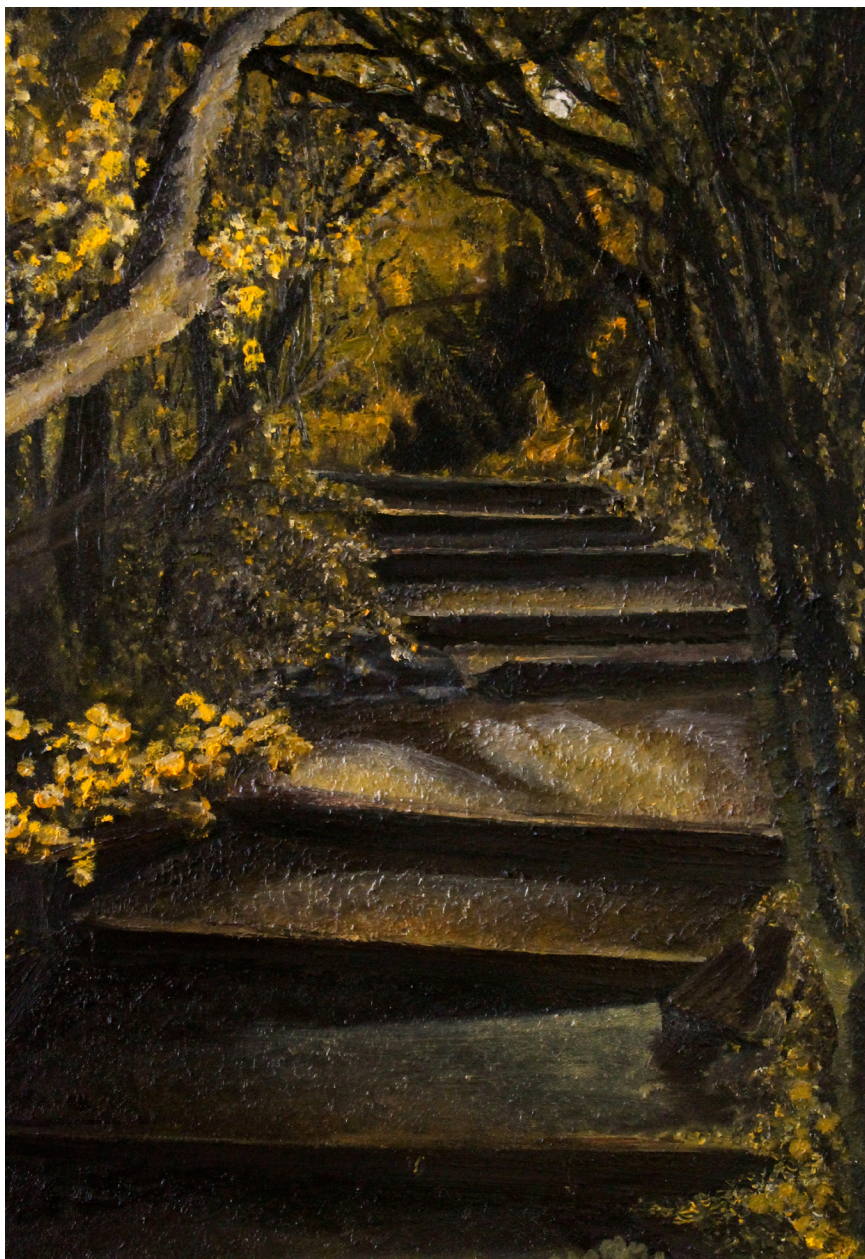


The University Scholar

University of Dallas

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Eric Puhlinger

Sequence

ceramics

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Carrie Baker
Night, Revisited
oil on canvas
2011

Back Cover:

Brandon S. Cruz
15 Sticks and 3 Butterflies in Space
graphite stick and paper
2011



