of Catskill folk history paved the way for many roads to be walked again and again, and, despite blocking off one of those roads, the barricade is easily moved aside, and the road is ready to be walked again and again and again.

Notes

1. At least two members of the symposium audience can testify to the popularity of this tune; it has been recorded by both H.R. Stoneback and Happy Traum (the latter used it as the title and title track of his latest record [Traum 2005]).

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Whose Side Are You On?—Folksong and Solidarity in Appalachian Mining Communities

Daniel J. Pizappi

I.

On October 4, 2015, during a performance of Brahms' Requiem, patrons of the St. Louis Symphony were settling into their seats following intermission when about 50 audience members stood and sang "Which side are you on friend? Which side are you on? / Justice for Mike Brown is justice for us All." While they sang, banners were unfurled from the balconies that said "Requiem for Mike Brown, 1996-2014" and "Racism lives here." Audience members and musicians from the symphony spontaneously joined the singers (Alter). The song they sang is an adaptation of the famous Appalachian protest anthem "Which Side Are You On?" which was written by Florence Reece in 1931 in response to the bitter miner's strike in Harlan County, Kentucky, known as the Harlan County War. It was sung to build solidarity amongst the striking miners and, as the example from St. Louis suggests, it continues to have a similar power. In this essay, I examine "Which Side Are You On?" along with two other songs of the 1920's and 30's, "The Mill Mother's Lament" and "The Dream of a Miner's Child," with attention to the ways folksong served to build solidarity and a shared identity within Appalachian communities, and how those same songs came to export an image of that Appalachian identity to the rest of the nation.

II. "Which Side Are You On?"

Though not a miner herself, Florence Reece spent her life around the mines. She was born in Sharps Chapel, Tennessee and grew up in coal mining camps. At sixteen years of age, she married a miner named Sam Reece. They moved to Harlan County in the 1920's (Yurchenko 214). In so doing they moved into a community on the verge of violent conflict. The stage for that conflict was set over a decade earlier, when the First World War drove demand for coal to heavily inflated levels. This created a boom for coal operators, but the situation changed drastically after the Armistice was signed in 1918 and demand fell off sharply. Yet mine owners chose to continue producing coal at wartime levels—and they were able to do so for nearly ten years without major issues. Beginning in 1927, dwindling profits caused mine owners to implement cost saving measures that drastically increased the burden on miners—creating

dissatisfaction that would eventually lead to the violent strikes of 1931-1932. Lucky miners suddenly found their wages reduced, and the unlucky ones found themselves unemployed and evicted from their company owned homes, replaced by labor-saving machinery in the mines (Yurchenko 212).

Coupled with the effects of the nascent Great Depression, these harsh working conditions led to the violent and protracted strike known as the Harlan County War. During the strike, Sam Reece worked as a union organizer, and Florence worked to support him and the union, as she had supported her father during strikes in her youth. In fact, according to Alan Lomax, who collected “Which Side Are You On?” from Reece in 1937, Florence wrote an early version of the song at just twelve years old, while her father was out on strike (215). The version that we know today can be traced to a particularly tense night during the strike in 1931. Years after the fact, Reece wrote the following concerning that night:

Sheriff J.H. Blair and his men came to our house in search of Sam. He was one of the union leaders. I was home alone with our seven children. They ransacked the whole house and then kept watch outside, waiting to shoot Sam down when he came back. But he didn't come back that night. Afterward I tore a sheet from a calendar on the wall and wrote the words to “Which Side Are You On?” to an old Baptist hymn “Lay the Lilly Low.” (Qtd. in Yurchenko 215)

In an introduction to the song on his album “Can't You See This System's Rotten Through And Through?” Pete Seeger provides us with a bit more context and some of his own color—though this is clearly from memory and his accuracy is questionable at points:

Maybe the most famous song it was ever my privilege to know was the one written by Mrs. Florence Reece. Her husband Sam was an organizer in that “bloody” strike in Harlan County, Kentucky in 1932. They got word that the company gun-thugs were out to kill him, and he got out of his house, I think out the back door, just before they arrived. And Mrs. Reece said they stuck their guns into the closets, into the beds, even into the piles of dirty linen. One of her two little girls started crying and one of the men said “What are you crying for? We're not after you we're after your old man. After they had gone she felt so outraged she tore a calendar off the wall and on the back of it wrote the words and put them to the tune of an old hard-shelled Baptist hymn tune, although come to think of it the hymn tune used an old English ballad melody. (Seeger)

Whether Sam was tipped off or whether he simply had the good luck to be out and not come home that night, the event led Florence Reece to create

one of the most enduring and, as Seeger says, famous of all the Appalachian protest songs.

At its core, “Which Side Are You On” is a call to action, or what R. Serge Denisoff calls a “song of persuasion.” It is a song written to draw workers together and motivate them to support the cause. As Denisoff writes:

One of the major functions of the song of persuasion is to create solidarity or a “we” feeling in a group or movement to which the song is verbally directed. Songs indicating the unity of the group and the relationship of the individual to the group are performed at rallies and on picket lines. Songs of this nature stress “side by side we battle onward / victory will come.” (583)

Reece establishes this solidarity by utilizing a number of conventional folk song tropes. The first verse opens with a traditional gathering call: “Come all of you good workers / Good news to you I’ll tell.” Likewise, the song ends with a very traditional call to action and moral-esque reminder of what is at stake:

Don’t scab for the bosses
Don’t listen to their lies
Us poor folks haven’t got a chance
Unless we organize

Reece also makes use of some less traditional appeals to gender. The first comes in the second verse, when Reece adopts a male guise, writing: “My daddy was a miner / And I’m a miner’s son.” This gender inversion serves to further the effect of solidarity because it establishes the speaker as one of the miners he addresses. It also adds irony to a later line where Reece appeals to the masculinity of her audience: “Will you be a lousy scab / Or will you be a man?”

The most rhetorically effective aspect of the song is its imploring chorus—the insistent repetition of the question “Which side are you on?” It is likely that this question is what has given the song such staying power and fame. According to Denisoff, “Rhetorical songs can be divided into subcategories of the universal or the specific. A song such as “John Brown’s Body” transcends time and sectional geographic boundaries and political movements” (585). The same could be said of “Which Side Are You On?” Originally composed in response to the Harlan County strike, its rousing refrain expands its appeal universally—just as the repetition of “his soul is marching on!” in “John Brown’s Body” transcends the specific event it references. The boundary erasing effect of these refrains creates a universal relevance—these songs are continuous and linguistically demand that they not be completely abandoned to history. “On the other hand,” Denisoff continues, “specific songs of

persuasion deal with singular events... Most of these songs do not transcend the historical context of the lyric. Specific songs exemplified by ‘The Marion Massacre,’ ‘Plow Under,’ and ‘The Mill Mother’s Lament’ [which I will discuss below] are today confined to dusty collections” (585). Lacking a universalizing chorus or other element, these songs may gain a measure of fame in their time—and even after as a historical curiosity—but they do not attain the same universal applicability or immediacy.

III. “The Mill Mother’s Lament”

Like “Which Side Are You On?,” Ella May Wiggins’ “The Mill Mother’s Lament” was born of her own experience of economic hardship and a strike. Ella May was born in Tennessee. In 1926 she settled in Gaston County, North Carolina where she went to work as a spinner at American Mill No. 2. Ella May’s struggles in Gastonia mirrored the Reece’s in many ways. As with the coal mines, textile factories were affected by dramatically increased demand during World War I, but that market began to shrink in the mid-1920’s. Tens of thousands of mill workers lost their jobs and the remaining workers faced reduced wages and the implementation of the notorious “stretch-out” system, which was the name workers used to describe the labor-saving machinery that allowed mill supervisors to assign one weaver to the work that would have taken three or more workers under the old system (Huber 83-84).

Workers also had to face increasing scrutiny from supervisors who wanted to avoid unionization of their workforce. Women faced especially petty regulations. Makeup was banned in the mills and in some departments women had to purchase uniforms. According to millworker Bessie Edens, “men could do what they wanted to in their own department,” but women needed a pass to leave their station. Another worker, Flossie Cole, said “If we went to the bathroom, they’d follow us” A bathroom monitor ensured that the women did not stay too long or gossip too much in the bathroom. If they did, they faced pay reductions or even termination for excessive trips to the bathroom (Hall 364).

Living and working under this system, Ella May faced more than her share of hardships—many of which formed the basis of her lyrics for “The Mill Mother’s Lament.” By the time the Loray Mill strike broke out in 1929, Ella May was twenty-nine years old and had given birth to nine children, though four had died of malnutrition and disease. Ella May had been her family’s sole breadwinner, even before her alcoholic husband abandoned her, and she struggled to provide for her children (Huber 85). The first five verses of “The Mill Mother’s Lament” list the many hardships of a working mill mother and seem to echo the speeches Ella May gave during union rallies

throughout 1929. She would stand in front of a crowd of strikers and say:

I never made no more than nine dollars a week, and you can't do for a family on such money. I'm the mother of nine. Four died with the whooping cough. I was working nights, and I asked the super to put me on days, so's I could tend 'em when they had their bad spells. But he wouldn't. . . . So I had to quit, and then there wasn't no money for medicine, and they just died. I couldn't do for my children any more than you women on the money we git. That's why I come out for the union, and why we all got to stand for the union, so's we can do better for our children, and they won't have lives like we got. (Qtd. in Huber 97)

It was not uncommon for strikers in Gastonia to sing or to write their own songs, though Ella May is certainly the most famous songwriter of the strike. Singing was very much a part of the lives of the workers, even before the strikes. According to Vera Buch, the women of Gastonia “knew any number of ballads, most of them rather mournful” (Huber 85). Once the inspiration of the strikes presented itself, many workers, women especially, began composing their own protest songs in support of the cause. According to Patrick Huber, this gender disparity was at least in part due to female songwriters seizing upon an opportunity presented by the unrest: “Ballad composing in particular accorded women a status and prestige in their communities usually unavailable to them under peaceful conditions” (Huber 92). Many of these balladeers drew from their own knowledge of ballads and folksongs, writing new words and singing them to traditional melodies.

Ella May often made use of borrowed melodies in the composition of the at least twenty-one songs she wrote during the strike. She modeled her songs on the old ballads that she had learned as a girl, but she also drew from commercial hillbilly records. She borrowed the melody for “All Around the Jailhouse,” from Jimmie Rodgers’s “Waiting for a Train.” Another song, “Chief Aderholt,” was based on Vernon Dalhart’s recording of “The Death of Floyd Collins,” while the B-side of that record, “Little Mary Phagan,” provided the melody for “The Mill Mother’s Lament” (Huber 99-100).

Though much of its content is sentimental and based on the hardships Ella May faced as a working mother—it is what Margaret Larkin, a New York City musician who came to Gastonia to support the strike, described as “classic expression of a working mother’s love” (Huber 100). “The Mill Mother’s Lament” is at its core a rhetorical song, meant to rally support for the union. This rhetorical aspect is present throughout the song as its speaker expresses the many ways in which the greed of the mill owners has denied her the ability to care for her children. It becomes especially evident in the final verse of the song as she rallies her listeners:

But understand, all workers,
Our union they do fear.
Let's stand together, workers,
And have a union here.

Both “Which Side Are You On?” and “The Mill Mother’s Lament” are, in the words of R. Serge Denisoff, “propaganda songs performed and composed in the folk idiom or songs performed using the instrumentation and presentation techniques traditionally associated with nonprofessional rural singers of songs—traditional ballad singers” (581). They are songs that fit within the established cultures and folkways of their Appalachian place. Their performance at rallies and in union halls created a sense of shared identity, of solidarity, and provided the motivation for workers to continue fighting for their cause. They were a unifying force within the community, but their most interesting effect may be the result of their exportation to singers throughout the nation.

Ella May Wiggins was murdered by union-busting thugs toward the end of the Gastonia strike in 1929, but her songs were given new life by Margaret Larkin, who returned to New York City and spread Ella May’s songs through national magazine articles and her own folk concerts in Greenwich Village. In fact, the Village folk scene was instrumental in spreading not just Ella May’s songs, but a large variety of Appalachian protest songs, with artists like Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Lee Hays performing and using these songs as models for their own protest songs (Huber 104). These songs were also used to serve particular purposes in urban movements—for example, Ella May’s songs became something of a secret handshake, identifying the singer as a radical who supported the strike in Gastonia (Denisoff 581). Finally, the introduction of Appalachian songs to an urban audience carried an image of what it meant to be from the South. Speaking about the coming of Harlan County refugees Aunt Molly Jackson and Sarah Ogan Gunning to New York City, scholar and radio producer Henrietta Yurchenko wrote:

The presence of Aunt Molly and Sarah in New York, along with their friends Leadbelly, Woodie Guthrie, and Pete Seeger, gave immediacy to this trend... We learned their country songs and used them as models for new songs on contemporary themes; we learned their way of singing and harmonizing, and we learned the proper instrumental style to accompany each kind of song. We also acquired from them knowledge about injustice and hardship suffered by miners, migrant workers, and Dust Bowl refugees, and about chain gangs and lynchings in the South.
(210)

Thus these songs came to project a version of the collective identity that they

engendered in the communities they sprang from. With their transposition, these vessels of solidarity became a primary text in which outsiders could read an image of a people and their place.

IV. "The Dream of a Miner's Child"

In closing, I want to briefly examine one more song, which did not have its origins in American labor camps or worker's strikes, but nonetheless came to play a similar role in popular culture. "The Dream of a Miner's Child" was first known as a British ballad called "Don't Go Down in the Mine, Dad." It tells the story of a young girl who wakes from a nightmare. In her dream, the mine where her father works suffered from a tragic accident. Upon waking, the girl pleads with her father not to go into work that day, lest the dream turn out to be a prophetic vision. A common theme in both its British and later American versions is that the song presents the girl's warning as a gesture of protective community/family solidarity in the face of the reckless negligence of mine operators.

The song's early history and original authorship are unclear, but it appears to have been very popular in the British Isles before being imported to America. "Don't Go Down in the Mine, Dad" was first published as sheet music by Will Geddes and Robert Donnelly in 1910 (Shepherd 208), but it appears to have been in popular circulation for at least a few years before that. According to Wyland Hand et al:

Harry Broad, a night watchman at the Anaconda, heard the song on the streets of Saint Austell, Cornwall, about 1908. He also saw in theaters and other public places stereopticon slides that were flashed upon the screen to accompany each verse. A dapper Cornishman, and one well versed in the mining history of his native land, Jim Bennetts, heard the piece while working in South Wales in 1908-1909, also in a lantern-slide performance. (Hand 13)

As with its writer, the earliest transmission of the song to America is unknown. What is clearer is the moment that it was rewritten and disseminated throughout the nation.

The American popularity of "The Dream of a Miner's Child" is linked to the popularity of another early country or hillbilly, as it was called at the time, song: "The Death of Floyd Collins." In February of 1925, Floyd Collins was trapped in a sand cave in Kentucky. Despite rescue efforts, Collins died after a painfully slow struggle. Coinciding perfectly with the rise of radio broadcasting, Collins' plight and death became a national sensation. The song was written by Atlanta based Reverend and songwriter Andrew Jenkins at the request of Okeh records' Polk Brockman. The song was first recorded by Fiddlin' John Carson for Okeh, but it did not take off until later that year when

Vernon Dalhart recorded it for Victor records. The B-side of Dalhart's recording was "The Dream of a Miner's Child," which was also written by Jenkins as a reworking of the English ballad, and the pair became a national hit. Radio popularity allowed "The Dream" to take a place alongside traditional mining ballads and protest songs.

What is most interesting about the linking of these two songs is the normalizing effect that their juxtaposition allowed, blurring the contemporary/traditional boundary. According to Archie Green:

The public made no such distinction. Instead, it began to link [Dalhart's] contemporary pieces with the older ballads, as well as the string-band social music and southern rural humor available on disks. The industry was most acute in helping its consumers relate the new topical pieces to old ballad themes and styles. (*Only a Miner*, 218)

The effect of that industry acuity is equally vital to the transmission of the songs discussed above. Songs like "Which Side are You On?," "The Mill Mother's Lament," and (most-likely) the original "Don't Go Down in the Mine, Dad" emerged organically from workers and their communities. Thousands of other such local ballads have been written, sang, and forgotten—having never found widespread popularity outside of their immediate context. Yet the influence of the nascent country/hillbilly music industry, folk performers in New York City and elsewhere, and national radio play allowed these songs to transcend their origins and endure. This national distribution created such influence and cultural cache, that a protest song from a 1920's mining camp in Kentucky could remain relevant to protesters at the St. Louis symphony in 2015. Today these songs speak to us of their people and their place, but perhaps most striking is their ability to speak to our people and places, and the dissemination that made that possible.

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Form and Musicality: The Poetry of Emily Dickinson

Victoria Prashad

It is largely agreed upon that Emily Dickinson has found great artistic success and impact through the medium of poetry. However, even after a century of reception history, her poems are still perceived as enigmatic, as they elude many of her readers in their quest for meaning. Though late nineteenth-century critics of Dickinson's poetry failed to recognize her strict adherence to the form of hymns, many were still able to note the musical qualities of her verse. However, the knowledge of Dickinson's fundamental connection to the hymn form is crucial for understanding the ways in which her words resonate in more than simply the literary world. When, in the twentieth century, critics finally identified the connection between Dickinson's poetry and the hymn movement of the eighteenth century, they still failed to recognize that, through its use of hymn tradition, the poetry is, furthermore, grounded in *oral folk tradition*. The poems, which are written in the meter of hymns (also called common meter), are derived out of the ballad tradition, which is a live tradition. Ballad stanzas are characterized by alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter and it is no small wonder that her poems are characterized by this exact same metrical pattern (Brooks and Warren 566).

When we consider Dickinson's poetry, we must do so with the notion of oral tradition in the backdrop of our minds. Albert Friedman, author of *The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English-Speaking World*, suggests that "there are some people who hate to see wild flowers in a vase or animals in cages" (ix). I argue that there are poets, like Dickinson, who hate to see poetry that is similarly stifled or inanimate. In light of the connection between Dickinson's poetry and oral tradition, readers can recognize the ways in which her verse is meant to resonate deep within them as more than static words. Her poetry is meant to move and to breathe and it is for this reason that she works out of and through the hymn tradition. In fact, the excitement of her poetry can be traced to how daringly she handles the traditional form of the hymn; the poet's insistence on working within the metrical units of common meter allows for innovative rhyme schemes and imagistic language to develop organically, which, in turn, enables Dickinson's poetry to rise from the page and fill our senses with a palpability much like that of music. It would seem that Dickinson achieves her goal of creating "Verse [that] is alive," by renewing the traditional hymn (*Letters* 260).

Though critics from the late 1800s marvel at Dickinson's great intellectual activity and praise her poetry "as wild, free and lovely as the thrush's

song, with clear, sure notes,” they, too, describe her accomplishment of verse as, still, an “untutored” song (Buckingham 144). A Boston Sunday Courier critic, who is unnamed, suggests that though the musicality of Dickinson’s poetry can be noted, her verse is still without form. Similarly, in an 1891 response to Dickinson’s poetry within Scribner magazine, an unnamed critic laments the “loss involved in...[Dickinson’s] disregard of the advantages of form” (Buckingham 120). Andrew Lang, also published in 1891, argues in response to Dickinson’s work, that “if poetry is to exist at all, it must have form and grammar” (Buckingham 122). Though the late nineteenth-century community of critics were unable to recognize Dickinson’s use of the hymn form, some did note a magical quality to Dickinson’s poems which lent itself to musicality. Liliam Whiting, in 1890, suggested that if Dickinson had “learned to chip and polish the marble,” her poetry “would lose strength rather than gain in melody” (Buckingham 28). In fact, private readers and female readers are described as having widespread enthusiasm for Dickinson’s poetry and letters, from the first publication of her work in 1890 (Grabher 302). Dickinson’s reception history of the late 1890s, then, suggest that there is a quality inherent to her work that unconsciously resonates as musical to readers, without them being able to necessarily recognize what exactly about the poem is causing this association with music.

The twentieth century witnessed a shift in Dickinson’s critical reception, where readers were able to take note of Dickinson’s adherence to poetic form. Within *Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography*, Thomas H. Johnson suggests that Dickinson was “creating a new medium of poetic expression...[that was nonetheless] based on the metric forms familiar to her from childhood as the iambic, trochaic, and occasionally dactylic measures in which Isaac Watt’s hymns were composed” (84). Within *Hymns Unbidden*, Martha England asserts that the hymn is the “formal influence in all...[of Dickinson’s] poetry” (119). Similarly, it was not until 1925 that Susan Miles recognized Dickinson’s “slant” rhymes as “deliberate and...an organic expression of her...world view” (Grabher 304). In this way, readers can observe the co-dependent nature of form and content within Dickinson’s work. Dickinson’s use of common meter lends itself to innovation, as it is necessary for the poet to use enjambment and complex motifs in order to convey her ideas while maintaining strict form.

Carolyn Lindley Cooley reminds us that “from her earliest years, Dickinson’s mind was inculcated with the words and the music of Isaac Watt’s hymns” (71). The family household library included Watt’s *Christian Psalmody* and his collection of *The Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs* (Johnson 85). As outlined within Johnson’s biography of Dickinson, the principle iambic meters, including common meter, long meter, short meter, common particular meter, and short particular meter, were all found within Watt’s hymnbooks

with high frequency (Johnson 83). Though Watts' creation of hymns based on scripture were highly controversial, rejected by some churches, and adopted by others, one of the churches that did fully adopt Watts' hymns was The First Church of Amherst, Massachusetts, where Dickinson, from girlhood on, prayed (Grabher 33). She would have been repeatedly exposed to Samuel Worcester's edition of Watts's hymns, *The Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, where the variety of hymn forms and meters were demonstrated through different songs.

One must look no further than *The Methodist Hymnalbook* to observe the overarching influence that music had on Dickinson's life. The preface to the hymnbook conveys to its user that it was utilized in church for singing songs of worship. Included in the indexes of the text is a metrical index of tunes, which outlines what form each of the hymns follow. Dickinson could easily have consulted the metrical index within this text in order to learn how to use different meters with poetry for varying effects. In this way, her childhood was spent gathering an awareness of the intricate nature of how meter and sound work together in order to produce a musical quality. Dickinson also played piano and collected sheet music throughout her life (Cooley 10). In fact, from the age of 14, Dickinson had her very own piano at home on which to practice her craft. Critic Carolyn Linley Cooley notes that the music Dickinson was practicing contained intricate and complicated variations on popular songs of the time that would have challenged the majority of pianists (14).

Dickinson's experimentation with music can be seen as giving rise to experimentation within her poetry. In his biography, Johnson notes that Dickinson's experimentation "went beyond anything envisioned by the formal precisionists who edited Watt's hymns and songs, the interesting point is that she did not have to step outside her father's library to receive a beginner's lesson in metrics" (85). Dickinson had felt the effects of the eighteenth century Protestant hymn movement, which was led by Isaac Watts and the Wesley brothers. Martha England suggests Watts' influence upon the modes of subsequent poets as complex and far-reaching (England 1). England notes, too, that Dickinson speaks of her poetry as hymns or psalms; her connection to the hymn form, then, is not an imaginative leap. Readers can recognize that the range of the reading voice found within the poetry is restricted to that of hymns and her vocabulary is impregnated with hymn vocabulary as well (England 119). Though Dickinson wrote poetry in the form of hymns, she used the form with greater metrical freedom, with a freer use of enjambment and with no scriptural source (England 119). The formal influence of hymns on her poetry, however, is still pervasive, especially when we consider that her poetry was written, as most hymns are written, *par-odia*, or to an already

existing tune (England 119). In addition, readers must consider that simple things like paper size may have occasioned the irregularity in metrics when they did occur; furthermore, Judy Jo Small posits that “a slight reordering” of syllabic beats within Dickinson’s irregular poems frequently establishes “a regular meter” within the poetry (20).

Within her book, *Music of Emily Dickinson’s Poems and Letters*, Carolyn Lindley Cooley positions a set of Dickinson’s poetry, all of which contain spiritual themes, to the sheet music of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century hymns. Cooley performs this experiment in order to demonstrate that Dickinson’s poetry would fit within the strict meter of the hymns. Cooley further posits that “the blending of poem to hymn is sometimes so startlingly beautiful it would seem that Dickinson surely must have had that particular hymn in her mind when she composed the poem” (84). If “Because I could not stop for Death” is sung to the tune of “Amazing Grace,” it is observable that the poem is easily fitted to the tune of the hymn, since both works are written in common meter.