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From the Editors' Desks

Dear Reader,

When Alexis de Tocqueville wrote his *Democracy in America*, he argued that the Americans were distinguished by combining “two perfectly distinct elements that elsewhere have often made war with each other . . .the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom.” The University of Dallas, a remarkable little institution on a less than remarkable little hill, has embraced that spirit, casting itself as “the Catholic university for independent thinkers,” and thus preeminently Catholic and preeminently American. The works in this edition of the *University Scholar* bear witness to this. The dedication to the good, the true, and the beautiful encourages both the delving into tradition and the charting of new courses. The result is the happy multiplicity you see before you, united by a joyful affirmation of and search for truth. It is humbling to witness this work. As we graduate, it seems altogether fitting and proper to suggest a theme to those who remain: “It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us. . .” Therefore, my friends, *veritatem et justitiam diligite!*

The Editors

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Flame

This morning I was caught by the sight of a flame. It was flickering atop a simple white candle near the main altar at Sunday Mass. A tiny flame, barely visible over the top of a smooth gold follower.

Masses tend to be a time of great distraction when my imagination works tirelessly on every item of the world around it. One particularly magnificent fantasy of my youth featured the capsizing of the whole church. As the image grew clearer and more convincing, and I became nervous, I would search out nesting places and holds amidst the ceiling's wood arches, spots to run for when the building began to turn. Of course the safest route was to head for the many recesses in the main altar. There I could squeeze myself behind Peter and, if need be, climb on over to Paul.

Every once in a while this flame would puff out tiny clouds of black smoke. I watched it dance there, watched it shudder and twitch, rolling through silent rhythms of softening wax. I had seen many flames before, but I had never watched them like this one. I was certain I could sense some great mystery hidden within it. (I began to assume this was the case with all flames and that I had simply never noticed.) I don't claim to have the words or the skill to convey such a mystery, but I am certain it is true. Prometheus didn't suffer for nothing.

At first it seemed odd that a mystery could be held in such a simple thing. This one was hardly bigger than my thumbnail. But upon reflection, it seemed only right, since mysteries are almost always unassuming. Mysteries hide quietly within things inconspicuous and ordinary--a glance or a host or a turning leaf. They're never bold or ostentatious. They sit quietly on the dusty shelves of library basements in the worn and curling pages of poorly bound books, which tell humanity's hard-earned, lost secrets with every fading line. Or sometimes they rest high up and out of sight in the muted beams of sunlight meeting the reddening autumn leaves. I am sure that for those who will look into the quiet and curious lilt of the candle's flame, between where its sapphire base transforms into a satin yellow, there is some mystery there too.

As this tiny flame's glow caught my attention, I realized in no time that part of its mystery was a vast reserve of my own memories. Ignoring my uncertainty as to how they had arrived there, I began to pursue them. I found a small group of boys kindling fire in a dirty, gray gardening bucket. Gabe was the youngest, wearing a white shirt and diaper, excitedly balancing a running hose in his hands. He was only

included because he had threatened to tell otherwise, and he didn't want to be there. He watched his eldest brother crouch low near the metal rim and blow into the smoking mess of twigs, sending choking clouds up and out into the huddled faces. Through the black clouds, deep in the bucket a dancing, glowing, rising flame grew until many tongues of fire appeared. But Gabe was scared. He quickly aimed and sprayed.

Crack. Sizzle.

And as he extinguished the memory, another appeared. The same boys, older now, some of them men, huddled together around a few split and roaring logs. The light from the black-metal fire pit bounded out the darkness and brought them closer together within the confines of its glow. Together they yelled Irish tunes which they had sung together since their childhood, every word shouted in lively unison. In their small circle, they handed and tossed a bottle of rum, without challenge or conceit. I watched their swirling revelry spin faster and faster and the fire burn brighter as it slid out of the black-metal fire pit into a low hole of sand, dug out on a moonlit beach.

In the sand, the same group huddled close to the flames. I stayed with them a while. We didn't sing and a few girls had joined me and my brothers. But soon, I left them. I rose with her and walked down to the shoreline. Once near the water, looking back, our bonfire was no bigger than a candle flame.

Parallelism and Progression from Aristotle to Darwin

He had an inquisitive mind and knowledge of natural science. He was unafraid to propose new theories in his day. He performed experiments, and he closely observed animals. He profoundly impacted Western society, significantly changing scientific thought. Who is he? He is both Darwin and Aristotle. Despite being separated by two thousand years, these men shared an eagerness for knowledge, formulating their own explanations and theories in natural science. In Chapter Nine of *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Darwin visits Santa Cruz, Patagonia, and the Falkland Islands; he makes many observations and predictions, both supporting and refuting Aristotle's schema. Whenever Darwin encounters natural phenomena, he enumerates the theories of his predecessors before proposing his own conjectures; and while he does not mention Aristotle by name, Darwin's theories regarding the mutability of species, the hierarchy of natural organisms, and the pace of geological change both parallel Aristotle's theories and progress from them to better knowledge of the natural world.

Darwin diverges from Aristotle by propounding a theory of evolution, in which species change over time and are subject (but not necessarily doomed) to extinction. Aristotle believed in "species permanence," in which animals passed on their "form" (the eternal and unchanging soul of the species) to their children, leading to "an eternal continuity of the form" (Sloan). Aristotle did not believe in the extinction of species; he dismissed fossils as "chance aberrations of rock strata" (Birx 43). Darwin, however, correctly assessed fossils as the remains of extinct animals; he mentions "the Apteryz of New Zealand, as well as its gigantic extinct prototype the Deinornis" (Voyage 186). Furthermore, he sees extinction as a threat to extant species. Darwin observes a "wolf-like fox," the only indigenous quadruped to the Falkland Islands; he cites "Byron's account of their tameness and curiosity" and he mentions the ease with which the Gauchos kill these wolves (181). Based on his own observations of their declining populations and their lack of fear, Darwin makes the prediction: "Within a very few years after these islands shall have become regularly settled, in all probability this fox will be classed with the dodo, as an animal which has perished from the face of the earth" (181). Darwin is in qualified agreement with Aristotle about the fixity of species; for Aristotle, this fixity is definite, whereas for Darwin, it is merely possible. Species can either remain in existence (and continue to evolve), or they

can become extinct. For example, Darwin observes that the horses, “both tame and wild, are rather small-sized” on the Falkland Islands; he speculates: “At some future period the southern hemisphere probably will have its breed of Falkland ponies, as the northern has its Shetland breed” (180). Darwin acknowledges that most species will continue to survive for several years, but he also believes in the extinction of past species, like the *Deinornis*, and the possible extinction of currently extant species.

While Aristotle was against formal change in species, he was amenable to “local adaptation in ‘accidental’ properties”; his schema allowed for non-essential changes within species (Sloan). Darwin also supports this, and expands upon this idea of accidental changes. During his surveillance of the rabbits which have been introduced to the Falkland Islands, he distinguishes between the black variety and the grey variety (Voyage 181). Darwin, in agreement with the Gauchos, refutes the previous theory of the French naturalists that the two varieties were different species; furthermore, he notes that the two species “produce piebald offspring” (181). This observation in the change of color in the species is consistent with Aristotle’s acceptance of a change in accidental properties.

Darwin and Aristotle both studied a wide variety of organisms, including plants, simple animals, complex animals, and human beings. They found every level of life interesting and important. In *Parts of Animals* Book I, Aristotle states:

For even in the study of animals disagreeable to perception, the nature that crafted them likewise provides extraordinary pleasures to those able to know their causes and who are by nature philosophers. ... For this reason we should not be childishly disgusted at the examination of the less valuable animals. For in all natural things there is something marvelous. (Lennox)

Darwin likewise exhibits this appreciation of nature, as evidenced in his careful study of the “lower marine animals” of many different genera, including “*Flustra*, *Eschara*, *Cellaria*, *Crisia*, and others” (Voyage 186). He refers to a zoophyte’s mouth as a “beautifully-fitted trap-door” (187); for Darwin, even the simplest of animals have “something marvelous” (Lennox) to offer the naturalist. Nevertheless, Aristotle did not view all organisms as equal; rather, he firmly believed in a “latent and static ‘Great Chain of Being’” in which “each organic kind has its own eternally fixed place in this hierarchical order of the living world depending on its degree of complexity and sensitivity or intelligence” (Birr 43). In this Aristotelian “Great Chain of Being,” plants are the lowest, with purely nutritive souls; animals are higher, since they have a nutritive and sensitive soul; and human beings are

the highest, with a nutritive, sensitive and rational soul (Shields).