However, I suggest that Dickinson’s poetry could be fitted to a variety of hymns, since she employed the meter extensively in her work. What is of note in Cooley’s study is that she is able to invigorate Dickinson’s poetry by singing the verse to the tune of a hymn. Cooley creates a new avenue through which to study Dickinson’s works that invites readers to focus on the aural characteristics of her poetry. To recognize the aural qualities inherent to her poetry, one need not look farther than her use of rhymes. Within *Positive as Sound: Emily Dickinson’s Rhyme*, Judy Jo Small provides a framework for the different kinds of rhymes that are found within Dickinson’s poetry. She makes mention of full rhymes, partial rhymes (including assonantal and consonantal), identical rhymes, and unaccented rhymes. The array of rhyme types allows for Dickinson’s poetry to contain a fuller tune.

Poem 126, also referred to as “The Brain is wider than the sky,” is written in alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter. The poem does not deviate from the established meter of the hymn stanza and, too, is thematically concerned with spirituality. In fact, Helen Vendler suggests that “The Brain is wider than the sky” was a common phrase that Dickinson was most likely repurposing from a sermon or hymn (17). The first stanza of the poem proposes that the human brain is superior to skies (which are representative of God) by describing the human brain as enabling human beings’ imaginative capabilities. Dickinson suggests the “ease” with which the brain can “contain,” or consider the immense sky. The second stanza further proposes the imaginative powers of the brain and does so through an extended metaphor, where the depths of the brain are said to be deeper than the depths of the sea. The last stanza observes that through language, humans have the

capacity to communicate and order nature, which is created by God. The poet, then, is communicated as existing with the power to reframe in intelligible “Syllables,” God’s “unintelligible” Sounds.

In the opening stanza, line 3 contains enjambment, as the thought of “the one the other will include” is finished in the following line: “With ease, and you beside.” Instead of the “abab” rhyme scheme most common to hymns (and ballads), the poem deviates and, instead, contains the rhyme scene “aaba.” However, the first and second lines of these stanzas do not contain a full rhyme. If we consult critic Smalls, we can recognize that the first and second lines rhyme through partial, assonantal rhyme. The following rhyme, lines two and four, are a full rhyme. Since Dickinson follows this pattern throughout her poem, the reader should consider the pattern as intentional and as a way in which Dickinson was experimenting with her use of the traditional form of hymns. Through varying rhyme patterns, the poet is similarly ordering the poem, as the brain is suggested as being capable of doing. The predominant feature of the rhymes, as the reader experiences them, is an effect of uncertainty that is lent to the poem through its ambiguous patterning. However, the use of both full and partial rhyme lends to the verse a musical quality that is able to rise and fall. Though readers may be quick to recall jingles from television commercials or other insignificant tunes, Dickinson’s poetry further allows readers to be transported to a church, a location where the hymn form would be sung regularly.

When readers recall that Dickinson is working out of the hymn culture, the question of Dickinson’s relationship to God and faith is sure to arise. Even if we are, again, to consider poem 126, we are quick to see the mention of God and the question of the relationship between humans and God. As James Davidson suggests, “If the architecture appealed to her, one may be certain that the message did, too” (142). However, if the reader, on their search for a message or a moment of pure realization, forgets to account for form, he or she will also lose sight of why Dickinson is such a crucial figure in American poetry—Dickinson bridges the gap between tradition and modernity. Dickinson understood that “to create a form is to find a way to contemplate, and perhaps to comprehend, our human urgencies. Form is the recognition of fate made joyful, because made comprehensible” (Brooks and Warren xiv). When we sing “Amazing Grace,” are we to question what the intention of the song is? Or, are we to, rightfully, allow the tune to wash over our beings and settle within us without philosophizing about its content? Though Dickinson did experiment with other forms, she always returned to her use of the hymn form which gave her an avenue through which to express her observations of the world and her understanding of human urgencies.

Dickinson’s use of a form associated with her religious upbringing con-

veys to modern readers that to create something new is not to dispense with tradition but, instead, to “probe the deficiencies of...tradition” (Tate 293). In is through Dickinson’s repurposing of tradition that she conveys the importance of working out of the past in order to propel ourselves into the future. Dickinson’s actions categorize her with other Modernist writers like Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot who, too, would suggest the writer’s obligation to work from tradition. Charles Anderson suggests that though Dickinson was working within a form that went back at least 300 years as the standard of English hymnology, “it offered the immediate advantage of novelty, since no poet had ever explored it fully as a serious verse form” (Anderson 132). For modern readers, it is important to remember the pervasive influence of hymns and, thus, of oral tradition, that is behind *Dickinson’s Entire*. If we are to recognize the ways in which the folk oral tradition has led the way to art, specifically to Dickinson’s poetry, we are a step closer to reclaiming a spot of significance to folk tradition in general. We must consider oral tradition within the academic sphere, and it is through the tradition’s connection to other art forms that knowledge of its importance will stem.

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Irish Swans in Poem, Ballad & Song

Colleen Stewart

Alan Friedman, a scholar of folk balladry, states on the back of *The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English Speaking World*, “—over the centuries folk ballads have lyrically immortalized the human experience.” In accordance with Friedman’s words is the poet William Butler Yeats, an Irish nationalist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yeats dedicated much of his life’s work to the Celtic lore of his ancestry, exploring Celtic mythology and its relation to the tradition of Irish broadside ballads. He studied, translated, collected, and took ideas from the ballads and reworked them into his own poetry. Yeats’s commitment to his studies sparked the Celtic Revival during the Modernist era, right around the time the Irish began to seriously detest their British rulers. The Irish, Yeats included, began to assert to the rest of world what made them Irish, meaning a revitalization and celebration of the Celtic lore, ballads, and culture. Or in the words of Friedman, the songs that had immortalized their experiences as human beings.

The reach of Celtic/Irish folklore extends both forward and backward, linking the high ideals of Greek mythology with the lower sensibilities of the Irish peasant farmer class. Yeats comments on the importance of this work in “The Celtic Element of Literature”: “The Celtic movement’ as I understand it, is principally the opening of this fountain, and none can measure of how great importance it may be to coming times, for every new fountain of legends is a new intoxications for the imagination of the world” (270). Through an examination of Yeats’s work in the subject, the aforementioned links become visible. Certain tones, tropes, and themes within Irish balladry, and subsequently in Yeats’s work, are defined as a response to the characterizations of the Irish as “feminine” or “weak” for falling to the English power. Traced through the evolution of the Greek Myth *Leda and the Swan* to the Irish folk ballad, “Molly Bawn,” to Yeats’s 1923 poem “Leda and the Swan,” the connections of Greek-era mythology to eighteenth-century Irish broadside ballad, to nineteenth-century poetry also find relation to the fight for Irish nationalism. Yeats returns to the roots of great balladry and oral tradition to understand the culture of his people and to create a story for them, one that will be praised rather than ridiculed. Each iteration of the “Leda and the Swan” narrative involves violence towards women both sexual and physical, which Yeats interprets as a representation of the order of social and political power between Ireland and England. Albeit controversially, Yeats takes the role of Leda in in the myth and Molly Bawn in the ballad and writes his poem as a scathingly sarcastic

allegory of the British rape of Irish culture. The gendered roles of the British as male and Irish as female in the poem are an attempt to overturn the idea of Irish as weak/feminine and to insinuate that not only are Irish men and women not weak but their culture, literature, and arts are important, reaching much farther than what the British Anglo-Saxon world previously thought.

In Poundian fashion, an explication of Yeats's work must begin with "the old." He often noted how Irish culture extended from the Greek traditions. In her book, *Yeats's Nations, Gender, Class and Irishness*, Majorie Howes voices Yeats's belief: "Irishness coincides with the virtue of other ancient literatures, especially the Greek tradition," (26). Therefore, Yeats's connection with Irish nationalism and culture can be understood through the connection of his poem "Leda and the Swan" to the work that came before it.

"The Fable of the Swan and Leda" is documented around the 5th-6th century A.D. In summary, the myth surrounds the origins of Helen of Troy. Zeus came down to Earth entranced by the beauty of the mortal Leda so much so that he disguised himself as a swan and raped her. Zeus inseminated Leda with an egg that hatched Castor, Pollux and Helen of Troy. Thus, Leda has become synonymous with not only mothering one of Greece's most beautiful women but playing a role in the greatest Grecian victory of the time period, the Trojan War. The myth maintained attention in the cultural world, becoming the subject of many artists. It has been reimagined in paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, Correggio, and many other Greek and Italian Renaissance artists. By the time it reached the modern era, poets had become aware of the original myth as well as its many artistic interpretations. According to Helen Sword in her work "Leda and the Modernists," through these artists Leda came known to represent: "predestined position of abject mission to male authority" (307).

The myth continued to transcend through time and mediums and where traces are found on the next stepping stone to Yeats, the nineteenth-century Irish Broadside ballad, "Molly Bawn." Friedman, editor of *The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English Speaking World*, notes that the story of Molly Bawn dates back to the dawn of European culture. The ballad goes that Molly Bawn turned into a swan every evening and on one of those evenings her lover, Jimmie Randall, shot her not knowing it was Molly. Once Jimmie realizes the swan is actually Molly and that he has shot her dead, he runs back to his uncle to tell him what happened. His uncle stands firm, that even though Jimmie killed Molly Bawn, he won't be hung. At Jimmie's trial, Molly Bawn's ghost returns to assure he pays for what he has done.

Although the ballad of Molly Bawn does not consist of a godly swan raping a mortal, it is inferred that both stories share important basic narrative elements and themes. Both stories contain betrayal, hurt, heartbreak, and vio-

lence toward women, as well as the swan, although used in different contexts. Just as the Greek *Leda and the Swan* was representative for the Trojan war, “Molly Bawn” as a broadside can be viewed as an allegorical story for British imperial rule over Ireland. The swan becomes vulnerable, representing the feminine Irish murdered in cold blood by the masculine English hunter. The power dynamic in the ballad reflects a common trope of the restless Irish who resented their rulers across the pond. Being treated like game to be hunted, captured and subdued, were all characterizations that plagued the Irish with the feeling they were losing their identity to the colonizers. Sir Horace Plunkett, author of *The United Irishwoman: Their Place, Work, and Ideals*, sums up the Irish restlessness behind “Molly Bawn”: “Ireland, more than any other country, is spoken of as a women is probably due to the appearance in our national affairs of qualities which men call womanly. And this impression is not merely the cheap attribution of racial inferiority by the alien critic with which we are familiar, it is our feeling about ourselves,” (qtd. in Howes 16).

What Plunkett details is exactly the depiction of the Irish Yeats is fighting against his entire literary career through his own writing and celebration of the Celtic literature and arts. He felt that if the strong roots of Celtic culture were revered and widely known, then the depiction of the Irish people as the weaker relative of the British colonizers would fade away. Howes addresses Yeats’s concern in her work, explaining very well the imperialistic British view of the Irish: “This strand was shaped by several aspects of the colonial enterprises in Ireland. Their geographical proximity and racial and cultural similarity to the English rendered the Irish less radically ‘other’ than the inhabitants of the other British territories. The Irish were white, Christian and partially anglicized culturally” (Howes 19). The ideal that Howes summarizes here is the same ideology that Yeats is battling; it is what makes the Irish colonial situation even more dire than that of India or Africa. The Irish physically resemble the English and maintain similar cultural aspects, representing to the rest of the world that they should just be categorized as English. The logic follows simply: they look the part, so they should play the part. And this assimilation leads to a frustrated nation of Irish people, their battle for national freedom hard won due to the inability to differentiate themselves from the English.

Yeats find the voice of the Irish people within their folk balladry. In 1893, Yeats published *The Celtic Twilight*, a collection of folklore, folktales, and balladry that survived oral tradition from Celtic Ireland. Summarized in a review by Tim Wenzell, Yeats goes out into the Irish country to gather stories and songs “like something you would hear if a tape recorder were left on and one roamed the Irish countryside in search of random folk tales” (21). Yeats attempts to draw out of the Irish people the true sense of what it means to be

Irish, establishing a sense of nationalism through the stories and lore. Wenzell recognizes the fervor with which Yeats complied his books and restates Yeats's reasoning for doing so, to reinstate the national Irish identity that had been blanketed by English imperialism:

In this way, history becomes an imagined one, woven into the tapestry of the culture through storytelling and oral tradition fortified by subsequent generations who re-tell, re-invent, re-imagine. This is the particular case of the Irish, who, faced with the absence of any substantive written history of their Celtic past, resorted to the fertile ground of imagination from which to paint the blank canvas of the past. (20)

Yeats understood the importance for a nation of people to have not simply a historical past but a cultural one. And he knew that in order for the Irish to regain their country as well as their ethnicity, there must be books like *The Celtic Twilight* to firmly ground them in their nationalism.

Although many criticize Yeats's work when aligning it with his personal political status, he makes clear his strong feelings towards reviving Celtic tradition. Yeats explained that Irish culture, especially its literature, is vastly different from the English: "All that is greatest in that literature is based upon legend—upon those tales which are made by no man, but by the nation itself through a slow process of modification and adaptation, to express its loves and its hates, its likes and its dislikes" (Qtd. in Castle, 273). By associating the legendary phase of Irish literature with other great cultures— primarily Greek and Indian—Yeats implies that Ireland, by taking its folk culture seriously, will discover the same greatness possessed by "Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, and even Dante, Goethe and Keats," who "were little more than folklorists with musical tongues" (Qtd. in Castle, 53). Through his own words, it is clear how highly Yeats thinks of the folk culture of the Irish and how it is dominant enough to be linked back to some of the most revered and intelligent cultures of human existence. This link is present in the earlier discussion of the Greek myth "Leda and the Swan" and the Irish broadside ballad "Molly Bawn." The connection between the two supports Yeats's assertion of the Irish culture as not simply a parasite but one that has grown out of the ancient culture and blossomed into its very own.

To home in specifically on Yeats's desire to raise the Irish literature and culture up and away from their British colonizers, I now turn close attention to Yeats's poem "Leda and the Swan." Yeats writes the poem, most obviously, with the aforementioned Greek myth heavily in mind and I would argue also with the knowledge that "Molly Bawn" exists in Irish folklore. The narrative of his poem follows closely to the myth's but with heavier emphasis on the violence enacted on Leda. Similarly to how the rape of Leda is related to the

Trojan war, Yeats means to use Leda's rape as allegory for the English rape of the Irish both in a colonizing and cultural sense.

The entire first stanza is dedicated to the violent nature of the swan's/ Zeus's attack and begins Yeats's trend of characterizing the girl with weak adjectives including "staggering," "helpless," "terrified," "vague," and "mastered." All of the words mirror how the Irish were viewed by the British and subsequently the rest of the world. He continues the allegory by representing England as the "great," "feathered glory," full of "knowledge," "power," and "indifferent" swan, employing these domineering adjectives to represent the British assertion of power over the unwilling Irish.

What brings Yeats's poem to characterize the imperial relationship between Ireland and England is the gendering of the myth, the ballad, and the poem. The fact that England is a "he" and Ireland is a "she" unfurls the core of Yeats's desire to form an Irish nationality; because of their seemingly endless domination by the English, the Irish were often considered a "feminine" people. Howes details this dynamic: "A major strand of British imperialist discourse labeled the Irish feminine and therefore inferior, dependent and weak; nationalists often disavowed femininity and asserted a compensatory and exaggerated masculinity" (Howes 16). Thus, what every Irish citizen, Yeats included, was trying to do was to escape this ideology, that being Irish coincided with being feminine and weak. Yeats's attempts to do so, by writing satirically in "Leda and the Swan," creating an overtly large gap between the genders and making the violence hard to turn away from. Yeats is forcing his readers to understand the perceptions the Irish were held under, playing on the gendered stereotypes attempted to slander his people.

The emphasis on the women portrayed in Irish folklore and Celtic myth as strong, independent and forthright characters is key. Along side their male warrior counterparts (Cuchulainn, for example) the women of similar folk tales are in no way the traditional standard of femininity, a fact supported by Lorna Reynolds: "The truth is that the Irish women of legend, literature and life are women of formidable character and tenacious will, if not always of distinguished ancestry" (13). Reynolds tells the stories of many strong Irish women of the Celtic tradition including Queen Maeve of *The Tain*, Deirdre of *The Sons of Usnach*, Liadan from *Liadan and Cuirthir* and many more. All of these women's stories are a part of the Red Branch, a time period in Celtic Ireland where a matriarchal order of society dominated a patriarchal one.

By reemphasizing the dominant female role in Celtic folklore during the Celtic Revival, the Irish and Yeats were hopeful to reverse the idea of the Irish, regardless of sex, maintaining a weak, traditionally feminine temperament. Thus, Yeats writing satirically in "Leda and the Swan," asks a key question in his final lines: "Did she put on his knowledge with his power /

Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?” (Yeats 118, 15-16). He questions his readers and the British rule, insinuating that the Irish only adopted British ideals on the surface to appease, still maintaining their true Irish nationality beneath. Many critics, both of political and gender disciplines, criticize Yeats for being too radically political or overtly sexualizing the female body to make a politically charged point. Yet, what I see here, tracing Yeats’s poem through Irish/Celtic historical culture and even back to ancient European culture, is a nation attempting to raise its voice and establish its cultural background over a colonizing force attempting to make them forgotten.

Within the history of the Irish people is a very real account of how literature and the arts are necessary to maintain a national culture and identity. The conflict and imperialism of the British over the Irish left them thirsting for an identity as a people. Yeats picked up such desire, taking it upon himself to provide a sense of national pride for the Irish. On the large scale, he did so by sparking the Celtic Revival movement and publishing those culturally important folk stories and ballads in his many works. On the small scale, students of Yeats’s poetry and Irish history can trace the existence, stark difference, and verification of Irish culture and ethnicity from the English through the link of the Greek myth “Leda and the Swan,” the Irish broadside ballad “Molly Bawn,” and Yeats’s own poem “Leda and the Swan”. The depictions of the females in Irish folklore as the opposite of traditional female roles supports the desire to erase the link between the Irish people and feminine weakness. And although the Greek myth of Leda does not portray a dominant woman, the representations of the myth throughout Celtic and Irish poems, ballads, and songs speaks to the sheer and utter importance of a culture’s literary past in establishing a national identity.

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IV | Songs from the Symposium: *with Reflections on Songwriting*

Introduction

H. R. Stoneback

In this section a handful of songs written by symposium participants are presented. I asked the contributors to include some reflection on the background of their songs, to address their sense of the relation of their songs to folk traditions, to say something about differences between writing songs and writing poems. These are not easy questions to answer.

When I lived in Nashville from 1966-1969 I was surrounded daily by the greatest concentration of songwriters, both experienced professionals and inspired amateurs, anywhere in the world. But Nashville was also a literary capital, largely because of the Vanderbilt Fugitive poets and their poet-descendants. At Vanderbilt we might have laughed at Nashville's proud appellation, "The Athens of the South" and its concrete replica of The Parthenon, but still those of us who thought of ourselves as poets and writers felt we were denizens of the Cradle of the Southern Literary Renaissance. A few of us who were PhD candidates at Vanderbilt had one foot in that very literary world and names like Dickey, Ransom, Tate, and Warren were our daily bread; but we had another foot in the Nashville music business where names like Hank Williams and Jimmy Rodgers reigned in the songwriter's pantheon.

We took seriously our attempts to refine our craft of songwriting in the songs we tried to sell to producers on Music Row in Music City, U.S.A.; and we took seriously our developing craft of poetry as we tried to place our poems in literary journals. But sometimes the modes and tonal modalities of the separate crafts spilled over into each other, the poetic influence on song, and the songwriting influence on poetry blurring the lines and often working to the detriment of poem or song. And, of course, not so much in Nashville but certainly in the outer world of Folk-Rock Culture Bob Dylan's early songs had inspired a revolution in songwriting. Many people in those days said things like *Poetry is Dead. Songwriting is the only living poetry*. I don't think we subscribed to that view. We knew songwriting and poem-making to be singular and separate aesthetic activities. We also knew that great poets who aspired to be songwriters—from Red Warren to Elizabeth Bishop to those old lyrical balladeers Coleridge and Wordsworth—generally wrote lousy *songs*. And we probably agreed with those who held—and there were many—that Dylan-

esque song lyrics were, taken as poetry, as printed text without tune, mostly doggerel, drivel and logorrhea.

One Nashville producer, A & R man (read: *song-buyer*) and music publisher that I pitched my songs to said things like this: *Songs have a scent, they work like aromas from childhood that make you feel something and you don't know what or why. But these latest songs of yours smell like poetry. That's another thing.* Another producer said: *Why would you want to write a song that sounds like Baudelaire? He couldn't touch Hank Williams and vice-versy. They're a-worken in different languages and I don't mean French and English. Don't you want people to sing your songs? Don't you realize that one Number One Hit Record with 2 million records sold and played every day every way on radio and jukeboxes reaches more people than all the poets together do in twenty years or a century? You wanna be a songwriter or a poet?* I said: *I want to be both.* He said: *OK Kiddo—but not at the same time.* I thought about what he said. As a poet, you want people to *read* your work but you don't like hearing other people say your poems out loud. As a songwriter, that's the very point—you want to hear others *sing* your songs.

Another Nashville producer—a part-time preacher—said to me, after listening to a few of my songs: *Good. Strong images. Good tune, good hook. You haven't crossed the line into Dylan's pseudo-poetic pretentiousness. But you're trying to rewrite Hank and Hank Williams is the only one who can write Hank. Why don't you try writing a hymn as a kind of songwriting exercise. And remember that Walt Whitman couldn't write "Amazing Grace." Remember, too, that a good number of the world's billion Christians sing "Amazing Grace" more every Sunday than a century's worth of readers chant Whitman.*

These are just a few of the things I heard about the differences between songwriting and poetry long ago and faraway in another country. And on the opposite side of the street from Music Row, at Vanderbilt I listened to the failed efforts of many poets to write ballads, songs, even folk operas. I must have learned something about songs and poems in Nashville.

One last note: Originally, I had intended to ask the songwriters represented here to answer the headline question too much discussed in recent months: *Does Bob Dylan deserve the Nobel Prize in Literature?* But the very question may condemn any possible answer to insignificance. So I withdrew that question. If songwriting is literature, then Bob Dylan, the greatest songwriter since Hank Williams, since Irving Berlin and other Tin Pan Alley bards, deserved the Prize. But then why didn't the others get it? For songwriting, not for poetry.

A Little More Fair, A Little More Free

Kathy Johnson

We sat in our classrooms and listened
To the sounds of the first astronauts,
And there was a thing called the Peace Corps –
Some said it was Camelot.
And we all had such dreams of a future
Where things would look up for us all.

Sometimes I look at the setting sun
And think back over where I've come from,
And I wonder if we could just become
A little more fair, a little more free
With plenty to share in a world at peace.

We sat in our classrooms and listened
To the news of the President's fate,
And then came the war and the riots
And Martin, Bobby, and four at Kent State.
And did we get scared or forget them?
But some of those dreams seemed to die.

Sometimes I look at the setting sun
And think back over where I've come from,
And I wonder if we could just become
A little more fair, a little more free
With plenty to share in a world at peace.

Now we sit in our kitchens and listen
To the national news every night.
Things seem so much worse for so many,
With tolerance on the decline.
But I think our old dreams are still living
And if we work hard, things could change.

Sometimes I look at the setting sun
And think back over where I've come from,
And I wonder if we could just become
A little more fair, a little more free
With plenty to share in a world at peace.

Way Out West

Kathy Johnson

I'm tired of this old city where it's cloudy all day
And everything is gritty – at least it looks that way.
Maybe a change of scenery will chase away my blues
What I'd give if I could live with a wide open view.

I'm heading way out west, I'll see some cowboys riding
Way out west, I'll saddle up beside 'em
Feelin' free and easy while I watch the dogies roam,
Way out west sure feels like home sweet home.

I'm going out to the prairie where the sky is big and blue
From Abilene to Laramie, I'll just be passing through
Where the tumbleweed is tumblin', Oh what a sight to see,
And if I find romance at a small town dance, that's all right with me.

I'm heading way out west, I'll see some cowboys riding
Way out west, I'll saddle up beside 'em
Feelin' free and easy while I watch the dogies roam,
Way out west sure feels like home sweet home.

Words and music by Kathy Johnson, © Singing Bridge Music (BMI) This song can be heard on the Recordings page of Kathy's website: www.kathysongs.com

Reflections

Both of these songs share some similarities with and grow out of folksong traditions in the use of a repeated chorus, telling a story, and even using what might be called stock images. In traditional ballads, stock imagery might include “snow white horse,” “blood red knife,” etc. In “A Little More Fair, A Little More Free,” the terms “Camelot,” “the Peace Corps,” and “four at Kent State” call up iconic images and events of the 1960s. “Way Out West,” builds on the familiar phrases “way out west,” “home sweet home,” and “tumblin’ tumbleweeds,” and bends the line from “Home on the Range” “where the skies are *not* cloudy all day” to “where it’s cloudy all day.”

The boundary between poem and song is not hard and fast. Music is an integral part of a song, which is meant to be heard. A poem, while sometimes heard, is not set to music and is meant more for reading and reflection. Part

of the difference also has to do with the intent of the writer and the writer's understanding of the forms.

Better Than Lovin' You

Chris Paolini

There's a cockroach in my coffee
Fruit flies in my wine
There's an alley cat in my favorite hat
Coughing up turpentine
There's broken glass in my whiskey
Cigarettes in my brew
There's a blackened bruise on my battered heart
But it's better than lovin' you

Our love had me in fetters
Like the fire boy's body bound
On the bright side I guess it gave me
This low-down and loaded sound
When you stripped to lace I took it for grace
But you bore rotten fruit
So here's an unsent letter on what's
Better than lovin' you

There's a rat pack in my wallet
I don't mean Frank, Sammy and Dean
They already spent all my money at the bar
Using my I.D.
Now my Ford's up on cement blocks
My guitar's broke in two
Every dream I dream's in a minor key
But it's better than lovin' you

Our love taught me a lesson
That they don't teach in school
A pretty gal can knock ya
From a clown down to a fool
Only the reddest devil of a woman
Could do those things you do
So here's an unsent letter on what's
Better than lovin' you

Well, Delilah sprung on Samson
Soon as he hit the snooze
I'm sure she and Circe
Are in cahoots
God bless Marty Robbins
And his hit from '62
I've got an empty stair down to you-know-where
But it's better than lovin' you

Our love gave me a reason
To spend a season at the bar
I hit a high score on the jukebox
But that won't get me far
You act like you're a Hit Parade angel
Hotter than Emmylou
So here's an unsent letter on what's
Better than lovin' you
Here's the b-side to being single
It's "Better Than Lovin' You"

Reflections

"Better Than Lovin' You"—a bouncy honky-tonk number taken from the playbook of Ernest Tubb, Lefty Frizzell, Webb Pierce, Buck Owens. Country music has always been an inspired and empowering medium for belting out bitterness over a love gone wrong. Although nowadays what's most popular and pervasive has devolved into a derivative FM radio nightmare—either slick, saccharine pop meeting as few of the genre's criteria as it can get away with; chuggy rock-sans-roll, macho-swagger, high-octane twang; or anthems of "highbrow" asceticism, buddy-up ballads proud to be fancy free in "the simple life," culled from rural Southern stereotypes, yet embraced with Budweiser-brained amicability even way up in New England frat houses, swearing by the "holy trinity" of girls, beer, and trucks, fetishizing patriotism and pledging allegiance to the commercial capacities of Old Glory (*whew*)—the genre's

rooted in rich folk traditions.

The “All-American” marriage of “hillbilly” and Western music consolidated the influence of mountain folk music (from the Appalachians to the Ozarks), traditional English ballads, Irish fiddle tunes, the blues, popular music (both American and European), and cowboy songs. I’d like to believe that writing anything of substance is at least partially predicated on having a sense of the past and its traditions. In this poetry and song are blood brothers. In borrowing a tune tested tried and true I’ve borrowed *ipso facto* a distinct structure, meter, and rhyme scheme. Q: What’s the primary difference between a poem and a song? A: You don’t sing poems. Unless you’re Vachel Lindsay, I guess, but even still we get him more on the page than the airwaves. This is my *song* because I *sing* it, and if I teach it to you *you* can sing it too. Out of context, on the page—this can be a poem. But it’s not a poem if I tell you that these words are only a vessel; the singing voice is the vehicle of the greater performance. Singing introduces a whole new and distinct dimension that allows—and is tailored to encourage—expanded capacities of expression and emotion. Poems are like academics who live in the library; songs are the academics who live in the world.

I had fun with this one in part because I allowed my literary pretensions to dress up the standard sad, snarky country crooner in a new suit. Thanks to songs like Tex Ritter’s “Hillbilly Heaven” or Waylon Jennings’ “Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way?” (and there’s thousands more), it’s no longer that novel or much of a rarity to reference other musical personages in a country song—although you’d be hard-pressed to find Emmylou Harris, Marty Robbins, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., and Dean Martin all at the local honky-tonk. Less customary, though, is to toss some Classical and Biblical figures—Prometheus, Circe, Samson and Delilah—into the mix as well (although I wouldn’t put it past Kris Kristofferson, who clearly learned a thing or two or ten from Bob Dylan). Overall, I think this song achieves a happy medium between traditional and modern. It’s not just another “tear in my beer” song, but one that I’ve very deliberately jeopardized the classic integrity of by letting it run wherever my restless mind took it.

Blue Birdie (Fare Thee Well)

Chris Paolini

Fare thee well, farewell, my little blue birdie
The sky's full of freedom that waits for your call
Farewell, farewell, my little blue birdie
Farewell, my sweet honey, it's time to fly on

In the morning was springtime
It was nothing but shadows
Cast down by some gypsies
With coats made of buckskin
And all of their fathers
Wished dearly they'd have listened
To the wisdom of fables
That said to move on
And the sweetest surprise
Is that love don't abide
Like the shadows of gypsies
That darken the dawn

Fare thee well, farewell, my little blue birdie
The sky's full of freedom that waits for your call
Farewell, farewell, my little blue birdie
Farewell, my sweet honey, it's time to fly on

Well I waited for hours
Picked all of God's flowers
You were shackled up in the romance
Of the ragged boy's blues
He tried to lift you to Heaven
And dance you to Heaven
And sing you to Heaven
And you let him
And the sweetest of his songs
Was for a love that had gone
Now looking round the room
I see that I'm all alone

Fare thee well, farewell, my little blue birdie
The sky's full of freedom that waits for your call
Farewell, farewell, my little blue birdie
Farewell, my sweet honey, it's time to fly on

You'll be angry like brimstone
When you think that there's nothing
Across burning bridges
Save a lost holy vision
But babe you will blossom
Like balcony flowers
And I'll play the gravedigger
That feeds you the soil
You've the sweetest of fruits
That he's bitten by looting
Just a beggar with a banjo
And some bourbon of mine

Fare thee well, farewell, my little blue birdie
The sky's full of freedom that waits for your call
Farewell, farewell, my little blue birdie
Farewell, my sweet honey, it's time to fly on

Reflections

“Blue Birdie”—a waltz written in one fell swoop down in New Orleans circa August 2013. The city is known for its rich musical heritage, and living in the French Quarter (the 600 block of Royal Street—an ideal location for a first-timer fixing to really *know* the place he's found himself in) made traditional music, specifically old-time and dixieland, a permanent fixture in my daily living. Life in the Vieux Carré became a series of rituals dictated by who was playing when and on which corner. The idea of street music was far from a foreign concept to me, but I had never known it as a lifestyle, and I had never witnessed it in such high volume, distinct character, or raw talent. It was not only a whole new world of music; it was an inspiring example of a

lived authenticity built out of tradition. Sitting (or dancing) through a set by Yes Ma'am, Tuba Skinny, The Hokum High Rollers, Stalebread Scottie, or The Drunken Catfish Ramblers was like reading a novel, discussing it in a graduate seminar, then going out into the world to converse with the *deus loci* of the work's generative landscape. It was much more than being introduced to and eventually learning a whole new repertoire of songs and playing styles; it was about having the folk tradition verified and continually validated right before my eyes. This was not the same "folk music" that saw a revival in the sixties, but it was very much *folk* music acting within a similar context as what was cultivated and shared in Greenwich Village coffeeshouses and nightclubs. It was traditional music—whether performed with historical accuracy, rearranged, or adapted into original compositions—exchanged and performed within a community brought together by its shared passions, forging a defense to prevent the spirit and substance of a vintage culture from fading into obscurity while simultaneously validating its contemporary relevance.

Being around this music so often changed the way I understood songwriting. I began to see it as participating within a conversation. I think for a substantial portion of musicians these days there is the anxiety to make something "new." This is an entirely valid creative impetus and should not be suppressed. However, whenever influence is avoided, denied by pleading ignorance, or pretentiously displaced onto obvious outliers for the sake of reputation—rather than ethically "citing your sources"—it becomes an act of careless vanity that disrespects outright the traditions that fostered musical vernaculars that are so often taken for granted. "Blue Birdie" was inspired by "Dink's Song" (also known as "Fare Thee Well"), a popular folk revivalist song performed and recorded by the likes of Pete Seeger, Cisco Houston and Dave Van Ronk (its popularity has recently been revitalized by the Coen Brothers' film *Inside Llewyn Davis*). I was low-down and loaded on corner store wine in the heavy heat of a New Orleans summer trying to find solace in a song, something to alleviate the comparable weight of a wrecked relationship. I was looking for something that didn't wallow too adamantly in self-pity. I stumbled upon Dave Van Ronk's version of "Dink's Song" and felt an affinity for its high, strained melancholy—it was *sad* but it owned its sadness. The tune of "Blue Birdie" has a very distinct Townes Van Zandt feel to it, and even some of the imagery is adapted from his, but the heart of the song is the repetition

that spans the chorus, which is obviously indebted to “Dink’s Song.” I consider “Blue Birdie” to be something of a response to it. I wanted to compose something in which the subtext resounded throughout, like an echoing drone built as a bastion of commonality to justify what I was feeling.

Rabourn's Store

H.R. Stoneback

F C G A

1. Well now it's half past four— I'm going to
 2. Yes down at Ra - bourn's Store— Well who could
 3. Yes down at Ra - bourn's Store— Well who could
 4. Not com - ing back no more— No not to

D

Ra - bourn's Store— It's great to sit a - round
 ask for more— With noth - ing to do
 ask for more— With noth - ing to do
 Ra - bourn's Store— I left our gro - cery sack

E

With the sun go - ing down— Listen - ing for that eve - ning train—
 But wait for num - ber twent - y two Listen - ing for the eve - ning train—
 But wait for num - ber twent - y two Listen - ing for the eve - ning mail—
 Went running down the tracks— Run - ning from Ra - bourn's Store—

D

Unc - le John's on the porch with the men
 They say Grand - daddy's going blind and the mines are a - closing
 Mist - er Rabourn's sort - ing mail and Old Blue's chasing

A D

a - chew - ing— Mis - ter Ra - bourn says *Hel - lo there*
 next fall— Me and Cous - in Jinny drink Or - ange
 his tail a - round— Then Ma had a letter and I'll never

A D

22 *son how y'all do - ing* And my ma
 Crush and don't say much at all They say that War's still
 forget her choking sound As that westbound whis -

A D

24 ma she done brought her eggs and her but - ter She's tra - ding for
 a - go - ing them bod - ies still float them rivers down Up on Por - ter Creek
 tle blew and Num - ber twen - ty two left the store That let - ter edged

A

27 some side - meat for our sup - per
 old crazy Jimmy Jake done shot his favorite coon - hound
 in black said Daddy wasn't coming back from the war

Reflections

I wrote this song with my late wife Sparrow—Jane Arden Hillman Stoneback—in Nashville in 1966. We had been performing on stage together almost from the day we met in 1962. I had been writing songs since before I was a teenager—my father, who had been a professional pianist-singer, started giving me songwriting assignments and challenges when I was eight or nine years old. Sparrow and I started writing songs together when we lived in Nashville (1966-69). During those years, we sang regularly in Nashville clubs and did shows at area colleges and institutions, while I was working on my PhD at Vanderbilt University. I had chosen Vanderbilt over all other institutions not just because of its association with Robert Penn Warren and some of the other Fugitive-Agrarians, but also because I wanted to keep my career as a singer-songwriter going, to keep my options open, and Nashville was the best place to do that. I could be heard saying around Nashville in those days that I'd take a PhD or a #1 Hit Record, whichever came first.

Maybe our best shot at a big hit record was this song, “Rabourn’s Store.” It was already a “club-tested” *hit* in Nashville (and other performers were singing it, too) when Cowboy Jack Clement, the legendary record producer, songwriter, and A&R man heard our demo of “Rabourn’s Store” and imme-

diately said he would have Cash record it and put it on Johnny's next album. And I replied: *It ain't an album tune*. In those days we believed good songs got lost, buried in albums and we wanted our best songs to be released first as singles. I often hear myself saying *Non, je ne regrette rien*—but this is not true. I do regret my youthful folly and songwriter-artist arrogance that killed the chance to have Johnny Cash record this song. It would be nice to drive down the road in 2017 and hear on the car radio Johnny Cash's 1966 recording of "Rabourn's Store." But I blew that. I've told the whole story elsewhere, in a long poem entitled: *Hear That Train: Elegy Written in a Country Music Churchyard (for Johnny Cash)*, first published in the special Johnny Cash Memorial section of the *Shawangunk Review* (XV 2004) and later reprinted in other journals, anthologies, and in my 2009 volume *Amazing-Grace-Wheelchair-Jumpshot-Jesus-Love-Poems*.

The songwriters in this issue have been asked to comment on the relation of their songs to the folk tradition and say a few words about the difference between writing songs and poems. "Rabourn's Store" reflects the deep folk and country roots of both of the songwriters. Sparrow grew up in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, singing the old traditional ballads she learned from oral tradition. I grew up singing the same ballads I learned from my grandmothers and others in Pennsylvania, South Jersey, and Kentucky. We both loved the old traditional ballads as well as the best of the storytelling songs of authentic country music. We also both wrote poems though in 1966 we might have partially agreed with the common saying among songwriters—*Poetry is Over*—and we were part of a generation that wanted to put our best poetry in our songs. Even though we knew songs were not poems.

As for the details of this song: "Rabourn's Store" is a real place in a real Kentucky mountain hamlet and almost everything in the song reflects the daily routine and details of Sparrow's Kentucky mountain childhood. Another thing that may have helped shape the song is this: Sparrow and I were both deep in reading Faulkner and other writers of the Southern Renaissance at the time we wrote this song. And at the time of composition I was taking a graduate seminar at Vanderbilt called something like *Anglo-American Balladry and Folksong*. I cannot point to any specific influence on this song from my study of the Child Ballads, the English and Scottish traditional ballads and songs. But I did study carefully the use of details and the modes of storytelling in the

old songs and that attention to sung narrative may have played a role in the creation of this song.

Just a word about one detail in the song: “that letter edged in black said daddy wasn’t coming back from the war.” It is amusing to remember that another record producer who wanted to record this song in the Nashville of 1966 asked us to change that line because it was “too anti-war.” We refused to change it. And we did not think the line was “anti-war.” Indeed that line carries what folksong scholars call the *emotional core* of the song. What no listener could guess is that Sparrow’s father was killed on the very railroad tracks that delineate the song, perhaps by the train that drives the song. *Perhaps*, I say, because there was a strong suspicion of murder. But that remained, as Hemingway would say, part of the deepest submerged layer of the song’s Iceberg. The death of the father remains the enduring emotion of the song, though the details are altered, oblique; but bank-shot displacement does not change the emotional core that brought the song into being.

{The only authorized recording of this song is on the 2-CD Album *Live at the Oasis: Stoney & Sparrow—Songs of Place* 2007}

South Jersey Girl

H.R. Stoneback

A D A

1. South Jer - sey girl	South Jer - sey girl	She sings hymns in the
2. South Jer - sey girl	South Jer - sey girl	She sings folksongs in the
3. South Jer - sey girl	South Jer - sey girl	She writes songs in the
4. South Jer - sey girl	South Jer - sey girl	She sings hymns in the

E A D

mor - ning	sings coun - try late at night	South Jer - sey girl
mor - ning	Hank and gospel late at night	South Jer - sey girl
mor - ning	Sings lone - some late at night	South Jer - sey girl
mor - ning	sings coun - try late at night	South Jer - sey girl

A

South Jer - sey girl	She's been down to the
South Jer - sey girl	On the boardwalk At - lan -
South Jer - sey girl	She makes the world with
South Jer - sey girl	She's been down to the

E A

al - tar	She tries hard to do what's right	Nev - er been
tic City	She tries hard to do what's right	She re mem -
her song	She tries hard to do what's right	She loves Green -
al - tar	She tries hard to do what's right	

A

North to New York	Ci - ty won't go
bers _____ Rob - in	Rob - erts She's touched
wich and Green Bank	And pine - wine - y

D A

11

near As - bur - y___ Park She looks good with-out make up___ in the
 the Lib - er - ty___ Bell She meets me at the Ea - gle___ We do
 back road ways_____ She loves Cow - town and Delsea Drive___ Deep South

B7 E7

13

mor - ning and af - ter dark She
 lunch at Read - ing Term - inal We
 Jer - sey_____ nights and days She's

A

14

won't play cool and sha - na - na___ with
 fish from the dock at Strath - mere___ Dream
 got that sense - of - place - look She's nev - er

D A

15

pho - neys___ and fa - kers She buys all her clothes and gifts at
 what our___ life could be Play skee - ball on the board-walk At -
 pout - y___ never bit - ter She doesn't live on Face - book, She never

E A

17

John Wa - na - ma - kers___
 lan - tic Ci - ty and OC
 texts nev - er Twit - ters___

Reflections

The preceding song, “Rabourn’s Store,” was written a half-century ago in 1966. In the notes to that song I mentioned that my musician father had started giving me songwriting assignments before I was ten years old. And I am still writing songs more than 60 years after I wrote my first song. I reckon this proves that *old songwriters never die they just decompose*.

This song, “South Jersey Girl,” was written in 2009 in South Jersey—a special place; and the obscure barrier island village of Strathmere is a *very* special place, where I have spent vacations “down the shore”—as we say down there—for about 40 years. What can I say about *South Jersey* that the song doesn’t say—when I was a kid in deep South Jersey if you dated a girl from North Jersey people would pray for you because you were dating a Yankee.

The song was written in the middle of a Great Storm, a Nor’easter worse than the hurricanes I have seen. Torrential driving rain, sustained winds over 70 MPH, gusts over 100 MPH, strong storm surge and serious flooding from both the back-bay and the ocean two blocks away. The island is only two blocks wide. My bay-front rental house was just a few feet from the water. My house-guests had gone home and I was alone in the house. Most of the people in the village had heeded evacuation directives and fled the island. I love a good sea-storm, and I had stayed on the island through serious storms before, so I stayed. And stayed until it was impossible to leave.

I watched the bay waters cover the dock and then the wind-driven waves began to break on the porch-steps. I waded to the back-side of the house and made sure my van was on the highest piece of ground. The water was almost to the top of the wheels but since the vehicle was protected from the main flood surge by the back wall of the house I did not think my van would be washed out to sea. Unless my rental house, the last small low-slung unstilted old house on the bay, was washed away. But the house had been there through more than a half-century of floods and storm-tide surges so I had faith it would not become a sinking houseboat. It was still two hours until high tide and there was nowhere to go. It would be a long night.

So I wrote this song. What else could I do? I got my guitar and sat in the doorway of a small shed on the bay-front porch, out of the wind and hard horizontal rain, and watched the water-level rise slowly as I wrote this song.

The song came all of a piece—the tune came with all the words, very quickly. When the waves started washing on the porch, I took the guitar inside, put it and a few other things on top of the refrigerator, threw a few small things in a plastic garbage bag that I tied over my shoulder, got my cane and waded out to the flooded street where the water was almost waist deep with a strong tidal current. I was determined to wade or swim to the highest place on the island, the century-old Deauville Inn, where the rich and infamous had partied through Prohibition, where Princess Grace and the Kelly family dined when they were at their home up the road in Ocean City.

Fighting to stay on my feet in the strong current, I waded with the surge, singing loud a few lines from old half-remembered hymns—*On Jordan's Stormy Banks, Jesus Saviour Pilot Me over life's tempestuous sea, Lord Lead Me on to Higher Ground*. But I kept coming back to *South Jersey Girl* because I did not want to forget the words and tune that had come to me in a wave. The water was now above my waist—try walking with a cane in a strong current when your entire cane is under water. *How High's the Water, Mama—five feet high and rising*. I tried to keep my mind on my song, refining an image here, a rhyme there, as I half-waded half-swam toward higher ground. If it's going to be your last song better make it a good one. I laughed at myself for finding pleasure in the midst of the terror of the howling storm and rising flood with my polysyllabic rhyming of “phoneys and fakers” with “John Wanamaker’s.” I sang the line at the top of my voice—then shouted into the storm *How do you like this song Sparrow? Maybe nobody else would ever hear it. John Wanamaker's, that magnificent emporium in Philly, was her favorite department store in the world. Meet me at the Eagle darling—the Philly slogan. Oh if I had the wings of an Eagle—or was it Angel?—over these walls of water I'd fly . . .*

Looking down the cross streets toward the ocean two blocks away, I could see nothing but black water. The entire island was inundated. Dark. The storm surf was very loud and close. Exhausted from struggling to stay on my feet in the deep surging water, I climbed onto the highest porch I could see on the land side of Bayview Street and rested. It was too risky to swim the rest of the way through the island's lowest places to the higher ground of the Deauville Inn. So I sang *South Jersey Girl* over and over. The song was finished. Maybe I was, too, but it felt like a good song.

Then the rain stopped and the winds died down. I thought I detected

a reversal of direction in the current of the river that was the street. I waited, singing the song and watching carefully the water level. It stayed steady then dropped an inch and then another inch. High tide had passed. I could see clearly now that the current was flowing the opposite direction and I would not have to fight to get back to my house. I was cold and I wanted wine. I waded into the stream, moving with the water back toward the house. The house was still there. So was my van. I could see where the water had come over the tops of my tires all the way over the top of the fenders. *Good* I said *An engine needs a good salty bath. Yeah right. Probably never start again.*

I went inside the house, assessed the damage where the waves had washed under the door and inside the house. I drank some wine and scribbled down the words to *South Jersey Girl*. I drank some more wine, watched the water receding from the porch, and went to bed. In the morning the sun was bright and the water was back in its ocean and bay boundaries. Amazingly, my van started right up. I checked out and drove through still flooded but passable streets away from the shore and back to New York. A few weeks later when I first sang *South Jersey Girl* for an audience, somebody said afterward *I love it—How do you write a song like that?* I said: *Easy. All you need is a Great Storm, some good rhymes, a certain mépris for death, a sense of place, love, and a tune that rides on the terror of the sea.*

To answer the songwriter questions here, I think this song's connections with traditional folk and country song are obvious. Like “Rabourn's Store” and many of my other songs (see the forthcoming *Stoney & Sparrow Songbook*), it is a song of place. The song alludes to hymns, to other songwriters—Hank Williams directly and Bruce Springsteen more obliquely. It situates itself somewhere between folksongs of the urban folk revival (1950-70) and country and gospel music of the past century. Like many songs in both traditions, it rides on repetition, perhaps even the celebrated *incremental* repetition of the old ballads and story-songs. But it's not really a story-song in the narrative mode of the old traditional ballads or even classic country. It is what some songwriters and producers in Nashville in the 1960s called a *girl-song*.

One producer who listened to demos of my songs back then said repeatedly: “Give me some girl-songs. Not *chick*-songs, *real* girl-songs.” Maybe he would like this one. In fact, it was inspired by a specific *real* girl, i.e. Spar-

row, my late wife of 40-some years. As the notes to “Rabourn’s Store” indicate, she was born and raised in the Kentucky mountains. She loved many places. But of all the continents and 60-some countries where we lived and sang and traveled for 45 years from France to China, from Hawai’i to New York, there was no place that she loved more than South Jersey, the South Jersey *Shore*, Strathmere. So it is a girl-song and a place-song for a specific girl and a specific place. But if it’s any good as a song it must transcend singularity and local particulars and make listeners who have never seen or known South Jersey wish they were—or knew—South Jersey girls. I’ve been told that’s what the song does, so I reckon it’s a good enough song. For me, in the performance of it, the emotional core remains honest and particular and local. The weather of the song is serene—the storm disappeared but the hymns remained. The song is a function of landscape and other things. What makes a song? The Great Storm in which it was written, the Great Love and the Great Loss that floods the song? It is a song not a poem. A song should not mean, but *sing*. Like almost all good songs, it has no existence, no identity as text without its tune.