Darwin also places human beings above animals. In Patagonia and on the Falkland Islands, his interactions with the Gauchos taught him the power of rationality; the Gauchos, due to their ingenuity, are able to control wild and domesticated horses and cattle, despite the animals' superior strength. Darwin was impressed by the "very savage" wild bulls and by the Gauchos' dominance over them. He describes the bulls as "magnificent beasts; they equaled in the size of their huge heads and necks the Grecian marble sculptures" (Voyage 179). When threatened by an old bull, the Gauchos decide to vengefully "emasculate him." Despite his immense physical power, the Gauchos are able to render him helpless; Darwin observes: "It was very interesting to see how art completely mastered force." Human rationality and "art" allows them to maintain their superiority on the Aristotelian "Great Chain of Being." Darwin describes how the Gauchos use their lazos and bolas to catch wild cattle; they train their horses to "keep the lazo tight" so that the rider can more easily kill the cow (Voyage 178). They use a similar method for domesticating wild cattle; they throw the bolas at multiple cattle, leaving them entangled for a few days before freeing them to docilely join the tame herd (182-3). Darwin also notices how human beings are able to use domesticated animals to outwit wild animals. He cites the Chilean practice of training dogs to protect their flocks from condors; the "shepherd-dogs are trained, whenever [condors] pass over, to run out, and looking upwards to bark violently" (173). Darwin also expresses an Aristotelian perspective when he praises the complexity of zoophytes over the complexity of plants. While observing compound animals, he states that "the union of separate individuals in a common body is more striking in a coralline than in a tree" (188). For when the animals unite, they possess "as perfect a transmission of will...as in any single animal" (187); this effect of "will" is missing in plants. Although Darwin may not adhere strictly to Aristotle's Great Chain of Being with the same enthusiasm as its originator, Darwin's observations about the higher development of humans as compared to animals, and animals as compared to plants, parallel Aristotelian hierarchy.

Darwin often expands upon the work of previous natural philosophers, as evidenced in his study of geology. When confronted with particularly interesting geology, Darwin cites a variety of previous thinkers while theorizing himself. In Patagonia, he sees a large basaltic platform rising above a river, united to basaltic cliffs; he wonders as to the origin of such a "solid mass of very hard rock" (Voyage 171). He first speculates that the river might "in the lapse of ages... produce by its gradual erosion" an

effect upon the cliffs. Darwin also cites: "Geologists formerly would have brought into play, the violent action of some overwhelming debacle." He dismisses both these theories due to the presence of seashells along the plain, thus indicating a past branch of the ocean. Darwin summarizes: "[W]e must confess that it makes the head almost giddy to reflect on the number of years, century after century, which the tides, unaided by a heavy surf, must have required to have corroded so vast an area and thickness of solid basaltic lava" (172). Darwin's theory of gradual tidal erosion parallels Aristotle's opinion that natural elements are "capable of bringing about in the lapse of ages a complete revolution" (Lyell 15). In "Meteorics," Aristotle discusses how "the distribution of land and sea in particular regions does not endure throughout all time, but it becomes sea in those parts where it was land, and again it becomes land where it was sea" (Lyell 15). Aristotle believes that rivers can begin and end, land can become sea and sea can become land; in Patagonia, Darwin asserts this same idea: sea has indeed become land. Yet while Aristotle "claimed that the Earth changed, but this change was slow to the point of imperceptibility" ("A Historical Look at Geology"), Darwin acknowledged both slow and fast geological change. In Chapter Nine, Darwin describes: "In many parts of the island the bottoms of the valleys are covered in an extraordinary manner by myriads of great loose angular fragments of the quartz rock, forming 'streams of stones'" (Voyage 183). He gives the following explanation for such a phenomenon: "We may imagine that streams of white lava had flowed from many parts of the mountains into the lower country, and that when solidified they had been rent by some enormous convulsion into myriads of fragments" (184). Darwin attributes the existence of these "streams of stones" to volcanoes and earthquakes, agents of swift geological transformation. Darwin progresses from the Aristotelian purely gradual geological change to incorporating theories of both slow and immediate change.