Dead End Town

Joseph McNulty

1. Well I knew a girl named Au-brey when I was just a boy And I
2. Well last night I stayed with Cait-lyn then I rose to meet the day And I
3. Well they say I took her mon-ey one aw-ful win-dy night And I

4
loved her with a simp-le-ness that's long since been de-destroyed And it's
got my-self a tow-el shave just to make a change Some
brought it down to Dead End Town to spend it for her right Well they

7
true that I still look for her and love her in my way But I've
times the on-ly com-fort is a strang-er in the mirror
say I lost it play-ing cards but let me make it clear She

10
done so man-y aw-ful things for which I must soon pay My heart is made of
Oh_ to watch the weeks just dis-ap-pear
did-n't have no mon-ey and I spent it all on beer

13
met-al its heav-y lid is closed you might call me a dev-il but I am not so

16
bold and if for-tune brought me Au-brey I'd soon lead her a-stray To

19
be a boy a-gain I would give my li-fe a-way

Here We Stand

Joseph McNulty

I been farther out
further on
better off
worse along
beaten down
fortified
I've held my hand
and let it slide
out of cash
out of mind
out of sorts
and right on time
flown so high
been so blue
and all of this
and now there's you

I killed my beliefs
my fantasies
those precious things
I'll never need
just like the rain
that hits the house
the endless joys
the falling outs
they fill my brain
they flood my heart
what carpenter?
what storied ark?
I say out loud
there's nothing true
in all of this
and now there's you

Time it goes
Time it comes

Time is real
and moving on
Time will tell
how we began
this whole big world
the birth of man
it's all so much
it's nothing new
the seasons change
the sky in view
the endless gray
the early blue
and all of this
and now there's you

Reflections

It's hard for me to write about folk song without feeling I'm doing it wrong somehow. I suppose many of my songs fall into the folk tradition simply because they *sound* and *feel* like folk songs. Having spent much of my time as a teenager experimenting with sound – noise music, free jazz, anything and everything esoteric and hard to grasp – I guess it's natural that I found my way to folk music. A folk song is something everyone can feel and understand.

You can get away with a lot more in a song than you can in a poem. I don't fool myself into thinking I'm a great poet, by any means. In fact, I'd be hard pressed to name one poem I've ever written that I've truly been satisfied with. Songs are different. They come quick and often unrevised, and the feeling lasts. And you can get away with saying stuff like, "She didn't have no money / And I spent it all on beer." Try that in a poem sometime.

I'll Be on My Way

Alex Pennisi

As I lay waking in the morning
I dreamt them ships sailed out to sea
Upon the breaking waves
They hauled their loads from yesterday
Oh God I gotta get away

A breeze came drifting in the wind
Floating steady, soft, and slow
It brought the sailor to his patient wife
And it held the weight and the heave of life
Maybe this time you oughta stay

Oh to be free
Out on that open sea
It's what I need
So I'll be on my way
I've got to run
Before the morning brings the sun
Just kiss me once, love
And I'll be on my way

I've seen the world through ports and harbors
I've washed my hands in the seven seas
I've cut some anchors and I've pushed off ports
I've rode some swells and I've run off course
Knowing not why I couldn't change

Oh to be free
Out on that open sea
It's what I need
So I'll be on my way
I've got to run
Before the morning brings the sun
Just kiss me once, love
And I'll be on my way

She built a fire by the beach

And signaled out for me to see
From the flames she coaxed the light
That burned away the dark of night
From the flames I saw my way

Oh to be free
Out on that open sea
It's killing me
So I'll be on my way
I've got to run
Before the morning brings the sun
Just kiss me once, love
And I'll be on my way

Reflections

When I wrote this song, I was listening to a lot of Townes Van Zandt and Jackson C. Frank, particularly Townes' "I'll Be Here in the Morning" and Frank's "Kimbie." As far as folk traditions go, I know that "Kimbie" is a descendant of the traditional American folk song "I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground." As far as the Townes song goes, I'm not so sure, but I do know that both songs deal with the difficult and sometimes frustrating struggle of managing the conflicting desires of travelling and settling down. My song is an attempt at participating in the same tradition as those before me. The title of my song is actually an explicit response to "I'll Be Here in the Morning," while the fingerstyle owes its foundation to "Kimbie." Writing songs has rarely been easy for me, but this one was an exception—from the lyrics to the melody to the guitar, everything came out naturally. If we understand the folk tradition as one rooted in the past, then we should also recognize that the tradition is renewed in the present. The voices of the past echo into the present and the future, but if we hope to learn anything from them, it isn't about singing or writing or picking, it's about listening.

OK. Just to be clear, I'm hardly a songwriter and I'm even less a poet. I've finished only a handful of songs since I learned guitar 15 years ago—don't ask me if I've finished a single poem. That is to say, I don't feel confident an-

swering a question like this. What I do know is that the *process* of composing songs and poems can be very different, but the *moment* of inspiration, that initial creative spark, is sometimes very similar. I've had melodies pour out from the guitar, and I've also had couplets in perfect pentameter nearly write themselves inside my head. What inspires these creative outbursts, this necessity to put words into form, for me, is a specific emotion I'm feeling that I'm trying to preserve. This song, for example, was my attempt to capture the essence of what I was feeling in a dream I had about ships at sea. The rocking of the waves and the blue light of dawn stayed with me well after I woke up, and I felt I had to preserve it in some way. My initial response was to put the feeling into a poem, but, after a few lines, it wasn't clicking. When I picked up the guitar, though, the song nearly shaped itself. The picking pattern fit with the rocking of the ships and the melody and lyrics somehow managed to imitate the soft but dense blue light of the early morning air. I don't expect listeners to feel the dream I'm trying to imitate, but the emotion is there in a way I could only attempt to preserve through song. That's not to say that songs can express more complex emotions than poems, but that it's different for different people. The lines of poetry and songwriting are likely to overlap and entangle, so all I can say for certain is that, for me, songs and poems come from similar places, even if they're taken to different lengths.

Brass-Bound

Alex Pennisi

Take a drive around in your old Chevrolet
Have a look outside at the bright sunny day
Can't you see what you're looking at
When you're looking straight at your past?

Drive over to the river and park by those tracks
Watch all the faces changing on the trains as they pass
I bet you wonder are they looking at you
Why yes they're staring straight at a fool

If you've already fallen down
You oughta learn how to stand
You were born on battlegrounds
And now you're a running man
But you can't tell me what you're running from
Oh won't you tell me why you're hiding from the sun

Pull your cap down low and fall right to sleep
Don't let yourself wake up until you're drowned in the deep
Until that river rises up through your bones
Until that glimmer washes over your soul

Have that dream again that you're holding her hand
You'll keep flying through that burden, boy, if you don't ever land
So if you get tired of all that atmosphere
If you learn to fly low you'll learn to steer.

If you've already fallen down
You oughta learn how to stand
You were born on battlegrounds
And now you're a running man
But you can't tell me what you're running from
Oh won't you tell me why you're hiding from the sun

Reflections

I wrote this song in undergrad at New Paltz back in 2012. I was taking an American Lit course and we spent the final weeks of the semester reading Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men*. That's also around the time I started seriously listening to folk music. I specifically remember sitting in my college-excuse-for-a-room with books and trash scattered across the floor and quotes—ranging from Eliot's *Wasteland* to inappropriate puns—written in chalk on all four walls. I was sitting in bed trying to write a song that could sustain three-part harmonies. I never really figured out the harmonies, but I did end up with a melody that I didn't hate and some lyrics that fit pretty well. After the first two lines were down, I realized I was writing about *ATKM*, so the rest of the lines just followed. Before I knew it, I had written my first narrative that was about something other than myself. It was still about me, of course, that's why I connected with the book in the first place, but it was about me through Jack Burden's story. It was the first time I told someone else's story in a way that I ended up seeing myself more clearly. In the folk tradition there are a lot of narrative ballads that tell stories about specific people. I think one of the reasons these stories and songs and poems survive is because they tell us more than about people, but about ourselves. I mean that more than just in the general sense of a shared human condition, but that we as individuals are able to better define ourselves in relation to these stories. I find this to be a compelling crossroads between folk tradition and literature, and this song acts as a youthful but enduring landmark that marks my first trip across the intersection, but certainly not the last.

The Cockeyed Mayor of Kaunakakai:
Song & Residential Survey of Moloka'i

For Lois-Ann Yamanaka and *Blu's Hanging*: Talking Story on Moloka'i

H.R. Stoneback

Go ahead, say it. Say *Cow* (insert the middle *una*) then *Cockeye*.
Then spell it. It's as easy as Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha.
Kaunakakai Town rhymes with *Yoknapatawpha County*.
In more ways than just language and sound.
Apparently, the only true Moloka'i writer admires Faulkner.
I've just written her a letter. Maybe she'll answer.

If I were to move to Moloka'i, a question I have entertained,
or just spend winters there, Cow-Cockeye would be my hometown.
Since it is the island's only town. As nice as Ke Nani Kai is
(the condo place on the far West End where I just stayed),
I think I'd have to be closer to town. Of the island's 7345 residents
roughly half live in this town, the rest scattered around the sparsely
settled island. Almost everybody who writes about Moloka'i says
it's like going back to 50 years ago. More like 100 years ago.
There are certain places on the island with color-shape, place-geometry
of the Australian Outback but this town feels like a carbon copy
of some towns I saw when, age 15, I hitchhiked through west
Texas and Oklahoma and all that country seemed surreal frontier:

The small towns with the broad empty Main Streets, the low one-story
idiosyncratic storefronts and building facades, the benches in front
of stores where men sat and watched the rare traffic go by, in places
where the tonal scale, even the air and the sunlight and silence, felt Local.
I study the Main Street of Kaunakakai, make my prospective resident
survey: I would probably shop some at the large Friendly Market

but maybe not so much since I learned in that island-favored store
that it will be taken over—right now, this January—by a chain from
Oahu. Chains kill Local, and chain or not I already preferred the other
supermarket down the street, Misaki's Grocery. Just as on Lana'i,
two large stores, one headed mainstream, the other old-fashioned.
My choice clear—Misaki's. I liked the storekeepers and when a store

is run by the same family since 1922 they must be doing things right. Other stores on Main Street: one I liked the look of, the small market across from Friendly called Pascua's, with the bright green storefront and red awning and locals sitting out front on benches. If I lived here, I would be there. And I would be at Kanemitsu's Bakery & Restaurant. Again, 80 years in the same family. Not exactly famous, but locally

the most celebrated Bakery. Nobody talks about their restaurant but the menu looked good and I liked the 1950s ambiance of old formica tables and booths and the hula dancer murals on the wall (painted by an unknown artist in 1935), surely some of the finest (only) mural art on the island. I'd probably pass on the Bakery's beloved soft "hot sweet bread," since I'm not a fan of wonder-soft-white bread. Our Ohana bought

a mess of it and what little I tasted—well, I'll pass. Best thing is the local evening ritual when they sell the bread hot out of the oven. They close the front of the bakery and everybody gathers down the alley to buy at Kanemitsu's back alley window when the bread comes out of the oven from 7:30 PM on. Not much to do in Kaunakakai, but it's a local ritual so if I lived on Moloka'i I'd be there some evenings just to talk story

with my neighbors. And to roll down the alley that looks like a 1940s back alley in Kentucky or Philly, one of those alleys that used to lead to the bootlegger's shack or some other house of ill repute. But if I lived there, I'd focus all my charm and diplomatic skills on convincing Kanemitsu's to bake good French baguettes. Failing that, I'd have to import a French baker's daughter, entice her to open a Boulangerie.

I could live here, could I live here, would I live here—alone?

Well, judging from my discourse with the island ladies, the Aloha Spirit of the Friendly Isle, mere loneliness would not be a problem. I got the Shaka-sign—the *me-you* version of it—more on Moloka'i than the other islands. Still, alone, the higher lonesomeness might kick in. It might be best to seek serenity of Island Old Time with one you truly love.

Night Life? That's funny. Restaurants—well, in four busy days we did not get to try much but I liked the feel of the truly local-looking

places, the Sundown Deli, Big Daddy's Filipino place, places to try the local Plate Lunches. And maybe if you had a date and a car, you'd drive out to the Kualapu'u Cookhouse on Prime Rib night; for lunch go out to Pukoo just before the one road turns into a winding one-lane

coastal *corniche* and stop at the best place, the *only* place, on the East End: Mana's Goodz n Grindz. Talk Pidgin over good grindz, good food, eat at the outdoor tables. Get the excellent Mahi Mahi sandwich—almost as good and as cheap as the Mahi Mahi sandwiches we got in The Jungle of Waikiki in 1965. Of course, the big date and one fixed rite of every week would be at the Hotel Molokai, at their Hale Kealoha Open Air Bar

and Restaurant. Locals said they need a new cook so we did not eat there. But it is the bar with the best setting in the islands—right on, almost *in* the calm ocean lagoon waters inside the reef, looking across the Kalohi Channel beyond the breaching whales at Lana'i rising like an island in an ancient dream, watching the best sunsets and then listening to local musicians by torchlight. I would be there every Aloha Friday night from

4-to-6 for the Circle of Aloha gathering with the island elders singing and playing ukuleles—and maybe if I lived there, I'd get to be one of the *Kapuna*, the singing elders. But all that's in another poem.

Yes, if I lived here, I'd have to live on the Hotel Molokai side of town.

No reason to live on an island if you can't get rid of cars. Maybe live at the Molokai Shores Condos, on the ocean with a pool—buy it now

write a check, pay cash—close to town and Aloha Fridays. Buy a little shack close by to open my French Boulangerie. And when she got the loaves out of the oven I'd load them on my golf cart or electric scooter and drift slow and quiet into town, past yards with intricate totemic stacks and racks of the beautiful Axis Deer antlers, and roosters tethered by their personal A-frame shelters, past yards exploding with flowers and fruit—avocado.

banana, chikoo, coconut, guava, mango, papaya, Tahitian lime and all the rest. And neighbors would make the Shaka-sign and some would wave me into their yards and we would talk story and trade bread for fruit.

Then I'd make—only three days a week—my regular baguette deliveries

in town and if I had any left I might even go as far out the other side of town as Church Row, that stretch of lovely wooden chapels: and to the people in and around the churches I'd give away my unsold bread, honor what they call the Friendly Isle sacrament of sharing excess food. That might get me a few votes in the election for Honorary Mayor, the old island tradition where villagers put down a penny for their chosen candidate. Have I given away my secret plan: to achieve the exalted title celebrated in the old song? Surely, you know it—sing along: “The Cockeyed Mayor of Kaunakakai.”

We've been singing it since the 1930s. Well, not me, not that long, but *our* culture singing it with Hilo Hattie, the Andrews Sisters, in movies, on hit records with Bing—Crosby, of course. My father sang Bing's version when I heard him (late '40s) playing piano, crooning those consonants and vowels. He was a broke unemployed ex-factory-worker poet in love with sounds. He made the words and the island sound magic. The island of Lepers & Saints where everything *looks* and feels and sings as if it might kill you or save you. Where language *is* an outrigger canoe full of O's and U's, volcanoes of vowels and only seven consonants. It's hard to write poems in Hawaiian, easy to sing my father's song-symphony of vowels. It is ineffably strange how a slum kid in Camden, New Jersey sang the old Hapahaole song more than 60 years ago, living inside a song set 5,000 miles away, 8 years old, telling my father—

I want to grow up to be The Cockeyed Mayor of Kaunakakai?

Reflections

I wanted to include here, as the conclusion of this songwriting section, the lyrics of the old song “The Cockeyed Mayor of Kaunakakai.” Copyright restrictions and permissions proved difficult. Then I thought of reprinting a poem or two that illustrated the connections and resonant intertextualities of songwriting and poetry—again the permissions problem. So I include here my recent poem inspired by a song long ago. At least, the permissions process was easy. Many poems and songs begin with delight in the *sound* of words (e.g., see Wallace Stevens). Words like *Kaunakakai*. But poems and songs have

a way of taking us to unexpected places. My old friend Lawrence Durrell, the great British novelist and poet, used to say *Character is a function of landscape*. To Larry Durrell's axiom I would add: *Many poems and songs are a function of landscape*. Use what you get from country (from place), Hemingway would say, to make your stories live. Sing like Cézanne. Every day in Hawai'i nearly everybody with a local sense of things says: *Let's talk story*. So this poem talks story, sings story, about the far, forbidding, magical, numinously strange island of Moloka'i. And, with my father, it also *laughs story*.

for Emma Bovary

Larry Carr

She wishes the poem were more romantic. That it would describe their perfect kiss and how his perfect hands caress her long, smooth neck. Hands of an aristocrat, yet rough from working mornings in his formal gardens, in disguise, perfecting the perfect orchid. For her.

He'll invite her there, and his touch will bring her breasts to blossom, mingling with their hothouse breath. This could be that poem. But no—it's about a fencepost dividing a meadow from a road, and how a pilgrim walks on one side but finds no gate to lead him to the other.

It's about nothing she wants to know, and nowhere she imagines being. She takes the verse and tears it up. It'll be good for kindling, to start a fire in her parlor hearth, while she awaits a knock at the door of her silent house. A knock from the hand of the Comte de _____, who, sans disguise, bestows that perfect flower rolled inside a vellum note that finally, finally will deliver her from her life of death.

for Andy Warhol

Larry Carr

I understand why you packed your bags and left.
Drawing with Mom wasn't enough,
even as she nodded approval when you colored
outside the lines.

And who wanted to get beat up under the High-Level bridge
just for asking some hustler to pose under sooty streetlights—
near the factory with its blasting furnace
when you needed a bigger blast-off, Sputnik style.

So heading East with your roach ridden portfolio was all
you could do. Rolling toward the rising sun, hoping
it wouldn't end in orange disaster. Your ultimate rebellion
choosing Campbell's over Heinz. To a land where holy

mass and parties converge in dark rooms dripping
candlelight. To reinvent the eyes of heaven.

You had to leave. To clock the Other's 15 minutes
and connect with your Dead End Kids, who burned

through coke like the river mills you left behind. With art
you never believed in but wore like haute couture. That soon
became our sacred trash. Caught in shots of grainy flesh of
heroine lovers and wacko snubnosed bullets. And was that

Triple Elvis with the smoking gun father, son and ghost?

The Geography of Grief

Joann K. Dejudibus

He moved windward
from New York tenement
to farmhouse where
he learned the solitary hike.
Later, he'd trek international,
orienteer with his nephew.

He and the boy had just been sledding.
Frozen still: their feet printing
a path home in snow until
he moved ahead alone
to meet his cartographer.

The annual thaw charts his
departure in alluvial pools—
water always abandons.

Is it Still There

Joann K. Dejudicibus

The home that warmed you after that winter trip
downstate from Canadian border where Catholic charities
hoarded babies for those without to pick like flowers;

The small, blue house creaks beneath thin roof,
And chill winds whistling through workroom
cabinets your father built to store memories.

Arranged in the cherry china closet,
your mother's Polish tchotchkes stand
among fine dishes, an homage to her orderliness.

He, a woodworker, she, a nurse, took you and the boy
when you were just toddlers. Though you shared
no blood, you became one another's keepers.

Family portrait: Your brother's clutter of black curls
so contrast your blonde waves,
and your mother's deep chestnut coif.

You are only a teenager here, posed
in a blue dress to match your eyes,
but soon you'd be kicked out of the picture.

But brother was the one they could not keep for long:
He fled unexpectedly in his twenties, hemorrhaging
beneath the skull. No one anticipated aneurysm.

Now, in your fifties you live alone,
having survived the war of parentlessness twice,
one more thing we have in common.

But the burden of the house—leaks feeding foreclosure
in an IV drip, stretch-marked cement steps
pregnant with ice—is too much labor.

When the snow comes in blankets of quiet,
everything is still:
Water hangs from gutters.

Sharp-edged winter wears woe,
glittering like some silent film star.
She's all contrasts: Withering and convalescent.

What you mean to ask is not if the house
still stands to her elements, not if it can
distill life, eternally serve to memorialize.

For all that you've lost is greater than this—
one small, blue house that cannot hold
your father's last incoherent words,

your mother's latkes and best advice: give the child
to those without, to be picked like a flower,
the way she and your father picked you and your brother.

What you mean to ask but cannot is this:
Am I still here if I cannot be within those walls,
without the only ones I have known as my own.

Black Irish

Dennis Doherty

My mother said I had it,
my father's Black Irish.
She loved him powerfully,
as she did me. Still, I
knew that couldn't be good,
the way she said it, a disease.
But what exactly did it mean?

I saw a note she left him
(writers, they touched that way)
addressed to Ed Angst,
after a fight. Should have read it.
She'd search my eyes and spy it,
The darkness. His highs and wars
Were epic. He was large.
So how was I, half WASP,
mama's boy, of the Black ones?

It is this: a bumpkin thumb fumbling
the blighted nightshades;
a foreign body stumbling
among strangers' home fires
after washing ashore from shipwreck;
A misspent emissary after power,
orphaned, drawing strength from loss
in a maelstrom of armor;
the hurtful destroyer, dubbed Doherty.

It is this: The chance of thwarted love is
ever a threat; we wade in the surf
and then rage at the waves.
The Blacks are vulnerable, soft,
so we harden our sinews around
porous hearts; with blazing gazes
we shave our knuckles and dive
into quests for romance where we've

never felt welcome, take a gamble,
prepared to die in inevitable betrayal,
ever fatal, defensive, and proud
and resigned, cradle to battle grave;
Catholics who believe Christ can't save.

They sing of loss, the Irish, of death.

I never belonged anywhere

But to a consoling past,

in a drink, in a dream.

My shyness gave my face its anger.

My father's father barred his path,

so he broke his heart over

three wives, nine kids, and me.

Dead, he yet lashes our slumber.

My mother saw this: Destroyer

fascinated by the arsonist's flame,

hypnotized by immolation,

rejecting joy for the ecstasy

of self-prophecy, infliction.

We will not be happy; we reject

The proffered hand, knowing our *strange*.

Cultivating discomfort in our

mood as *the other*, we walk

dark pathways towards twisted

emergency rooms gilt in hell's gold

for the hurt and adulated vanquished, still

seeking the song, the visage, caress,

the tender loving despair of defeat.

Young Ones

Dennis Doherty

Young ones, rebel against enforced youth!
Look long, stare (your eyes entrust
an image to your composer brain, the voice
of your blood, history of body: you see
a boat kissing a dock over water; you see
flames licking two crossed logs over coals;
gulls tearing a bag of chips above
a beached and crying toddler)
and wonder your way on your own,
cultivating strangeness as you go.
Are you warped? So. Where's it hurt?
(Your stomach will always know the
tightened muscles, the acid nausea
of fear, your knuckles split and
aching with work or strife.)

Toss your toys – distractions. Pay attention.
Own your wisdom. Fat and printless fingers
reach for you over desk and counter,
through the portals of cyberspace,
even in dark solitude, coddling,
conjuring back to the blue glow and static of
no thought – not a green thought in a green shade,
not a sailor chasing tigers in red weather.
Leap beyond infantilizing systems
into independence of creative thought:
turn your room upside down and walk
through the window. Turn the world upside
down and walk on the air, your air.
Corporations can't breathe in it.
Clinicians can't prescribe for it.
In the sun you'll find shafts of fire,
in the dark, caves of terror.
Now you have your tools.

Go to work on a world you won't accept.

And young ones, never be satisfied—
you are neither demographic nor stage,
but a thing unto itself.
Never be comfortable, even in love,
but love.

Ode to the Fontans: Let Them Eat Kek

Matthew Nickel

Mangez ici, she tells me in the pages of my favorite Hemingway short story, “Wine of Wyoming,” you know—the one just before “The Gambler, The Nun, and the Radio”—with that great character Sister Cecilia, though academics rarely see her wisdom, her grace—and you almost never hear about the French Fontans.

Oh, Madame Fontan, I understand about eating at hotels—remember when she warned, “Only once in my life I ate at a restaurant in America,” she says, and adds, “They gave me pork that was raw!” Ah, the horror of hotels the crime de cuisine, and her daughter who married an American and *tout le temps il a mangé les beans en can*; beans in a can

my God, who would have thought. Yet, Madame, I have had beans *en can* from Languedoc and they are quite good, you know, the French cassoulet in a can is better than what you get in CIA kitchens in America. But I digress, you requested my presence at your table, and I graciously accept—would never miss a meal at Chez Fontan

because I too am crazy *pour le vin, mais oui* though I do not work all day in a book-factory I am hungry for communion, for the old world in two words at morning, in hands gesturing water into wine where the garden of the world meets the columns of Notre Dame, where we are unable to pray tonight,

you are right Madame and *je reste Catholique aussi* even in America, where sometimes they vomit *dans ses shoes* and readers miss your humor, my students complain because they can’t read French, yet, you make perfect sense to me, let them eat kek; we are crazy *pour le vin* so let us forgive them their trespasses and to them we raise our glasses!

On Being Changed After Understanding Poetry

For H. R. Stoneback's students, everywhere

*a wonderland just flowing free
of understanding poetry —H. R. Stoneback*

Matthew Nickel

The way the room finds a way to sing
The way we sing together when the guitar
Leads us over the dark chasm and into
The light of poetry, the recognition of fate
Made joyful, made into a comprehensible
Moment caught in the unstopped ear

Far away I listen to old recordings
Of H. R. Stoneback's hit show
On New Paltz campus, Understanding Poetry
And this, just after teaching my own students
Brooks' and Warrens' textbook, finally seeing
As if I could not see it simply reading it

For over a decade exactly what it was about *form*
About students recognizing *fate*
About words like *joy* and *comprehensible*
About the way a teacher finds his vocation
Teaching Brooks and Warren
Or maybe it's just the way we feel

Years later hearing old recordings
Of an Understanding Poetry night at New Paltz
Taped in 2009, remembering having flown then
Half the country from Louisiana to New Paltz
Just to sing along on "You Are My Sunshine"
To listen to the train-whistle on "Folsom Prison"

Or Bob Waugh on "Peggy Sue" or maybe
Meet my future wife or something unreal that
Can only happen at Understanding Poetry
With H. R. Stoneback in the possibility
Of timelessness that knows its place in time
the harmony of really great people singing together

I Need a New Poem

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt

I need a new poem
One that doesn't
stick in my craw
expect recompense
Go for the jugular
divide and conquer
Split hairs
Split bodies
Build walls

I need a new poem
One that doesn't tear flesh like paper
squeeze fingers to throats
or forearms
Blue marked skin
at the crease of the elbow
Streaks like sodden
violet crepe

I need a new poem
One that asks for more
Says to the pregnant
woman at the market
Buy mangoes figs
pears grapes
Taste the sweetness
Let it dissolve on your tongue
For there are no mines
No bombs
No shells
There is only bread

I need a new poem
One that smells of
lavender and bayberry
wild onion

and freshly cut grass

And dreams of itself
as only new poems can.

*Previously published in *Writing in a Woman's Voice* (writinginawomansvoice.blogspot.com)

Walking my Dog in Logan Park, DC the Day After the Women's March

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt

Soggy. Doused with rain.
My dog's hair, matted, curled, like tiny snails.
He sniffs the wet ground. Paws dead leaves and twigs.
The rain soaks through my jacket.
I mop drops off my fogged glasses.
Signs are flattened in the grass. Streaked
Words emerge out of the deluge. *Dump Trump.*
Humanity not Insanity. Love Trumps Hate.
No Mandate.
Messages rolled up, dumped in garbage cans
with newspapers, empty Heineken bottles, and pizza crusts.
The wind whips around me. Blows off my hood
Women's Rights Are Human Rights. Bad Hombre.
Mud and sludge. Dark puddles pool around roots of trees.
I was there. Pink waves buoying me up.
On the bus going a Latino man with a pussy hat
starts "America the Beautiful."
All sing—brown, black, white, young and old.
men and women. The driver too.
Women's Rights are Human Rights.
No left or right. Just straight ahead.
Words bleed into the muddy earth.
Make America gracious again.
They ground me.
The dog shakes off the rain.

*Previously published in *Writing in a Woman's Voice* (writinginawomansvoice.blogspot.com)

Halloween in Iran

“Old maids are better off than wives of drunkards.”

—Amanda Wingfield, *The Glass Menagerie*

Genaro Kÿ Lý Smith

October, and our daughters think of patterns
to carve in this year's jack-o-lanterns.
They mime monsters they've seen on television
late at nights before going to bed, of maniacs with smiles
stretched too wide, eyes large enough to whiten their dreams,
or scrunched to where they believe they are blind,
and that is why monsters Braille the air before them
for the unexpected wall or bare beetle-ruined pine trees,
their feet finding footholds in the ground
because gravity has failed them in this new form.

October, and our daughters understand that for a day,
they can be whoever they wish: a dead person
mummified in gauze and Ace bandages,
or wearing frayed hems and collars with blood
drooling from corners of mouths or bald heads.
Thankfully, they choose the obvious:
an assortment of princesses from Disney films.
Year after year, we purchase the shiny, faux satin dresses
with puffy shoulders, a picture of the princess in the center
where their bosoms will one day fill out, Beauty's expectations.

The wife and I are thrilled at first,
gushing over how adorable they look,
how they wear a smile as part of the costume,
and we capture on our phones their spinning around
to bloom their dresses, flower the living room
as though expecting stardust and glitter
to come off their cheaply embroidered fabric.
And we do not say it, but we often wondered who will be their prince.

I recall my childhood Halloweens when we went through neighborhoods,
unaccompanied, just a children-led procession of ghost sheets
and dirty-faced hobos, lopsided Frankenstein's

and Dracula-fanged boys who claimed their gums hurt.
In those days, we migrated with the intent of filling our pillowcases,
even if it meant disobeying our parents by venturing
into neighborhoods we promised we would never enter.

One Halloween, we strayed as far as 2 miles,
though we would never know it then,
before turning to each other beneath lamplights
and coming to a consensus that we were tired
and hungry and we should head back.
There was school tomorrow, after all,
and our parents would want to check our candy,
divvying the chocolates from the hard colored ones,
the taffies from the Pop Rocks and powdered tubes.

It was on our way home we stopped
in front of a house on our block
shared by two Iranian brothers and their wives.
They had lived here for a year, and for a year, we heard nothing
but yelling. Like their darkened home that night,
we knew only of their opened garage door disclosing a Firebird,
the hood often adorned by one of the wives
who sat cross-legged after all the screaming had stopped,
tears mascaraed by the arguments,
their sharp syllables slicing and clipping the air.
Their screams kept us inside when we wanted to ride our bikes
or skateboard in the daylight, and we waited behind our doors,
waited for the women's shrill screams to settle to silence
and the husbands slammed doors punctuating an end to an argument.
We waited until that fear of their gargling somehow swallowing us
or knocking us off our bikes or our skateboards flung
from underneath our feet left us.
Like our presence would reignite their anger.

We stood there that night considering knocking on the door to see if they had any candy. Maybe some gnarled fruit from their country, something bitter tasting that passes for candy. But all the lights were out.

We found out a week later that they had abandoned the home, the garage absent of the Firebird, and I imagined the husbands went to some different corner of America, maybe, where their screaming could get their wives to submit, or cut out their tongues so they could not produce the sharp and guttural gathering of syllables required for arguments, for any protests. What would come from the women would be ghoulish sounds, and it would be Halloween year-round. Or maybe they sent their wives back to Iran a country where many veiled princesses awaited for men—not just princes—who would watch their words the volume of their voice, men who would climb towers to rescue and unveil what has always been sacred, precious and good in this world.

This Is the Place

Genaro Kỳ Lý Smith

This is the place where our voices
try to triumph an argument that cannot be resolved
in the span it takes a commercial to convince us,
Hmm, I do need that. A place where our volume,
unfortunately, penetrates our daughters' skin and bones,
the layer of princess costumes over their daily wear.

This is the place where our daughters reside
in the room they share: the glow-in-the-dark
stars constellating their ceiling,
the long-haired and braided dolls
and stuffed animals littering the area
where they will lay their heads
to soften adult language, absorb the threats
of walking out, or wishing the other in hell.

This is the place where our daughters *tra-la-la*
all morning and afternoon, mimicking Disney characters
in their made-up, play-acting episodes,
one a potential husband, the other
a picky tower-stranded waif
wanting her parents' blessing for matrimony.

This is the place where they undress their dolls,
force us adults to put them back on again,
too young to understand that there is more implied
when we strip ourselves bare.

This is the place where their dolls' arms
and legs are limbered enough by lust,
their mouths slackened with the lies
they promise never to tell
or blaspheme the other spouse's shortcomings
at another couple's home when we have to debate
over that next glass—even the last sip.

This is the place where they learned to tell time,
eager for the next school day where they chore over
common core problems,
dwell over Crayolas that fit their moods,
mull over dull leads that need sharpening,
pick at whatever Mother made for lunch,
of wanting to be like their teachers when they grow up.

This is the place where they daydream
of being grown enough to leave the house
for a much quieter corner of the parish;
or to a friend's house where they can talk
about this one boy's walk, or the haircut on the other,
listen to music, try pot, or jimmy the liquor cabinet.

Or they dream of shedding their school uniforms,
putting on shorts and a t-shirt, scrunchie their hair,
lace up their Nikes and run around the neighborhood
till the lights are on when we think to have dinner
on the table at a decent time; they'll keep running
and won't come home until they hear nothing,
and they will walk inside
anticipating the day they will walk out forever.

Zero Visibility: Lana‘i Landing Again—Island Puddle-Jumper Flights

For the Ohana: Christmas 2016

H.R. Stoneback

To fly along the dangerous edge
of things in Zero Visibility—
and *love* it—requires not courage
only Heroic Risibility.

I have always loved small planes flying low, the bumpy rock and roll of old Marine Corps flights, even our chopper just clearing risky ridges and buzzing tall treetops. And eight-seater planes air-kissing sea-cliffs in our wind-sheer takeoff from the Iles des Saintes. And all those seaplane flights in our islands, the Grumman Goose flying low and VFR over serene then sudden squalled seas, all that puddle-jumping island-hopping plane-play. But in this bleak and dreary weather there will be no *Visual Flying Rules* today. In the dark, we take our 6 AM taxi to the airport for our 7:18 takeoff. Everything even reluctant daylight is darkness visible. Fog and cloud

all around, high and low, shrouding the runway right down to the ground. Departure is delayed. Our ATR-42 waits for some crack of clearing. To soothe Ohana-family-fears, I talk light: *Welcome to the wonderful world of back-country adventure flying. We'll be fine.* By 9:30 we are airborne. It only takes two minutes in the air to cross the channel. After twelve uncertain minutes I know we are in danger. From the back of the plane where I sit I cannot even see our wings. No sea, no island visible. Just the close gray wall of emptiness. At least I hope the skies around us are empty. I feel the *frisson* of zero visibility, the sudden shiver of some lost plane and mid-air collision,

meeting some amateur pilot desperately lost and confused in his small plane. (Later, we hear that a small plane went down off Moloka‘i that day—and last I heard is yet to be found. A novice pilot flying from Honolulu on a whim. One does not fly to Moloka‘i and land near the world’s tallest sea-cliffs on a whim.) I know we are in the fog-floundered cloud-closed sky far too long. I have confidence in the plane, it has a range of 400 miles—if they filled the tank. I take comfort in the knowledge that the ATR is a French plane—*Avions de Transport Régional*—made in Toulouse where the workers are good. I know this twin turboprop is a newer plane since it has the six-bladed

composite propellers.

No fear of metal fatigue. My mind resists the sound of *Toulouse* because it is impossible for my mind to form that word without hearing *Toulouse-Lautrec* and thus *To Lose The Trek*. And, of course, knowing the force of brain-wave transmissions my body asserts hand-over-mind not mind-over-matter as my hand moves unconsciously to the Camargue Cross around my neck: and spirit utters a small prayer. That touch naturally reminds me of old friend *gardians*, the Camargue cowboys and thus the *paniols*, the Moloka'i cowboys, and all that leads to memory-echo of an old conversation with the pilot of a Chalk's Air Grumman, sitting almost in the open cockpit with him as he dodges a sea-squall

and as our small plane is tossed half-flipped he says *There are two kinds of pilot—Cowboys of the Air who feel invincible and give little or no thought to the earth and Scholars of the Ground whose minds and hands remain firmly fixed on landing.* (And was it a Cowboy who soon after crashed, flying for Chalk's, the world's oldest airline without a wreck, killing everybody on board, including people I knew, and ripping the heart out of Bimini?) Two rows in front of me people are talking about Zero Visibility and arguing about Trump as if the weather is a metaphor for politics. It strikes me as odd that the pro-Trump people are on the left side of the aisle and the Trump-bashers are on the right. Across the aisle, a serene

silent woman makes the Sign of the Cross. I look out the window at funereal fog-flanneled air wrapping the plane like a nun's habit flapping against us, so close you can reach out and grab it—the doom-death fabric of gray-black fate. We seem to be motionless, suspended in some sorry Sabbath soup. And there is not even a hole in the sky for us to fall into. But I am a sky-High Modernist with a readiness for rain and a sky-skimming steadiness and I have been cured of metaphor and I know that weather is not a metaphor for anything or *nothing* and one must show *mépris* for danger and death so I touch my Camargue Cross again not-thinking but feeling *Oh Lord let our pilot not be a Cowboy* yet really I love

this dangerous edge of things and my hand unison-moves with the serene lady's Sign and my mind smiles *In the name of the Father, the Son, and into the hole-he goes.* It's an old joke but then everything's an old joke including

nothing. But of course I'm relieved when, after what seems like hours in the planned two-minute air, the pilot's decision is announced over the speakers: *We cannot see the runway and we'll be turning back and landing again at Lana'i.* Then my heroic risibility in zero visibility murmurs *Runway hell, you can't even see the sea or the island and what makes you think you'll see the runway at Lana'i now? The air controllers in these parts must be like phantom barking deer.* Then we land and we're back at the too-

familiar mini-airport on Lana'i and I seriously wonder if we will ever get across the channel to Moloka'i. I have planned this family trip for almost a year. We must not miss the *Aloha Friday* event at the Hotel Moloka'i and will we ever get there? Will we? Will we? The question remains unresolved when we take off again and land in Honolulu. Through it all I make jokes with the family about the fun of this kind of flying. I am not sure if they realize the danger we were in but you do not put your mouth on such matters. I know when my son requests a seat-change for the next flight, moving from his seat in the front to sit beside me in the rear of the plane. After many take-offs many landings, at last we are down on the ground

on the island we were supposed to reach
eight hours before. And as they exclaim
in the islands *We reached mon.* And thus we seek—
landing and landing and landing again.

***Are You the Famous Poet?*—A Meditation on the Benefits of Poetry and Poet Discounts**

For Ignacio: Hunter-Surfer Restaurateur-Chef

H.R.Stoneback

Rarely do we hear of poet discounts
Trochee benefits, iambic coupons:

But then a voice says on the phone—*Are you indeed the famous poet H. R. Stoneback?*

I laugh but I am somewhat taken aback
hearing this from a famous Hawaiian chef,

hunter, purveyor of rare Moloka'i
venison, Axis Deer, the best of the best

of the world's hard-to-get exotic meats.
I only left my name. He returned my call.

Flattery will get you every-no-where.
Flummery might get ten percent off the bill.

I did not ask him how he knew—was he there
at my reading at the University of Hawai'i

in '65, in that audience of 20?
Or was he there in 2009

at my reading for more than a thousand
people in that ballroom at the Hilton

Hawaiian Village. Was he one of the island's
privileged few who owned one of the 50 books

I signed that day? Maybe that's why I smelled
a discount coming from this hunter-cook.

We discussed Axis Deer, sometimes called Chital.
It was a most civilized conversation.

He pronounced *Chital* to rhyme with *beetle*.
I said it in the French way à la Bergson

So *Chital* was echoed by *élan vital*.
He said there was no Eland on Moloka'i.
We both laughed. He said *Chital* is the Taj Mahal
of Game. He usually charged 20 bucks a pound
but he would give me the Poet's Discount
of 15. He would cross the channel soon
and kill my deer with bow and arrow.
And ship in dry ice my tenderloin.
And then he said the price would be lower
if I wrote him a poem about *Chital* venison—
13 bucks—thus this poem-bargain, 35 percent off:
Such are the blessings, Poetry's benison.
Does the IRS give a discount for verse?
At least, at last I get to eat my words.

Snow Day

Pauline Uchmanowicz

Winter-booted kids, towing plastic sleds,
furrow windblown drifts inside
drifts, oblivious to how, indoors, parents
sort piled tax reports, plowing
the frazzle ice of our lives.

Passing Time on the Cape

Robert Waugh

I

The Wellfleet flats slope out and out
in the morning slap of the sun; the sunfish
wallop along the wharf and diminish
out of the yellow spit.

The buoys clang; a rocky silence
occupies water, fingers, brush
and it is all as if it once
had smouldered a way into light.

The Wellfleet flats slope out;
the hermit-crabs slide up
the parchment shore in pebbles
and amber, oil and silt,
the insolvencies of the age
or a silver rain. We have sand and bluebells;
stone pillars toothe the lip
of the nether shore in wreckage.

The Wellfleet flats slope out and out:
the puddles smell, the tide
is far away the other side
of Marblehead and twilight
and we lie here against the wash
watching the daylong gather
itself behind the gull and weather
and nets and a passable gouache.

The nets and a sprinkle of gouache
flicker in front of sand and spit

and a turn of the flapping sunfish:
the Wellfleet flats slope out.

II

Gilboa and Ararat
over Moon Pond
steady the tide away,
hold to the land;

chaffer carries
sand around, weed around,
skies around, mallow, rose
into the bay.

Gilboa and Ararat,
solitudes shoal
after the tossing
dolphin and sail

and a pinnacle sweeps in
to the point of the harbor
to wallow and rest
and abide the moon.

Gilboa and Ararat
shallow and sift,
slide down to the sun
and the hour and year;

the bay fills in
above the oyster:
the syllable falls
in a drop of rain.

In a fall of rain
the gull or godwit
stall in the waves under
Gilboa, Ararat.

III

The blue hydrangeas of Chatham
loosen above the sea.
The swans look up; you would say
it is time, it is only time,
for the sky in a looser blue
softens around the ocean
and filters out the sun
in our capable habitations.

The blue hydrangeas of Chatham
hold up in a dusty green
their nodding worlds--the town
stiffens in old chagrin.

You have gone walking for pleasure
to nod to the sun at noon
and sight along a yellow thumb
the order of the evening.

The blue hydrangeas of Chatham
interrogate heaven: Are you
in a similar eye, does another
regard only you? For you know
that the houses regard you, in lilac
and swans and the quickened lagoon,

and look across the time
the peninsulas roll and are gone.

The peninsulas will be gone
in a lazy season of basil and foam
and startled sun and sea
for the blue hydrangeas of Chatham.

Florida Fall

Ed Maietta

The leaves roll by, breeze-dancing, in the shade;
Here autumn's simple—green to brown, no more,
Unlike at home, where colors brighten, fade
Long after the proud tapestry they've made
Spills its stunned motley to the forest floor.
And nude trees shake as if they'd not before
Felt winter whispering, "I am coming. Some
of you will settle, broken, into sleep."
Here, only storms break trees; winter is dumb,
Untellable from fall, as if they come
Together with a warm, slow, silent creep
To wait a while for spring. Here no snows sweep
Early through boughs as they in color drown.
The year falls simply—green one day, then brown.

The Arc

Gregory E. Bruno

In the silence of the hardwood,
Marked by the resonance of
Three sharp snaps, abides
The shooter of free throws
Alone shooting for nothing
Except the soft coolness of
The swish, net nudged
From its solemn hang to abide
The ball within its rim.
Each arc, ripe with the total
Wholeness of the body,
Originates from feet on wood
Through knees bent, depends
On the core's hold and
The craftsman's elbow,
And departs from the body
Off middle finger's tip,
Containing the subtle will
To control the moment
If the mind is empty.

The Ride

Gregory E. Bruno

Balance is the rider's virtue,
To thrive on the in-between,
The edge of standing and falling,
Requires radical submission.
Downhill: ease of force,
body electrified, jolts
the pedals in joyous futility
spinning and whirling, slicing
the air's newfound resistance
to the follicles of your hair.
Uphill: the heavy grind from your
heart, hardly moving, lungs heaving,
Sucking cold air down to your
Blind belly furnace to pedal
To find relief on an even plane.

Mullica River

Evan Hulick

What murky, mysterious, mystical
Love, churns through the deep-brown heart that courses
Its way through marsh and bog unto the dove
Of peace where fisher-kings all fish the sea.

Coats blue and red lie dormant, typical,
Sad, amidst the cries of cannon curses,
Abandoning all sense of hope and love
All because of eunuchs, taxes, and tea.

And yet, before the ore and river-bends,
Through deep, rich, lush pine-barrens, pens
Should bow before beloved foamy streams
Transforming brown to orange-golden seams.

It drifts atop the cradled riverbed,
Flowing, twirling, gathering, from God's Head.

VI | Essays from the Graduate Program

Hath Not a Homosexual Eyes?; or, How the Lack of a Queer Discourse Shields Antonio in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

James Frauenberger

In the last three decades, Shakespeare critics have made much of the possibility of a homoerotic element in Antonio's relationship to Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*. Although many scholars, including Joseph Pequigney (known for his queer readings of the sonnets), stop short of describing the pair as homosexual, most recent critics still acknowledge the curiously emphatic degree of homosociality present between Antonio and Bassanio. There is certainly a temptation for contemporary queer scholars to see something like Antonio's seemingly inexplicable sadness (1.1.1-7) as evidence of the merchant's possible homosexual inclinations. If one accepts this proposition, one must also accept the less than beguiling outcome of the interpretation: that the play's queer character is not merely an anti-Semite but, in Seymour Kleinberg's estimation, the most "particularly vicious" anti-Semite in the play (117). The idea of a queer anti-Semite is anathema to the contemporary embrace of solidarity between members of oppressed groups, but Kleinberg argues we must view Antonio as just such a bigot. Though the virulence of Antonio's anti-Semitism is not in question, I do not intend to argue for or against a definitive interpretation of Antonio as queer; rather, I am interested in looking at the way in which discourse shapes how Antonio and Shylock are treated in Venetian society, and I will build on the works of scholars with opposing viewpoints of Antonio's sexuality. Michel Foucault's groundbreaking analysis of homosexual discourse helps to explain why Antonio, even if his homosocial proclivities are tacitly recognized by Portia, can escape social stigmatization, while Shylock faces continuous anti-Semitic prejudice. Ultimately, the lack of an essentializing discourse of homosexuality within Shakespeare's play inevitably privileges Antonio, a character whose otherness must remain a matter of speculation, rather than Shylock, whom racist discourse permanently relegates to his position as a Jewish other.

Any examination of queerness within Shakespeare's works must acknowledge at the outset that the words "queer" and "homosexual" are anachronistic when applied to Elizabethan England. As Russ McDonald explains, "the term *homosexuality* did not come into currency until the nineteenth century" (272). McDonald quotes Bruce Smith as saying, "[N]o

one in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would have thought of himself as 'gay' or 'homosexual' for the simple reason that those categories of self-definition did not exist" (272). McDonald and Smith apply the foundational insights of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* to Shakespeare's time. In that massive tome, Foucault argues that, in the Victorian age, "[S]ex was driven out of hiding and constrained to lead a discursive existence" (33). Foucault's critical point, for the present paper, is that discourse shifted queer-ness from an infraction to an identity when he writes: "[A]s defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts... The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage... Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality" (43). In Foucault's ingenious reversal, the modern discourse of homosexuality created homosexuals and not the other way around. At the same time that I find Foucault's work invaluable to my study, I also acknowledge the point Madhavi Menon makes in the introduction to her anthology *Shakespeare*; she argues that we can read plays like *The Merchant of Venice* "as queer texts without also assuming that they are either homosexual or proto-homosexual documents," and I certainly agree (4). Building on this body of scholarship, I intend to extend the insights of critics who have examined Shakespeare in general, and Antonio in particular, through a queer lens. The new insight I intend to bring to this critical discussion is the idea that the lack of a discourse of homosexuality serves as a kind of social safety net not afforded to societal others who *are* discursively marked.

Even critics convinced of Antonio's homosexual identity must carefully navigate the differences between Elizabethan and contemporary discourses. Antonio's opening lines are useful in this regard:

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:
It wearies me; you say it wearies you;
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn;
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,
That I have much ado to know myself. (1.1.1-7)

The play never explicitly solves the riddle of Antonio's sadness, but the above lines are ripe for a queer reading. Arthur L. Little reads this passage as "an extremely important instantiation of queer mourning (and speaking)" (217). Little sees Antonio as "articulating and performing *lack* as a constitutive part of queer desire," a precursor to the later idea of "the love that dare not speak its name" (217). While I follow Little's points with interest, I think his analysis veers closer to eisegesis when he argues that, "Antonio mourns how his own

culturally unsanctioned desires, those of same-sex intimate friendship...he mourns because he sees the institution of heterosexual marriage working not only to displace but to replace same-sex commuting” (217). Though the phrase I have quoted could be interpreted as describing something strictly platonic, Little makes clear that he sees Antonio as wanting to “marry” Bassanio, in a marriage that also includes “sexual rites” (216). Given my own standing as a contemporary queer reader, I am tempted to agree with an analysis that puts Antonio’s relationship to Bassanio, and his mourning, in such starkly queered terms; however, I simply do not think the text provides enough information to state the origins of Antonio’s sadness as definitively as Little phrases them.

Nor do I agree, however, with critics who argue definitively against an interpretation of Antonio as a queer character. In his influential article “The Two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*,” queer critic Joseph Pequigney argues that while Antonio and Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* can be interpreted as sexually involved, Antonio and Bassanio must be viewed as having “amicable” love rather than “amorous” love (220). Pequigney does note some beguiling hints of a queer nature within the play, though he draws back from them. Take, for example, Antonio’s courtroom injunction to “[S]ay how I loved you; speak me fair in death./And when the tale is told, bid her judge be judge/Whether Bassanio had not once a love” (4.1.283-285); while Pequigney concedes the possibility that the word “love” could viably be interpreted as “lover,” he ultimately rejects that interpretation, pointing out that “[T]he word ‘lover’ as ‘friend,’ without erotic connotation, was quite common” (211). The weakness, therefore, of Pequigney’s reading of the lines quoted above is that it is merely one choice among competing, plausible interpretations. Pequigney also presents as evidence this demonstrable fact of the text: “Neither of the Venetian friends ever makes reference to physical beauty in the other, or ever speaks in amorous terms to or about the other” (213). Pequigney rightly underscores the difficulty of building a textual case for a homoerotic Antonio-Bassanio relationship, but, as Little’s analysis shows, sometimes a lack can be read as *more* evidence for a proposition, not less. (Again, I do not necessarily subscribe to either view of Antonio’s sexuality, and I intend to construct an analysis that is fluid enough to elucidate either interpretation while remaining agnostic about the character’s possible queerness).

Finally, there is Pequigney’s observation that, given how a “Christian-Jewish opposition is fundamental to *The Merchant of Venice*,” Antonio cannot be a homosexual because he must be an exemplar of Christianity to oppose Shylock (215). This might be Pequigney’s weakest point; as James O’Rourke points out, “[A]ccording to Pequigney, Antonio isn’t a homosexual, he’s a Christian. Pequigney’s error is to take this contradiction too literally” (380).

While I agree that a Christian-Jewish binary is built into the structure of the play, I extend O'Rourke's criticism of Pequigney. A Christian-Homosexual binary, in an Elizabethan play, is a historical anachronism; following Foucault's outline, Shakespeare wrote at a time in which sodomy was, in McDonald's phrase, "part of the general depravity to which man's carnal nature was vulnerable" (273). A Christian-Jewish binary is created by the discursive recognition of two separate cultural and religious groups and is therefore woven into the texture of Shakespeare's play; Pequigney cannot exclude a homosexual Antonio from being a Christian for the simple reason that this particular opposition makes no sense in Shakespeare's historical moment.

Though I reject both that Antonio *must* be a homosexual and that he *must not* be one, I welcome scholarship that advances either position if it helps to elucidate Antonio's enigmatic position in the play, especially if that scholarship also addresses the troubling reality of the merchant's demonstrable anti-Semitism. In an early and groundbreaking queer reading of Antonio, Seymour Kleinberg forthrightly addresses the issue of a "virulently anti-Semitic homosexual" (113). In Kleinberg's unabashedly psychoanalytic reading, "Shylock is Antonio. They are psychological counterparts" (113). Kleinberg notes that Antonio is the most nakedly anti-Semitic character in the play, more than the other Venetians who are "casually anti-Semitic" (117). When Shylock wrathfully declares, "[Antonio] hath disgraced me, and/hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses,/mocked at my gains, scorned my nation," one may well wonder why Antonio is more blatantly racist than the other Christians of the play (3.1.45-47). This is Kleinberg's powerful explanation:

Antonio hates Shylock not because he is a more fervent Christian than others, but because he recognizes his own alter ego in this despised Jew who, because he is a heretic, can never belong to the state. He hates Shylock, rather than himself, in a classic pattern of psychological scapegoating. What Antonio hates in Shylock is not Jewishness, which, like all Venetians, he merely holds in contempt. He hates himself in Shylock: the homosexual self that Antonio has come to identify symbolically as the Jew. It is the earliest portrait of the homophobic homosexual. (120)

That Antonio's presumed otherness and sexual oppression leads to a fouler degree of racism is a disturbing proposition indeed. Though Kleinberg takes Antonio's homosexuality as something of a given, I appreciate that his idea of homosexual anti-Semitism is a means of solving the textual crux of Antonio's conspicuous bigotry. While I again take issue with the essentializing discourse in which this argument is made, I would certainly entertain an updated version of Kleinberg's thesis; rather than Antonio hating his own homosexual nature, we can view him as hating his proclivity for sin (in this case sodomy)

and, consciously or not, exorcising that self-hatred through the scapegoating of the racialized other Shylock.

Following Kleinberg's analysis, there does seem to be a level of guilt within Antonio, perhaps of queer origin, that emerges at notable moments of the play. Perhaps the most notable is Antonio's self-sacrificing rhetoric in the courtroom. He declares:

I am a tainted wether of the flock,
Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit
Drops earliest to the ground, and so let me.
You cannot better be employ'd, Bassanio,
Than to live still and write mine epitaph. (4.1.116-120)

There is much in the above passage to pique the interest of a queer theorist. Antonio's striking choice of a "wether," or castrated ram, as the metaphor with which to describe himself implies a lack or a faultiness connected to his genitalia; this fault seems to have marked him for death, and McDonald notes that, though rare, execution was the penalty for sodomy (272). Although "fruit" did not, to the best of my knowledge, signify a pejorative word for a queer person in Elizabethan England as it does now, Shakespeare's diction there is a kind of delightful coincidence to a queer theorist, one that tempts eisegesis. What is puzzling is Antonio's admission that he is "tainted." His most obviously negative characteristic is his racism, but this is not something Christian society would have viewed as something he needed to be contrite about, quite the opposite actually.

Whatever the origin of Antonio's guilt, it is not verbally expressed. I argue that this silence is an issue of discourse. Critics generally agree that, regardless of whether or not Antonio is a homosexual, his relationship with Bassanio is almost certainly unconsummated (again compare the other Antonio's relationship with Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*, which Pequigney sees as consummated). Within the discourse of Shakespeare's time, queerness emerges as sodomy, a sin to which men in general were susceptible; if Antonio has not acted on his latent desires, he has not committed a punishable sin within the normative discourse of Shakespeare's day. And, crucially, homosocial behavior (typified by Antonio and Bassanio) may not have even been logically connected with sodomy; as Alan Sinfield shrewdly notes, "[W]ithin those scenarios, it seems, men did not necessarily connect their practices with the monstrous crime of sodomy—partly, perhaps, because that was so unthinkable" (277). The lack of a homosexual discourse goes some way toward explaining Antonio's inability to express what has "tainted" him, but it also explains why Antonio, if he does have queer tendencies, does not face organized and deliberate societal stigmatization; indeed, it explains why the

debate about Antonio's sexuality continues unabated with no definitive resolution in sight.

The paradox that I want to explore is how such an extreme degree of marginalization, in which queerness is so lacking in the discourse of the play as to be articulated only through ambiguity and absence itself, functions as a peculiar form of hierarchical privilege for Antonio in comparison to Shylock. Proceeding from this observation, Shylock's famous speech takes on an entirely different character:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions—fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? (3.1.48-55)

Except for the ethical quandary posed at the end of the speech quoted above, Shylock's rhetorical questions all address characteristics which can be apprehended by the senses. Shylock's questions go unanswered; I think many critics would say the Christians to whom this speech is addressed choose not to answer because that would grant a greater degree of humanity to Shylock than their anti-Semitic ideology would allow. I look at it slightly differently. I believe their answer to the above questions, except the crucial last one, would be an emphatic yes. However, while at once acknowledging that Shylock and other Jews possess the same human qualities that a Christian possesses, they would qualify through discourse that these qualities are undermined by their Jewishness. Shylock's eyes are, in Venetian discourse, essentialized as necessarily *Jewish* eyes, and therefore inferior.

That Venetian anti-Semitic discourse essentializes Jewish identity in this way is evidenced by lines from Antonio in the trial scene, lines which Kleinberg notes as being especially egregious in their racism (119). As Antonio declares, to no censure from the Christians present:

You may as well do anything most hard
As seek to soften that than which what's harder –
His Jewish heart. Therefore, I do beseech you,
Make no more offers, use no farther means,
But with all brief and plain conveniency
Let me have judgment and the Jew his will. (4.1.79-84)

In Antonio's rhetoric of anti-Semitism, any difficult task is still easier than softening Shylock's "Jewish heart." One can only imagine how Shylock might

have answered question about whether a Jew has “organs.” Yes, Shylock does have a heart, but it is not like other hearts, for a Jewish heart cannot express mercy in *The Merchant of Venice*. In Shakespeare’s Venice, Jewishness is both something that is marked through auditory and visual characteristics (O’Rourke notes how Venetian Jews were made to wear red hats as a form of self-identification), but also something that emerges from an essential Jewishness within (393). This is nicely captured in the 2004 Michael Radford film version of the play. At movie’s end, Radford presents us with an extra vignette not present in the original play in which Shylock, after the forced conversion, stands alone, silently ostracized from both the Jewish and Christian communities; his exclusion from the former is the outgrowth of his departure from the religion, but his lack of acceptance in the Christian community presumably arises from the persistent presence of Shylock’s Jewish heart. Although this scene was not part of Shakespeare’s original vision, it is a useful visual metaphor for the kind of essentializing anti-Semitic discourse present in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Even if a critic accepts Antonio’s queerness, that critic would have to admit that there is not a discourse of homophobia in this play to mirror the discourse of anti-Semitism. I have to tread carefully here so as not to be misunderstood. I am certainly not denying the ways in which the societal hierarchy of Shakespeare’s time functioned, then like now, as a cis-heteropatriarchy. Those who engaged in behaviors we would now call queer faced dire consequences, and it is only in recent years that scholars are beginning to uncover the erased queer legacy of Shakespeare’s era. In short, I do not minimize the brutal reality of what we now rightly call institutionalized homophobia and heterosexism in the Elizabethan age. My argument does not discount that stark reality. What I *am* arguing is that because of the lack of a homosexual discourse in *The Merchant of Venice*, Antonio’s homosociality, which many critics see Portia as recognizing and resisting, is not able to be construed as a queer relationship with Bassanio; the upshot of this inability to label Antonio a homosexual, regardless of his actual sexual orientation, functions as a social privilege that prevents Antonio from being seen as having the essential identity of a marginalized group.

In order to see how this social privilege functions within the play, one should examine the ways in which Portia views Antonio as a homosocial (not homosexual) threat to the hegemony of heterosexual marriage and undermines his efforts. As Sinfield notes, “[T]he seriousness of the love between Antonio and Bassanio is manifest, above all, in Portia’s determination to contest it” (272). Male same-sex bonding is here posited as a threat to the natural order of heterosexual marriage, and Portia responds in kind. Sinfield points specifically to the trial scene, in which Antonio makes his above-quoted

exhortation to have Portia wonder whether Bassanio had once had a love. Moved, Bassanio responds:

Antonio, I am married to a wife
Which is as dear to me as life itself,
But life itself, my wife, and all the world,
Are not with me esteem'd above thy life:
I would lose all—aye, sacrifice them all
Here to this devil—to deliver you. (4.1.290-295)

Disguised Portia wittily responds that, “[Y]our wife would give you little thanks for that/If she were by to hear you make the offer” (4.1.296-297). Sinfield explicates this scene as follows: “[T]he last act of the play is Portia’s assertion of her right to Bassanio. Her strategy is purposefully heterosexist: in disallowing Antonio’s sacrifice as a plausible reason for parting with the ring, she disallows the entire seriousness of male love...She will not even admit to Antonio’s relevance” (273). I certainly agree with Sinfield that Portia’s actions undermine the heroic form of male same-sex love represented by the possibility of Antonio’s self-sacrifice. No matter how problematic they seem to contemporary readers, Shakespearean comedies inevitably move toward the sanctified heterosexual tradition of marriage, and *The Merchant of Venice* is no exception in that regard. As such, Portia’s actions to assure that marital outcome (including the subtle sabotage of Antonio’s male bonding with Bassanio) certainly do constitute a form of heterosexism.

That this undermining of a possible queer relationship between Antonio and Bassanio is heteronormative and implicitly anti-queer is not in question. But contrasting Antonio’s fate at the end of the play to the marginalization Shylock regularly faces throughout the text is a lesson in privilege. Many queer readers see Antonio as tragically alone at play’s end, with no prospects for marriage and, by extension, having to watch his true, unrequited love marry Portia instead. Just as Radford adds an extra scene depicting Shylock’s outcast status at the end of his film, he also visually emphasizes Antonio’s solitude when Jeremy Irons stands alone after Bassanio and Portia depart together. As a queer man myself, I can see why it would be tempting to film the scene this way, given some of the textual hints about Antonio’s sexuality, which we have already examined. There is a problem with this interpretation, however: there is essentially no textual evidence for it. Whereas Radford’s depiction of Shylock as desolate and alone at film’s end builds on textual evidence of Venetian hatred for the essential nature of Jewishness, it cannot be said that Radford builds on a similar textual basis for his concluding view of Antonio. Though I disagree with some other aspects of Pequigney’s analysis, I must reckon with his view on this matter. Citing Antonio’s grace and appreciation toward Portia

for saving his life (5.1.302-304), Pequigney disagrees with Sinfield thus:

This gesture [the return of the ring], in accord with the accompanying words, does not signify the rejection of Antonio but, to the contrary, his incorporation into the marriage. He is permanently and more closely than ever bound to his friend...Why the nearly universal assent to the mistaken critical view that both Antonios at the finish are excluded and unhappy? Since the Shakespearean text does not lend support to the view—quite the reverse—it must be imported and imposed by readers. (218)

I do believe Sinfield's and Pequigney's views can be at least somewhat reconciled. While I agree with Sinfield that Portia sees Antonio's self-sacrifice as a threat to heterosexual marriage that must be stopped, I also agree with Pequigney that the visualization of a disconsolate Antonio at the end of the play is not rooted in demonstrable textual evidence. The reconciliation in the views is that Portia recognizes that Antonio's heroic self-sacrifice is the threat to her marriage, not the same-sex friendship between Antonio and Bassanio; besides his stay of execution, it is the promise of the preservation of that deeply homosocial friendship that, I think, explains Antonio's concluding happiness.

That is the privilege that the lack of a discourse of homosexuality affords Antonio: that, regardless of his own inner sexual identity, he can "pass" as a heterosexual Christian, be privy to the privileged spaces that wealthy Christians occupy, and maintain the friendship of Bassanio without truly threatening the orthodoxy of Christian marriage. If he is a homosexual figure (and the fact that we must say *if* shows the degree with which his lack of a discursive identity continues to shield him from definitive labels), then he has successfully eluded the abusive and oppressive power structures of language that Shylock is permanently shackled with. Marked as a racial other in Venetian society, Shylock cannot by definition have the flexible privilege that Antonio possesses. If, for example, a discourse of homosexuality existed at the time, it is possible that the intimate interactions between Antonio and Bassanio in the courtroom could have marked them as queer before Venice's legal enforcers. Instead, Antonio is able to navigate his existence more smoothly because he must be caught in the act of sodomy in order to be punished. Shylock, as a racial other, is essentially criminalized from birth as a kind of monster and, though the Christians rejoice at the idea (Antonio's) that Shylock renounce his religion, there is little indication they will accept his "Jewish heart." To speak of a "homosexual heart" in the same sense is impossible in *The Merchant of Venice*, which shows that the limitations of discourse can occasionally represent the limits of societal stigmatization. Kleinberg is again useful here: Antonio *is* Shylock. Just as Shylock, a character born out of anti-

Semitic stereotypes, captures the imagination of contemporary readers and audiences as a tragic anti-hero, so too does Antonio repel us through his inexcusable anti-Semitism. At the same time, he beguile our need to rehabilitate the queer legacy of the Renaissance. The lack of a Shakespearean discourse of homosexuality only codifies the interest we will continue to express in Antonio: we can safely call him an anti-Semite, but beyond that we are limited by Shakespeare's discourse and our own.

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The Representation of the Survival of Children in *Life is Beautiful* and *Naked Among Wolves*

Sam Montagna

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, an important question surfaced: how can such an atrocity be artistically represented accurately and appropriately? Roberto Benigni's 1997 film, *Life is Beautiful*, comes to the forefront of this debate due to Benigni's use of lighthearted humor in the film. *Life is Beautiful* has become almost canonical in Holocaust film and is completely different stylistically from Philipp Kadelbach's gruesome contrast, a 2015 film called *Naked Among Wolves*. Both films feature a small child who is hidden and protected in a concentration camp. Despite being vastly different in style, the two have clear parallels as well as interesting contrasts in their treatment of the children in question. Both films explore similar motifs that include finding food, having faith in other prisoners, and the inclusion of a game or imagination. Both children survive their ordeals, but the fable-like quality of *Life is Beautiful* and the hyper-realism of *Naked Among Wolves* begs the question of the actuality of these children surviving the real camps. In this paper, the historical accuracy and representation of these common motifs will be analyzed through historical research, the lens of survival tactics or theories from Viktor Frankl or Lawrence Langer in conjunction with an actual memoir of a child survivor. Thomas Buergethal recounts his experiences in Auschwitz that include these same motifs in *A Lucky Child*. These themes, when compared with the memoir, either add or detract credibility to the films' representation of the Holocaust.

Beginning in Italy in 1939, *Life is Beautiful* centers around Guido Orifice who's happy family life is disrupted when Guido and his family are taken to a concentration camp. To protect his son, Giosué, Guido creates a game complete with rules, points, and a first prize out of life in the camp. Guido's humor and enthusiasm keep the game going despite his extreme hardship. Some critics believe Benigni is a genius; others believe that Benigni is utterly disrespectful for incorporating humor into a Holocaust film. Benigni contends that the film is supposed to be a fable; therefore, the essence of the film is more important than its realism. Benigni argues that such suffering can only be represented through a creative lens or distance to portray the horror because "no artistic vehicle could possibly keep pace with the horrors of this war" (Kroll 40). Kadelbach, in his film, on the other hand, attempts to remove that distance by providing an upfront realistic treatment of the camps.

Naked Among Wolves begins in 1945 at Buchenwald weeks before the

camp's liberation. Hans Pippig, a political prisoner and Kapo, discovers a three-year-old Polish Jew, Stefan, smuggled in inside a suitcase. Hans risks everyone's lives along with plans for an uprising when he decides to save Stefan. Despite the lack of critical reviews, this film is still controversial. Stefan Cyliak is based on a real three year old who was in Buchenwald, Stefan Jerzy Zweig. Zweig's story differs from Kadelbach's film version. Far from being hidden, Zweig was actually a registered prisoner in the camp. He only survived because his guardians arranged for Zweig's place on a transport to Auschwitz to be replaced with a sixteen year old Roma boy named Willy Blum who died in the gas chambers upon his arrival (Heberer 188). This fact, along with the political prisoners' underground organizations that were committed to protecting children, were left out of the film (Tec xxxix). These changes serve to increase the dramatic effect of Hans's individual sacrifice. While this film is realistic, it still fictionalizes some aspects of the real story proving that there will always be some distance when depicting the Holocaust, even in a memoir about a child survivor.

Thomas Buergenthal writes about his need for a separation: "I needed the distance of more than half a century to record my earlier life, for it allowed me to look at my childhood experiences with greater detachment..." (xv). Buergenthal chose to focus "on the circumstances that allowed [him] to survive" rather than the harsh emotions associated with it (207). Thomas's experiences include avoiding selections, a death march, hunger, amputation, and being left alone at liberation. Thomas, as a child survivor, faced the same challenges that Giosuè and Stefan faced: in addition to luck and food, he needed to have faith and help from others, and a healthy imagination.

Arguably, the most critical part of surviving the camps is avoiding starvation. It is clear that Benigni is taking some liberty with the starvation aspect of camp life because other than two instances, it is unclear where Giosuè's food comes from. It would have been impossible for Guido to give Giosuè his bread everyday as he did in the beginning. Just a little soup and a fraction of the bread that was designed to starve a person slowly would not be enough to sustain Guido, the hard labor he was expected to do, and Giosuè too. If the two traded or stole food, it is not mentioned in the film. Buergenthal, even at the young age of ten, remembers stealing milk and bread. Stealing was a dangerous, but necessary activity: "Had we been caught, our punishment would have been a very severe beating or worse" (Buergenthal 85). Buergenthal recounts that hunger had become his "constant companion" (6). The fact that Guido and Giosuè do not seem to be greatly affected by hunger casts doubt on the authenticity of the film. The lack of attention to hunger could be explained because not complaining about hunger is one of the rules for Guido's game, but starvation is different from just being hungry. Buergenthal describes that

he as a child needed less food (the same would apply to Giosuè) but on the same rations, grown men would become “Muselmen” who “looked like skeletons wrapped in transparent skin” (6). It is apparent that Guido and Giosuè are hungry, but do not appear to be starving which would not be accurate of camp life. In *Naked Among Wolves*, the theme of hunger is more visible.

Hans has an easier time getting food for Stefan because of his status as a Kapo, but when the two go into the hiding, Hans must rely on another Kapo for food. This Kapo is caught smuggling the food and suffers the punishment Buerghenthal wrote about; he is killed almost immediately. As a result, Hans and Stefan are forced out of hiding in order to avoid starvation. This film accurately shows the severity of the hunger prisoners suffered. The idea of one piece of bread becoming the difference between life and death is emphasized in the memoir as well as this film. Buerghenthal recounts how Czech people throwing bread into his train literally saves him on the transport to Sachsenhausen: “Had it not been for that Czech bread, we would not have survived” (94). The starvation aspect becomes more problematic when one thinks about Stefan’s chances of survival if Zacharias, the Polish Jew who smuggled him in, had to care for him. The film accurately demonstrates how much worse the conditions were for the Jews. They had watery soup, were covered in filth, and were visibly wasting away. Without help, it would have been unlikely that Zacharias would have been able keep Stefan alive.

Another key survival tactic was to have help from others. If not help, it was important to at least have faith or confidence in fellow prisoners to not give one another up to the SS. From the first day at the camp, Guido shows Giosuè that he trusts the strangers around him— “we’re all friends here” (Benigni). To start, Bartolomeo translates the German’s rules of the camp for everyone after Guido provides a fake translation for Giosuè. Significantly, Guido also tells Bartolomeo, “Don’t forget to tell me what he said too” (Benigni). The success of his game is in part due to his bunk mates because they never spoil the game for Giosuè. This demonstrates the camaraderie the men have. The men could have easily stolen from Giosuè or gave him up to the SS for their own benefit. It was common in the camps for prisoners to lie, steal, and hurt one another: “most often the survivors of death camps were those who were physically the fittest and morally the most ruthless” (Bullaro). In *Naked Among Wolves*, for example, in one scene, prisoners drown another prisoner in a latrine for stealing. In *Life is Beautiful*, the viewers do not see any of that ruthlessness. This does not necessarily mean that this aspect of the film is not historically accurate. There are also stories of prisoners banding together and helping one another. Camaraderie was common and having someone to lean on sometimes meant the difference between life and death. Buerghenthal has a similar experience with his camp brothers, Michael and

Janek. The three boys stay together during the death march. Thomas recounts, “it became increasingly more difficult to walk, but my two friends helped me along” (Buergethal 96). Also, the three boys came up with a system to avoid being shot. When they were tired, they fell back into the middle of the march to rest. Then they ran back to the front. When the SS demanded that all children come out to “rest,” the boys stayed in the middle of the crowd, and none of the prisoners pushed them out. The memoir shows how important faith in other prisoners was for survival as it was in *Life is Beautiful*. The change in everyday morality that many prisoners were forced to undergo, while absent in Guido and his bunk mates, is displayed in Kadelbach’s film.

The Kapos in *Naked Among Wolves* look out for one another much like Guido and his comrades, but when the men are presented with difficult decisions that Lawrence Langer calls “choiceless choices,” their morality is compromised. Choiceless choices are options that reflect between “one form of ‘abnormal response’ and another, both imposed by a situation that was in no way of the victim’s own choosing” (Langer 224). A good example of this occurs when Marian is being tortured. August is questioned about Stefan’s whereabouts and has made it clear from the beginning that he was “not going up the chimney for that little brat,” but has not tried to sabotage the effort (Kadelbach). August is asked to prove that he does not know where Stefan is which means kill Marian or August will be tortured to death. August chooses to kill Marian. These actions show the altered morality one needed to adapt in order to survive which sometimes meant turning on one’s own comrade. Langer puts it perfectly: “the alternatives are not difficult, they are *impossible*...How is character to survive *any* decision in such a situation, and retain a semblance of human dignity?” (Langer 228). Many survivors felt guilt and anger for what they were forced to do. This is why Hans’s decision to sacrifice himself in this film appears very heroic—as does Stefan’s survival. When the SS find out about Stefan, Hans hides him in the sick barracks. However, one prisoner is desperate for medicine to save his father and gives up Stefan’s hiding place. This prisoner demonstrates his own choiceless choice. This forces Hans to take the boy into hiding in the sewers because, ultimately, it is every man for himself. Helping could mean serious consequences like it does for Höfel and Marian who fall victim to their “choice.” In real life, Stefan has struggled with this. Zweig has had to fight for the dignity of his survival and its representation at the Buchenwald Memorial Foundation. A plaque in his honor was removed because of the circumstances with Willy Blum. Zweig felt “personally attacked, as if he was being directly implicated in the death of the other boy” (Connolly). Of course, Zweig never had any control over his situation as a three year old. Zweig is also described as “a broken man, who has never recovered from the trauma of his early years” (Connolly). The deci-

sions of this group of Kapos had immediate and life long effects on the lives of themselves, their comrades, and Stefan as well.

The idea of a network of Kapos is also featured in *A Lucky Child*, but there is a huge difference in the behavior of the Kapos in the memoir: “the Kapos allowed themselves to become the surrogates of the SS by beating their fellow inmates, forcing them to work to total exhaustion, and depriving them of their rations, knowing full well that by these actions they hastened the deaths of the prisoners. All that in order to improve the Kapos’ own chances of survival” (Buergenthal 70). The Kapos in Auschwitz participated in their own versions of choiceless choices: work with the Nazis or be murdered by them. There is a complete absence of Kapos in *Life is Beautiful* which only furthers the absence of the morally-changed prisoner in that film. The Kapos in *Naked Among Wolves* are not shown as cruel at all. In fact, upon Hans’s arrival, Höfel stresses the importance of a friendship: “want to know how I have survived this long? Luck and the right friends” (Kadelbach). The Kapos are also kind to Stefan. Despite the cruelty of Auschwitz’s Kapos, Kadelbach’s Kapos are still historically accurate. These Kapos are not the head of the barracks, but instead are in the Effects room (clothing room). These Kapos are also Bolsheviks or political prisoners. Aaron Hass, in his book, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, notes the difference in behavior: “the most malicious of Kapos appeared to be the ‘green’ tagged prisoners—those incarcerated for having engaged in previous criminal behavior. The ‘red’ or political Kapos were generally more humane in their treatment of others” (Hass 19). In addition, the real Kapos of Buchenwald saved nine hundred and four children (Tec xxxix). The portrayal of the kinder Kapos is believable because of this information and also because Thomas met doctors and SS men that showed him kindness at least two times. A Polish doctor kept “the red x” off of Thomas’s card thus ensuring his survival in the hospital (Buergenthal 81). Later, during the death march, an SS guard gave Thomas his cup of coffee (95). There is irony in a kind SS man and a cruel prisoner. The unpredictable difference in morals between person to person is highlighted in both films and the memoir.

Many survivors such as Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, and Buergenthal, famously attribute their survival to pure luck. However, Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist and survivor of the camps, puts forth the idea that imagination is a useful tool. Frankl writes, “I understood how a man with nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved” (37). Both films feature the use of imagination by itself and through the use of a game. The entire second half of *Life is Beautiful* centers around the game in which Guido uses to change the perception of everything his son sees. Critic Grace Russo Bullaro believes Guido’s game makes him an irresponsible parent because Guido, as a parent, is supposed to expose Giosuè

to the harsh realities of life in order “to grow into a well-adjusted adult” (Bullaro). I argue, and I believe Guido would as well, that the idea of this game is to protect Giosuè’s consciousness from the horrors. In addition, the Holocaust is not exactly a regular harsh reality that one needs to experience to be a well-balanced adult. Guido exhausts himself, puts himself at risk, and shows incredible will power, in order to comfort and convince his son. Guido is even able to combat a stranger telling Giosuè about making Jews into soap and burning people in ovens. It seems clear that Giosuè, because of his own intelligence, doubts some aspects of the game, but still humors his father. Guido even has to call Giosuè’s bluff when he wants to leave by packing up their things and leaving the barracks as if they could actually leave to convince Giosuè that they are not forced to be there. Pamela L. Kroll, in her analysis, points out that in this scene, it is “love, not imagination that pulls them through” (42). This is reminiscent of Frankl’s idea of keeping the beloved in mind. In this case, Giosuè is Guido’s beloved. It is also important to note that Guido never strays from his game. He remains consistent through the entire thing, remaining sincere while laughing. Benigni comments on the use of laughter, “if you are able to laugh, you are the owner of the world.” (Bullaro). With laughter, Guido is able to keep control of Giosuè’s perception.

Thomas’s father reacts in the complete opposite way from Guido by telling the truth of his surroundings. As a result, Thomas calls himself a child of the camps and is completely aware of the danger around him. However, when Thomas has two toes amputated and worries about never walking again, the nurses avoid the truth: “I began to believe that the doctors and nurses were telling the truth when they assured me that my toes would grow back” (Buergethal 101). In this case, the lie calms Thomas and keeps his hopes up. The use of imagination or love does not guarantee survival, but it helps build resolve and hope. Thomas is also assuaged when he sees his mother in the camp and leans on the memory for comfort: “for months afterward, I kept replaying her words in my mind and seeing her tear-covered, smiling face through the fence” (84). Similarly, the thought of a real tank gives Giosuè hope. These scenes are directly reminiscent of Frankl’s focus on his wife or his beloved to pull him through. While Guido’s creation of the game and its execution are clearly not realistic, his ability to instill hope into his son using his imagination is.

Like the nurses in Sachsenhausen, Hans tries to protect Stefan’s innocence even though Stefan has already suffered greatly. Upon discovering him in the suitcase, Hans mentions the SS, and Stefan quickly closes himself in the suitcase. Marian scoffs, “the things he must have seen” (Kadelbach). When Hans and Stefan hide in the sewer, Hans tells Stefan, “this is a game, you know. We’ll stay down here, but only a little while. The others will look for us, but if

they don't find us, we've won" (Kadelbach). Hans tells this to Stefan because it is instinctual to comfort children when they are afraid. Earlier in the film, Hans is able to make Stefan laugh on two separate occasions. These scenes are also significant because the child's laughter is the only sound heard without noise or music. It gives hope, to not only the viewer who wonders if Stefan will survive, but to Hans and Stefan themselves. They are still able to laugh together in a place that resembles Hell; this resonates with Benigni's assertion that laughter can make one feel like they own the world. In a way, Hans and Stefan are owning their circumstances for a moment. Even in this gory adaptation, Frankl's argument is applicable. In addition to protecting Stefan, Hans, like Guido and Frankl, dreams of his pregnant wife. Hans repeatedly "retreat[s] from [his] terrible surroundings to a life of inner riches and spiritual freedom" (Frankl 56). This small aspect of the film is possible to believe when one thinks about survivors, like Frankl and Buergethal, who were able to transcend their situations with memory.

Thomas, in addition to believing that his toes would grow back, also tries to transcend his suffering several times by creating a game for himself. He was able to strengthen his own resolve with the use of this game: "If I give up, they will have won,' I kept muttering to myself. Staying alive had become a game I played against Hitler, the SS, and the Nazi killing machine" (Buergethal 89). This game, although very small, helped him exponentially in the same way it helps Stefan and Hans. Buergethal felt, as did all prisoners, that the Nazis were despicable. It was easy for him to pose the Nazis as the bad guys and prisoners like himself as the good guys (as Guido poses for Giosuè). Therefore, his interactions with the SS took on new meaning; it was an opportunity to transcend the death camp everyday. Buergethal reflects, "outsmarting [Mengele] and living yet another day became a game I used to play, and every time I did not get caught in his deadly net, I felt victorious" (6). Thomas was able to hold on to his humanity and self-worth in order to survive. This is only further exemplified in *Naked Among Wolves* when Hans sacrifices himself: "You've taken everything from us, but not who we are. We exist" (Kadelbach). By saving Stefan, Hans defeats them.

The idea of winning is also shown at the end of *Life is Beautiful*. Giosuè believes his father's game to be completely true when the American tank arrives. An adult Giosuè speaks and views his father's actions positively: "This was my father's sacrifice. This was his gift to me" (Benigni). Giosuè, as an adult, has clearly come to terms with his past since it is revealed that he is the narrator of the story. Bullaro gives a harsh review of this aspect of the film. She argues that "[Giosuè] doesn't seem to give full weight to the fact that his father had died in the process...Should he, at the end, be so willing to trade his father's death for the granting of his wish?" (Bullaro). I argue that Giosuè does

grasp the reality of his father's actions as an adult; he calls it a sacrifice. Plus, at the end of the film, little Giosuè does not know his father is dead. Judging by Guido's entire orchestration of his game, he would want Giosuè to be spared the sorrow of his death. It is almost as if the tank's arrival was another one of Guido's manipulations of reality except he arranges it from heaven for his son. Giosuè tells his mother when they find each other "We won!" Dora, who was weary throughout her time in the camp, confirms her son's statement, "Yes, we won, it's true!" (Benigni). For her, surviving and finding her son alive is her victory. For Guido, he has managed to save his son's life and mind using the game resulting in the ultimate Nazi defeat.

Children, more often than not, had a harder time surviving. Because of their size and age, they were often immediately sent to the gas chambers. Those that were able to survive would not have been able to do so without "a network of supporters [that] protected and sustained them" (Heberer 347). These children needed food, help, imagination or love, and bravery to survive. Giosuè and Stefan's survival in their films is met with some criticism in their representations, but overall they depict the common themes for survival. These motifs are enforced when compared to the real story of Thomas Buergenthal. The artistic method in representing the Holocaust ultimately is not important. What we can learn from it, is.

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Postmodern Nostalgia as Distraction from Modern Fears
in AMC's *Mad Men*

Kasey Tveit

In the final episode of the premiere season of *Mad Men*, the foundation of the Emmy-winning show's success is revealed: nostalgia. In the season finale, Don Draper, the flawed and mysterious protagonist of the show, uses his own memories and family photos to evoke the idea and feelings of nostalgia through the product he is trying to advertise: The Kodak Carousel, a slide projector. While his colleagues, the other copywriters for the advertising firm Sterling Cooper, want to pursue a futuristic angle on the product, Don, as Creative Director, sees the value in nostalgia. He even renames the product from "The Wheel" (the title of the episode) to "The Carousel," replacing the implication of technological advancement with an image of childhood. He says:

Technology is a glittering lure, but there is the rare occasion when the public can be engaged on a level beyond flash: if they have a sentimental bond with the product...Nostalgia is delicate but potent...In Greek, 'nostalgia' literally means 'the pain from an old wound.' It's a twinge in your heart far more powerful than memory alone. It takes us to a place where we ache to go again. ("The Wheel")

This enchanting scene captures the tone and the allure of the television series for viewers watching from 2007 and beyond. It is as if the producers are speaking directly to the viewers, as if to tell us, "This is why you've been watching this whole time, and also why you will continue to watch." But it is of utmost importance that the nostalgia Don describes in his presentation is differentiated from the nostalgia modern viewers feel while watching the show. While the (most likely) deceased consumers of the early 1960s are experiencing the ache of an old wound when viewing the Carousel ads, the living viewers of the show experience nostalgia of the postmodern kind: nostalgia for something that does not and did not exist.

Postmodernism, advertising, and nostalgia have been intricately linked since the birth of the theory by thinkers like Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson, as well as contemporary theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. It is appropriate, then, that a television show about advertising takes postmodern theory and uses it to illuminate the success of the relationship of those three ideas. *Mad Men* cogently applies such ideas and implies a further cause for the potency of the emotion it wields: the fear that it serves as

a distraction from. Watching the show as it follows the reactionary post-war period, seeing the characters deal with the violence of the time, it becomes clear that the more afraid people are, the more they feel nostalgic for an invented golden age where fear did not exist. The success of the show in the early 2000s, a time fraught with violence, speaks to the prevalence of fear-induced postmodern nostalgia.

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in 2001, Americans have been living under the fog of war, constantly afraid of the next terrorist attack. The threat of terrorism is such that it mirrors the mysteriousness and unpredictability of the threat of the nuclear bomb during the 1950s and early 1960s. In their book *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism*, John Mueller and Mark G. Stewart call the war on terror just another witch hunt, and detail the repetitive nature of these elusive searches for some mysterious, masked, yet ubiquitous villain that is essentially a scapegoat for the multitude of anxieties afflicting people during a particular historical period. People need someone or something to blame for their fear, and in post-9/11 America, terrorists win that responsibility. It is now more than 15 years later, and Americans still cannot go one news cycle or walk through an airport without being reminded of the ever-present threat of terrorism. With this fear constantly hanging over their heads, Americans yearn for a simpler time. Watching *Mad Men* gives them that escapist experience, however ironic the reality of the situation may be.

Through the lens of postmodernism, the success of *Mad Men*, a pensive, languid drama amongst a booming trend of post-apocalyptic and action-packed shows like *The Walking Dead*, is demystified. Viewers of the show are simultaneously experiencing nostalgia for, what is in their minds, the lost Golden Age of the 1950s and 60s, distraction from fear, and catharsis from that same fear by escaping into the fears of the characters. Baudrillard, Jameson, and Hardt and Negri all give their two cents on the topic of historical revivals, a tradition in which *Mad Men* follows. While Jameson asks of period reproductions, “First of all, did the ‘period’ see itself this way?” (*Postmodernism* 279), Baudrillard calls history “our lost referential, that is, our myth” (*Simulacra and Simulation* 43). Jameson and Baudrillard both argue, in their own terms, for invented histories that are actually lacking in historical accuracy. Both theorists criticize historical reproductions for their presentation of themselves as history as opposed to what they really are: contemporary works of fetishism and wish fulfillment that seek to satisfy that specific brand of postmodern nostalgia that aches for something, but knows not what. Reflecting on this subject in his masterwork *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard writes:

Anything serves to escape this void, this leukemia of history and poli-

tics, this hemorrhage of values—it is in proportion to this distress that all content can be evoked pell-mell, that all previous history is resurrected in bulk—a controlling idea no longer selects, only nostalgia endlessly accumulates: war, fascism, the pageantry of the belle époque, or the revolutionary struggles, everything is equivalent and is mixed indiscriminately in the same morose and funereal exaltation, in the same retro fascination. (44)

The bleak backdrop that Baudrillard paints in this passage is made all the more grim by its uncanny familiarity to the circumstances and time period in which *Mad Men* was conceived. The void he describes is all too familiar to Americans living in the raw years just after 9/11. *Mad Men* first aired in 2007, just six years after 9/11, and was developed in the years before that. In our confusion, our numbness, the strangeness and disconnection with our own time, it makes sense to turn to “retro fascinations” and to excavate stories and images of the past, which, in hindsight, always looks greener (44).

Jameson’s analysis of a Philip K. Dick novel is an equally uncanny description of the draw to watch *Mad Men*. In *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, he writes, “From this perspective, the novel is a collective wish-fulfillment, and the expression of a deep, unconscious yearning for a simpler and more human social system and small-town Utopia very much in the North American frontier tradition” (283). The “small-town Utopia” of which he speaks takes on a very specific form. Like *Mad Men*, this invented Utopia looks like the peak of the American Dream. It looks like, in Jameson’s words:

the Eisenhower era and its complacency...the sealed self-content of the American small (white, middle-class) town, the conformist and the family-centered ethnocentrism of a prosperous United States learning to consume in the first big boom after the shortages and privations of the war...the first Beat Poets and occasional ‘antihero’ with ‘existentialist’ overtones.... (Jameson 279)

From the description of the cozy suburb and booming American economy right down to the “‘anti-hero’ with ‘existentialist’ overtones” (279), Jameson’s criticism sounds as if it was written about *Mad Men* instead of a Dick novel.

While the theories of Baudrillard and Jameson address the Golden Age appeal of the show, theorists Hardt and Negri bring us into the twenty-first century with their discussion of postmodern sovereignty and the reversion to fundamentalist ideals that occurs in opposition to the modernity of globalization. Fundamentalisms, say Hardt and Negri, are “anti-modernist movements, resurgences of primordial entities and values...a kind of historical backflow,

a de-modernization,” and “powerful refusals of the contemporary historical passage in course” (2628). In post-9/11 America, there are two separate fundamentalisms literally fighting against one another for prevalence. Since Islamic fundamentalism is seen as responsible for the attacks of 9/11, its Caucasian twin Christian fundamentalism has gained prominence in direct response. According to Hardt and Negri:

The most prominent social agenda of the current Christian fundamentalist groups is centered on the (re)creation of the stable and hierarchical nuclear family, which is imagined to have existed in a previous era... These common characterizations of fundamentalisms as a return to a premodern or traditional world and its social values, however, obscure more than they illuminate. In fact, fundamentalist visions of a return to the past are generally based on historical illusions...It is a fictional image projected onto the past, like Main Street U.S.A. at Disneyland, constructed retrospectively through the lens of contemporary anxieties and fears. (2629)

It is this particular hegemonic order of fundamentalism under which viewers turn to *Mad Men*. The show that begins on the tail end of the 1950s offers, at least at first, the comfort of the Christian simulacrum of the nuclear family, a stable economy in which one parent, the man, works and earns for the family, the woman stays at home and cares for the children, and traditional gender roles make navigating social encounters a reflex instead of an effort.

In the first seasons of *Mad Men*, the hegemonies of Christian fundamentalism reign, even if they take the form of sardonic representations. In the first episode, “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes,” we follow Don throughout the course of a usual day. He sits in a smoky bar full of well-dressed and well-quaffed successful white businessmen drinking an Old Fashioned, smoking a cigarette, being served by a black man. Smoking is okay because it is not synonymous with cancer yet, and the maltreatment of the black waiter by his white coworker is okay, because black Americans are still viewed as third-class citizens (behind women, of course). We follow Don through a crowd of trench-coated, fedora-sporting businessmen into the office that is positively brimming with secretaries trying to emulate Marilyn Monroe, and from there to the Greenwich Village apartment of the woman he is sleeping with. So far, every nostalgic whim that pulled historical fetishists in has been satisfied but one, and then they get it; the episode concludes with Don finally going home to his quiet suburban neighborhood where his beautiful wife and two beatific children are sleeping, waiting for the man of the house to come home. The final scene, Don caressing the heads of his sleeping children while his wife Betty stands smiling in the doorway, is something not even Normal Rockwell

could have painted so perfectly.

While viewers engage in the so-called simplicity of the 1960s to satisfy their various nostalgias, the characters face event after violent event and the stifling oppressiveness of the social hegemonies are revealed by their struggles, subverting the reconstructions of a perfect, peaceful past that viewers initially came to watch. Throughout the course of the series, the characters are confronted with the Kennedy assassination, the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald, the threat of the nuclear bomb, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Vietnam, the viciousness of the Civil Rights Movement, the Manson family roaming the country, and other atrocities. Indeed, those listed above are just some of the less-than-innocent events of the decade. But just as Don experiences flashbacks of his time in the Korean War from the safety of his upscale Manhattan office with a glass of rye in his hand, so, too, can viewers of *Mad Men* watch from the comfort of their living rooms as Betty Draper screams and cries as Kennedy bleeds to death in a car. By crying along with Betty as she sobs over JFK's death and starting from their chairs in shock as Lee Harvey Oswald is shot, viewers of *Mad Men* experience catharsis from their own, "contemporary anxieties and fears" (Hardt and Negri 2629). They leave their pretty pictures of the 1960s behind but get something even better in return: real catharsis from real fears by immersing themselves in the traumas of beloved characters with whom they have come to identify. The violence that *Mad Men* expresses is real enough to empathize with yet distant enough not to worry about. The protests, shootings, wars, and murders of the past are just that: past. The anxieties and traumas of the 1960s are buried in the past and therefore reflect a future within which the viewers are actually, safely living. By watching the characters on the show deal with their fear as the decade explodes with violence and rigorous social change, viewers of the show feel appeased of their worries and more satisfied by their current situation. Watching a period of violence that is buried in the past from the other end of the telescope comforts viewers; they believe that they also have a future beyond the current violence and their fears of that violence in their own time.

It is no simple emotion that people experience when they watch *Mad Men*. The producers of the show ingeniously ease viewers out of the nostalgia of the early 1960s into the disruption of the rest of the decade. By executing this transition, they never fail to give viewers what they want or a reason to continue watching. By the last episodes of the series, we see Don starting to heal. He confronts the fears and traumas that have been haunting him for the past 10 years. He visits a Veteran's Organization and admits to killing the real Don Draper. He reveals his dark painful childhood past to his children and his co-workers. He realizes, in one episode, looking at old work of his, that he seeks comfort through sex because he found maternal comfort in one of the

prostitutes in the brothel he was raised in. In the final episode he seemingly finds peace, something he's been searching for this whole time. But what does that peace mean for the future? It means even more change, and less stability. It means progressivism and less of the fundamentalism upon which society has operated for centuries. Don is moving forward, finding peace outside of the institutions that are supposed to have all of the answers: marriage, children, a stable nine-to-five job. And we don't know what that means for him, for ourselves. As we struggle with fears of what the future could look like, there is an instinct to return to an invented past, to revert to bygone hegemonic orders, because they are comfortable and familiar. That is why period dramas like *Mad Men* will always be successful; it is far too tempting to escape to a world of the past, as viewed through our "nostalgia-tinted spectacles," when we fear for our own present and future (Jameson 290).

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VII Book Review

Andrew Keen, *The Internet is Not the Answer*. New York: Grove Press, 2015.

Thomas G. Olsen

In *The Internet is Not the Answer*, technology-as-culture writer Andrew Keen departs slightly from his previous focus on the cognitive and social effects of the digital revolution and asks us, instead, to consider the economic impact of the Internet on its users. Why should readers of *The Shawangunk Review*, a literary journal, care about economic impact?

We should care for two reasons. First, along with between 40 and 50% of the human population, we are all users of the Internet—and very intensive ones, too: from how we take or deliver our academic courses, to how we make our travel arrangements or do our shopping, to how we communicate our professional and personal ideas, and increasingly, to how we organize our homes and the complex economies of our personal spaces and interior lives. Second, the job markets and workplaces of the future will increasingly be defined along principles that align with or indeed are defined by the Internet. I think of how my own teaching has changed over the decades in this respect, but even more, I think of the future that awaits my students, where by some estimates up to 50% of the jobs now done by human beings will be replaced by Internet-enabled robots (88). We should all care about what Keen wants to tell us.

His thesis is a bold and disturbing one. He asserts that in the current Internet economy (here I use the term *economy* in its etymologically pure form to signify both the “household” that we manage for ourselves and the broader “household” that we share with others), the majority of the Internet’s “users are its victims rather than its beneficiaries” and that “rather than promoting economic fairness,” it “is a central reason for the growing gulf between rich and poor and the hollowing out of the middle class.” Culturally, it has created “a panopticon of information-gathering and surveillance services” for which we are the product and not just the consumers (ix-x). Over and over Keen argues that the Internet has been an unprecedented boon for the 1% and “a disservice to almost everyone except its powerful, wealthy owners” (8). These are sobering counterpoints to the rhapsodic ways the Internet is often discussed both in popular culture and among professional theorists of technology as a site of endless possibility and equally distributed goodness. His

contrarian position is bound to excite controversy—and indeed he seems to intend it to.

At times Keen is intemperate with respect to the benefits of the Internet, and at others he's perhaps too happy to skewer some of its more conspicuous or downright silly acolytes and high priests. For example, he seems largely uninterested in the positive role the Internet played, say, in the Arab Spring and Black Lives Matter movements. In both cases, the conjunction of Internet infrastructures and spontaneously generated crowd-sourced content helped to reveal oppressive practices to the world, outing and shaming their perpetrators. He's also mostly uninterested in the various ways that the Internet has certainly connected people and made their lives easier, allowing for increasingly sophisticated forms of ride-sharing, long-distance collaborations, transferring of vital medical data, high-speed archiving, and all the other conveniences we have become used to. And he takes particular delight in mocking the likes of multi-billionaires Peter Thiel, Michael and Xochi Birch, and Tom Perkins for their pretensions, quirks, and hypocrisies as set themselves up as life coaches and philosophers of sorts, spouting mantras about "creative destruction" and "failure is success" while behaving like the loony characters in the HBO series *Silicone Valley*.

His excesses and blind spots notwithstanding, Keen is on to something very important; it is already defining our lives in nearly every particular and will continue to exert greater and greater force on us as we tiptoe our way into the era of Web 3.0, sometimes called the Internet of Things. Very soon some 50 *billion* Internet-abled devices will open our front doors, heat and cool our buildings, drive our cars and fly our planes, monitor our steps, keep patients alive, and perform functions we can only dream of now (13). The technologies that now compete with their analog versions for our attention and our money will, according to Keen, soon control our working lives, domiciles, personal relationships, travel, and educations as all these become more and more mediated and determined by the Internet.

At the core of Keen's thinking is a principle articulated several different ways in the book. He opens his first chapter with a 1944 quotation from Winston Churchill, now carved into a slab of black marble in San Francisco's super-elite social club called The Battery: "WE SHAPE OUR BUILDINGS, THEREAFTER THEY SHAPE US" (1). He returns to this premise over and over, citing our first great media-and-technology theorist, Marshall McLuhan, who amended Churchill's principle to "we shape our tools and thereafter they shape us" (10). In this respect, Keen is openly a technological determinist, in sync with Ralph Waldo Emerson, who famously wrote in his poem "Ode, Inscribed to W.H. Channing," "*things* are in the saddle / They ride us" (my italics). Like Emerson and McLuhan, Keen is convinced that it's the ma-

chines and not their makers that determine the direction of our lives. I am not sure he's wrong.

How does Keen support his central claim that the Internet has been a boon for the 1% and a bust for the other 99%? First, he traces the history of the Internet and the World Wide Web from its beginnings, drawing what seems to me the inescapable conclusion that a technology that was intended for non-commercial use—and indeed to early innovators like Vannevar Bush, Paul Baran, and Tim Berners-Lee, was to remain above the fray of commerce—became gobbled up by lavishly funded commercial enterprises like Google, Amazon, Facebook, Snapchat, Uber, and Airbnb that rewarded its developers and early investors with Midas-like riches, sometimes in the tens of billions of personal wealth. At the same time, much of the content of these digital behemoths—mostly mass data that can be deployed to feed ever-more precise marketing and sales strategies—come from us as users, and for free. Second, much of the book is given over to case studies of the economic disruption, even devastation that the new technologies have caused across the United States. Perhaps his most poignant example is contained in chapter 3, in which he describes the decline and fall of Rochester, New York, home of the now-defunct Eastman Kodak empire.

Rochester is a hollowed-out shell of the community it once was, a struggling city precariously propped up by modest public-private initiatives struggling to reinvigorate a local economy that collapsed when Kodak, a technological giant and one of the world's most valuable companies for much of the twentieth century, finally sang its swansong in 2012 after more than a generation of slow decline. In its prime, Kodak was valued at some \$31 billion and employed 145,000 workers across the workforce: landscapers and custodians, secretaries and warehouse workers, patent lawyers, engineers, and CFOs. It was a relatively egalitarian enterprise in this regard, spreading wealth and opportunities across thousands of families. For several generations it was the economic lifeblood of Rochester and, tragically, also the piggybank for 50,000 retirees who lost their pensions when Kodak declared bankruptcy (94-96).

By contrast, when Facebook purchased the startup WhatsApp in 2014 for \$19 billion it acquired a company with only 55 employees. Two years before, they purchase Instagram for \$1 billion, taking on a workforce of 13 employees in a single office (94, 112). General Motors is worth about \$55 billion and employs about 200,000 workers; Google is worth some \$400 billion and has about 46,000 employees (61). What do these contrasts teach us? Fundamentally, they indicate that the vast economic benefits generated by a transaction like Facebook's purchase of Instagram or WhatsApp becomes massively concentrated in the hands of a tiny inventor and investor class, to the tune of a staggering valuation of \$345 million per employee in the case of WhatsApp.

Kodak's valuation per employee, for perspective, comes in at some \$132,000. The online giant Amazon employs about 14 people per \$10 million in sales; their brick-and-mortar rivals employ about 47 (49).

The consequences of this kind of concentration of wealth are especially visible throughout Silicon Valley and the Bay Area and are well known to its residents: the combination of wealthy tech workers and pressures from Airbnb has driven up housing prices to a crisis point throughout much of the Bay Area, Google's private bus fleet for its employees has siphoned off much-needed revenue for public transportation, and new gated communities and swank high-rise condos have irreversibly changed the urban texture of the whole region. By riding in private cars, company busses, and helicopters, or by living in gated communities, buying football field-length yachts made of military-grade carbon fiber, or joining private clubs, the Bay Area 1% has effected a kind of de facto secession from urban life—not a political secession, but a cultural and economic one as they live above and outside the real world. But Keen does not stop there: he argues that they have also seceded from the civic responsibilities that the economic leaders of the past once saw as their domain and even obligation. As the cartoonist Gerry Trudeau once said of George W. Bush, the new Internet elite are all *noblesse*, no *oblige*. Keen worries that the Bay Area has become a neo-feudal society, founded on what Tyler Cowen calls a dire winner-take-all economy of “billionaires and beggars” (110).

I could add more cases here, perhaps by recapitulating Keen's touching account of the slow decline of the SoHo records stores of his youth, knocked out first by megastores and online sellers, and then handed their *coup de grâce* by illegal and then legal Internet-based file-sharing. But I would rather recommend that readers take up *The Internet is Not the Answer* for themselves. Keen is a skilled writer, able to lay out a complex economic argument in engagingly human ways, hitting us where we live by pointing out how our own listening, watching, shopping, traveling, studying, socializing, and dating all contribute to the economic inequalities that lie at the heart of the new economy. Even one chapter will give readers a good feel for Keen's argument. And if it has to be just one, I would recommend chapter 2, “The Money,” which I see as the core of his argument.

Though the present Keen describes is a bleak one, *The Internet is Not the Answer* does not offer an entirely hopeless prospect for the future. If the Internet is not the answer, what is? And for that matter, what is the question? Though implied rather than explicitly stated throughout the book, Keen's question is the classic challenge at the heart of progressive political theory: how do we make the lives of not just the privileged few, but everyone, as good as they can possibly be, especially in the wake of these amazing new technolo-

gies? How do we balance the ambitions and the power and the advantages of the clever, hardworking, or lucky few against the needs of the many? As Keen argues, an unregulated technology that simultaneously reaches deeper and deeper into every aspect of our lives *and* disproportionately benefits the 1% at the expense of the 99% is not moving us closer to this age-old goal.

In his final chapter Keen tallies up his score card, as it were: “the Internet’s current Epic Fail isn’t necessarily its final grade. But to improve, it needs to grow up quickly and take responsibility for its actions” (224). This is the gist of his guardedly hopeful message: the Internet is still very young, its hasty marriage to commerce still in its honeymoon phase, and there are still opportunities to return it to a public benefit rather than a private club for the very few. Government regulation is certainly part of the answer, but only if it is accompanied by a new ethos among the titans of Internet commerce, with “our new digital elite becoming accountable for the most traumatic socioeconomic disruption since the industrial revolution.” They need, he says, to sign onto “an informal Bill of Responsibilities” that reverses the old hacker ethic of “move fast and break things” (226). As the Internet reaches its young adulthood, Keen says, it’s time for its beneficiaries to realize that many things have been broken in the heady days of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0, and that Web 3.0 needs to be not just an Internet of Things, but also an Internet of Social and Economic Justice.

VIII | Thesis Abstract

“The Monstrous Revolution: Tragedy and the Feminine”

Alana Sawchuk

This project explores the “revolutionary” relationship between the physical and non-physical monstrosity of feminine identity in Ancient Greek tragedy. The hope is to understand how precisely that relationship functions, and how it might influence modern creation and perception of the female in a variety of contemporary discourses. Using Homer’s *Iliad*, Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, and Euripides’ *Medea*, this thesis discusses how supposedly “negative” representations of the female, in a uniquely tragic setting, act as revolutionary catalysts for storytelling as it involves the feminine perspective. While the final product did not include specific, contemporary examples of what I believe to be the best direction for the feminine narrative (given these ancient parameters), the thesis does identify the necessary disruption of linear storytelling that has determined the majority of “successful” fictional narratives within the Western canon.

XI

News, Notes and Calls for Papers

Alumni News and Notes

Cristy Beemer is an assistant professor in Composition Studies at the University of New Hampshire.

Michael Beilfuss is a visiting assistant prof at Oklahoma State University.

Kate Bohan is a senior instructional technologist SUNY New Paltz.

Mike Bonet is a full-time English teacher at the Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy in the Bronx.

Erin Braselmann is Director of AccessAbility Services at Hartwick College and an adjunct English lecturer at Hartwick College and SUNY Oneonta.

Danielle Bienvenue Bray is a lecturer at University of Georgia, and working on an MFA in Children's Literature at Hollins University.

Gregory Bruno is a doctoral student and research assistant at Columbia University's Teachers College and about to begin his dissertation on the intersections amongst educational opportunity programs, state and federal student aid programs, and remedial coursework. He teaches at the City University of New York at Queens College and the Borough of Manhattan Community College. He also coordinates a teaching in prisons program affiliated with the Department of Corrections.

Kevin Cavanaugh has been teaching at SUNY Dutchess Community College since 2003. He completed a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at University of Albany.

Jesse Cersosimo is a high school English teacher in Pearl River, NY.

Lee Conell teaches creative writing for Southern Word and Vanderbilt University, and has a story collection forthcoming from Johns Hopkins University Press.

Mickey D'Addario reports that he has received an offer for fully-funded

Ph.D. studies at Duke University. In the past year, Mickey has presented several papers at national conferences.

Tom Doran completed a Ph.D. in English at UC Santa Barbara in March 2017. He is currently a lecturer in English at California State University, Channel Islands.

Brian Garritano teaches English at Middletown High School.

Jennifer Gutman has received offers for fully-funded Ph.D. studies from Vanderbilt University and the University of California-Irvine.

Radmila Haviland teaches high school English for Ulster BOCES Career & Technical Center.

Jonah Havranek is the Public Affairs Officer and Staffing Coordinator at the Directorate of Public Works at the West Point Army Garrison.

Tina Iraca received her Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut this year. Her doctoral dissertation, entitled *Epistemology, Education, and the Individual: Lockean Philosophy in Sarah Fielding's Fiction*, examines Fielding's novels in the context of Locke's destabilizing designs of personal identity, liberty, power, and education that dismantle the intellectual and social fences surrounding women in eighteenth-century England. Dr. Iraca has presented numerous conference papers and she has served as Treasurer of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society since 2002. After teaching for ten years in the SUNY New Paltz English Department, in 2011 she joined the English and Humanities Department at Dutchess County Community College where she is an assistant professor.

Michelle Kramisen teaches at Fairleigh Dickinson University. She recently published on trauma, survivor guilt, and *The Walking Dead*.

Chris Lawrence is working on publishing his first book, and launched a small business building furniture, vagabondcraftworks.com.

Jennifer Lee is loving her work as a Professor and Stretch Composition Coordinator at California State University, Northridge.

Irene McGarrity holds a tenure-track position at Keene State College where she teaches first-year writing and courses in the Information Studies minor. She finished her MFA last January and is currently at work on a new short story collection.

Ryan James McGuckin is a Ph.D. candidate in Louisiana State University's English program. He focuses on literature, writing, and theory through a sound studies context. He is expected to give papers at The Modernist Studies Association in August 2017 in Amsterdam and Modern Language Association in January 2018 New York City. His dissertation project is entitled *Sonic Youth: Epiphany, Modernist Identity, and the Primacy of Sound*.

Shonnet L. Newton is the Development Manager at Natural Areas Conservancy, an environmental nonprofit in NYC.

Matthew Nickel is now in his fourth year as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of English at Misericordia University. He is the author or editor of several books and numerous articles. Among his many national and international activities, Dr. Nickel currently serves as Vice-President of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society, editor of the EMRS Newsletter, MLA Liaison for the Hemingway Society, and co-director of the International Hemingway Conference as well as the International Imagism Conference to be held in France in July 2018.

Daniel Pizappi is now completing the first year of his fully-funded Ph.D. Fellowship at the University of Tennessee. In the past two years, Dan has presented numerous papers at national conferences and is currently serving as co-program chair of the XVIII Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Rachael Price completed a Ph.D. last May and is now an Assistant Profes-

sor of English (tenure-track) at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Georgia.

Brian Rubin is in Minneapolis, working as the managing editor and script supervisor for a company called ZergNet, which makes silly YouTube videos.

Michael Schaefer teaches 9th grade English and American Literature at a preparatory school in Washington, DC.

Patrick J. Skea is in Fordham's Ph.D. program working on his dissertation.

JJ Smits is an Apprentice Funeral Director in Bergen Co., NJ and currently pursuing a degree in Mortuary Science from American Academy McAllister Institute in NYC.

Steve Sobierajski is the Associate Director of International Admissions at the Culinary Institute of America, where he oversees international recruitment for the Institute's three domestic campuses.

Stefan Spezio lives in Astoria, and is the Director of Academic Enhancement at St. Francis College Brooklyn.

Kelly Tempest teaches high school English and is chair the English Department at CATS Academy, an international boarding school in Boston, MA.

Goretti Vianney-Benca is an Instructor of English (tenure-track) at SUNY Ulster and President of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society.

Crissy Rogowski Vita is teaching as an adjunct professor at Suffolk County Community College, and chasing after two happy little girls.

Sarah L. Weikel (née Hurd) is a Development Associate at Spark Media Project, and has taught writing at Sullivan County Community College since 2012. In 2016, she received the "Rising Star" Fundraiser award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals – Mid Hudson Valley, and recently was named one of Dutchess County's "Forty Under Forty" by the DC Chamber of Commerce.

Notes and Calls for Papers

Submit your work to the next volume of the *Shawangunk Review*! We welcome submissions from English faculty and graduate students in any area of literary studies: essays (criticism; theory; historical; cultural, biographical studies), book reviews, scholarly notes, and poetry. Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with MLA style (8th edition) and should be submitted as an electronic file (emailed to the attention of Professor Cyrus Mulready: mulreadc@newpaltz.edu). Essays should not exceed 5000 words (15 pages), book reviews 1250 words, and MA thesis abstracts 250 words. Poetry submissions of no longer than five pages should be submitted electronically and in hard copy to Professors H. R. Stoneback and Mulready. The deadline for the 2018 issue is **December 15, 2017**.

The XVIII International Hemingway Conference—“*Paris est une fete... Hemingway’s Moveable Feast*”—will be held in Paris 22-28 July 2018. The Conference Directors are Matthew Nickel and H. R. Stoneback. The abstract deadline is August 1, 2017. See complete details of the CFP and other conference announcements on the Hemingway Society website, hemingwaysociety.org.

The jointly sponsored **VI International Imagism Conference—X International Aldington Conference—XIX Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference** will take place in Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France 30 July-1 August 2018, immediately following the Hemingway in Paris Conference. The Conference Directors are Matthew Nickel and H. R. Stoneback. The abstract deadline is September 1, 2017. See complete details of the CFP and other conference announcements on the Roberts Society website, emrsociety.com.

Gregory E. Bruno is an MA English candidate and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. His poetry has been previously published in this journal and in the collection *Kentucky Writers: The Deus Loci and the Lyrical Landscape*.

Laurence Carr writes poetry, plays, and fiction. His plays have been produced throughout the U.S and Europe. His novel in prose and poems, *Pancake Hollow Primer*, (Codhill Press), won the Next Generation Indie Book Award for first novel in 2013, and his poetry has appeared in numerous publications. His newest book is *Threnodies: poems in remembrance* (Codhill). Laurence teaches dramatic and creative writing at SUNY New Paltz. Website: www.carrwriter.com

Michael D'Addario received a BA in American Studies from Marist College in 2014 and an MA in English from SUNY New Paltz in 2016. In addition to working with the blues, he has presented papers about a variety of authors including Ernest Hemingway, Cormac McCarthy, and J.G. Ballard. He currently teaches at Manhattanville College and the Culinary Institute of America.

Joann K. Deudicibus is the Staff Assistant for the Composition Program and an Adjunct Instructor at SUNY New Paltz, where she earned her MA in English (2003). She is the Associate Editor (poetry) for *WaterWrites: A Hudson River Anthology* (Codhill Press, 2009). Her poems have been published in *A Slant of Light: Contemporary Women Writers of the Hudson Valley* (Codhill Press, 2013), *Chronogram*, and around the Hudson Valley. Her article, "Axing the Frozen Sea: Female Inscriptions of Madness" was included in the anthology *Affective Disorder and the Writing Life: The Melancholic Muse* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Her research interests include creativity, mental health, and composition, the body, as well as twentieth-century American poetry, particularly the work of Anne Sexton.

Dennis Doherty teaches creative writing and literature and SUNY New Paltz. He is author of four volumes of poetry: *The Bad Man* (Ye Olde Font Shoppe Press, 2004), *Fugitive* (Codhill Press, 2007), *Crush Test* (Codhill Press 2010), and *Black Irish* (Codhill Press, 2016), as well as a book-length personal meditation on Mark Twain's novel: *Why Read the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New Street Communications, 2014). Essays, poems, and stories appear throughout the literary press.

James E. Frauenberger is an MA English candidate and teaches Composition I and II classes. He completed his BA at SUNY New Paltz with a major in English and a minor in Creative Writing. In April 2017, he will be presenting his first ever conference paper at the New Paltz Graduate Symposium.

Vincent Fino is an MS Ed. candidate, 8th Grade English Language Arts teacher at Valley Central Middle School, and a Teacher Consultant for The Hudson Valley Writing Project. He completed his B.S. at SUNY New Paltz with a degree in Secondary Education (English).

Evan Hulick, a former TA in the New Paltz English Department, received his MA from SUNY New Paltz (2016) and plans to pursue PhD studies. He has presented numerous conference papers and published several articles.

Kathy Johnson received her MS degree in English at New Paltz (1973). After a career as an English Teacher, her second career as singer-songwriter and performer began in the late 1990s. She has recorded four CDs of folk and other songs and performs widely. For additional biographical information see, in this issue, the introductory essay to the symposium.

Edward Maietta teaches courses in composition in the New Paltz English Department.

Joseph McNulty received his BA in English from SUNY New Paltz in 2015. Aside from travel, labor and contemplation of graduate studies, Joe is a well-known singer-songwriter who performs widely in the mid-Hudson Valley area. He has published songs and poems and is the Associate Music Editor of

the forthcoming *Stoney & Sparrow Songbook: Volume One*.

Samantha Montagna is a dedicated assistant teacher at Kumon Math and Reading Center in Monroe. She has just completed her MA in English at SUNY New Paltz in December 2016. Her work is appearing for the first time here in the *Shawangunk Review*.

Matthew Nickel is an Assistant Professor of English at Misericordia University, finished his BA and MA (2007) at SUNY New Paltz and his PhD (2011) at ULL. He has served as an officer of several national literary organizations and is the author/editor of numerous books including *Hemingway's Dark Night* (New Street Communications 2013) and *The Route to Cacharel* (Five Oaks Press 2016).

Thomas G. Olsen has been a member of English Department since 1997. He teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Shakespeare, early modern English literature, British literature, and other topics in literary studies. In recent years he has also offered introductory courses in book history. He is currently at work on an anthology of Shakespeare's sources and two projects related to *King Lear*.

Christopher Paolini is an MA English candidate and Composition instructor at SUNY New Paltz. He is currently completing his Master's thesis on Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Modernism. His poetry has previously appeared in the *Shawangunk Review* and *Kentucky: Poets of Place* (ed. Matthew Nickel), and his essay on the poetry of Elizabeth Madox Roberts will appear in the forthcoming collection *Keenly Aware of the Ceremonies of Place: Essays on Elizabeth Madox Roberts*.

Alex A. Pennisi is an MA English candidate and teaches Composition I and II classes. He completed his BA at SUNY New Paltz with a major in English and a minor in Linguistics.

Daniel J. Pizappi is a Ph.D. candidate in the University of Tennessee English Department. His poetry and fiction have appeared previously in this journal,

as well as in *Your Impossible Voice*, *Burningword*, and *The Stonestrow Review*. is now completing the first year of his fully funded Ph.D. Fellowship at the University of Tennessee. This year he is co-program chair of the XVIII Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Victoria Prashad is a MA English candidate who teaches Composition I and II classes. She completed her BA at SUNY New Paltz with a major in Adolescent Education, a concentration in English, and a minor in Creative Writing. Her poetry and essays have previously appeared in *The Shawangunk Review*, *Chronogram* and *The Stonestrow Review*.

Jim Rooney is a nationally and internationally renowned figure in the music world as producer, singer-songwriter, and writer. Author of numerous articles and books on various subjects related to the world of music, he has produced and served as recording engineer on more records than anybody can count. For additional biographical information see, in this issue, the introductory essay to the symposium.

Alana Sawchuk completed her English MA in the Fall of 2016. Since graduating, she has begun working for a local publisher and marketing firm located in the Hudson Valley.

Genaro Kÿ Lý Smith is Professor of Creative Writing at Louisiana Tech University. A widely published poet, he recently conducted a creative writing workshop at New Paltz and gave a reading from his recent volume of poems *The Land Baron's Sun* and other works.

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt is a SUNY Distinguished Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz where she teaches composition, creative writing, American and Women's Literature, creative nonfiction, memoir, and Holocaust literature courses. Her work has been published in many journals including *The Cream City Review*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *The Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Home Planet News*, *Phoebe*, *Black Buzzard Review*, *The Chiron Review*, and *Wind*. Her work also has been nominated for the Pushcart Press Prize Series. She has had

two volumes of poetry published by the Edwin Mellen Press (*We Speak in Tongues*, 1991; *She had this memory*, 2000). One chapbook, *The Earth Was Still*, was recently published by Finishing Line Press and another *Hieroglyphs of Father-Daughter Time* by Word Temple Press.

Colleen Stewart is an MA English candidate and Graduate Assistant for the SUNY New Paltz English Department. She completed her BA at SUNY New Paltz, majoring in English and minoring in Creative Writing. Colleen's published work and photography can be found in *The Valley Table* and *Hudson Valley Magazine*.

H. R. Stoneback is SUNY Distinguished Professor in the English Department at New Paltz, has served as President of the International Hemingway Foundation & Society, Vice-President of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association, Co-Founding Honorary President of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society, and officer and director of numerous literary organizations. He is the author or editor of 37 books, roughly half literary criticism, half poetry. Recent critical volumes include *Reading Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises* (Kent State UP 2007), *Imagism: Essays on Its Initiation, Impact & Influence* (UNO Press 2013), and *Affirming the Gold Thread* (Florida English Press 2014); recent volumes of poetry include *Voices of Women Singing*, *Why Athletes Prefer Cheerleaders*, and *The Stones of Strasbourg*. Forthcoming volumes of poems include *The Language of Blackberries*, *Mystics on the Wissahickon*, and *Circle of Aloha & Fire: Hawaiian Poems*. His award-winning poems have been translated and published in Chinese, French, Italian, Provençal and other languages. Pertinent to the folksong subject of this issue, his memoir *the dulcimer: The Story of a 1960s Coffeehouse* was published in 2016 and his *Stoney & Sparrow Songbook: Volume One* is forthcoming.

Happy Traum is a nationally and internationally renowned figure in the music world as singer-songwriter, writer, music teacher-producer of scores of instructional music videos. Author of numerous publications on various subjects related to the world of music, he is the former editor of *Sing Out!* magazine, the key journal of the Urban Folk Revival. For additional biograph-

ical information see, in this issue, the introductory essay to the symposium.

Kasey Tveit is an avid reader and writer with an MA in English from SUNY New Paltz. Her creative and academic work has been published in *The Stonestrow Review* and *The Shawangunk Review*. She has worked as a freelance reporter and copywriter and currently works in publishing.

Director of the Creative Writing Program at SUNY New Paltz, **Pauline Uchmanowicz's** most recent poetry volume is *Starfish* (Twelve Winters Press, 2016).

Robert Waugh Puppeteer, poet, author of critical books on Lovecraft, and professor of courses on Joyce, Tolkien, Pynchon, and many other authors in his diverse career, Waugh is now emeritus at SUNY New Paltz. His most recent book is a collection of weird tales, *The Bloody Tugboat and Other Witcheries*.