Aristotle's claims, while erroneous in their absolute rigidity, can be correct when treated with flexibility, i.e. in light of Darwinian development. Where Aristotle supported the permanence of all species, Darwin introduced the option of extinction; where Aristotle taught a "Great Chain of Being," Darwin supported a more nuanced natural hierarchy; and where Aristotle believed solely in gradual geological transformation, Darwin added acceptance of rapid geological events. Their schema may not be thoroughly aligned, yet they shared a dedication to observing and documenting the natural world and to learning from the experts of their day. Aristotle "consulted with bee-keepers, fishermen and sponge divers" and "performed a great many dissections on a wide variety of animals"

(Lennox). Darwin, throughout *The Voyage of the Beagle*, consults a wide variety of local inhabitants, esteemed naturalists, and scientific texts; he watches the flight of condors “for nearly half an hour, without once taking off [his] eyes” (175); and he performs experiments on cuttlefish (35-6), planaria (51), coralline (188), and other organisms. Like Aristotle, Darwin revolutionized Western natural science; nevertheless, he did not enact a complete breach from former tradition, nor did he exclude “the progress of knowledge” in the future (185). Unlike Aristotle, Darwin was allowed a glimpse at a hitherto unknown continent: South America; his experiences there allowed him to further the theories of natural science in novel ways.

Brandon McMahan

Roma, Pieta

Her crowds mass daily past her marble'd arms,
Supporting the brown skeleton of her youth.
Her ancient beauty draws some, seeking faith
And inspiration; both abound in her.
The rest, unblinking, buried deep among
The cares of daily life, unwitting, walk
The paths the weary pious tread in search
Of heaven's promise

Scarlet skies at dusk
Reflect the hue of earth as tinted red
Marble temples, silent, tell their sanguine tales
To lovers, poets, captive witness, all
The same.

The popes and princes, common thieves
And strangers lie at rest, but though her Son
Is in a different sky her twinkling lights
Shine out within the universal dark.
For this men say she has eternal life.

Pompless Circumstance

Throughout the lines of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, recurring themes of insanity and morality appear, often together. The play, which largely focuses on Lear's gradual realization of his mistaken trust in flattery and outward praise, also shows a gradual decline in his sanity. Lear's three chief companions throughout much of the play each dabble in their own forms of non-reality, but rather than seeking deception, each seeks to reveal more fully his own quality of character. Consistently throughout the play, Shakespeare employs clothing imagery to distinguish between characters who wish to conceal their faults, and those who wish to lay bare their character. Kent, the Fool, and Edgar, each employing his own form of pretense, enter into the life of Lear, offering him guidance, after Cordelia departs, and the king is abandoned by all others. Their words and companionship grow on him and alter him until, at their relationships' climax, Lear, though still retaining his sovereignty and kingship, commands Kent, Edgar, and the Fool to sit with him—a gesture not only of equality among them, but also one wholly incongruous with the pride of the king (3.6.35-40). In asking his companions to sit with him, Lear, though by this time seemingly insane, shows a clarity of perception that he did not possess at the play's outset, one in which he has come to value internal character rather than outward pomp.

At the play's beginning, Lear is a man easily turned by flattery and praise. Convinced by declarations of fidelity and love of the devotion of his two evil daughters, Lear finds insufficient Cordelia's short, rather terse declaration of love according to duty (1.1.57-63, 71-78, 90-122). He willingly dismisses a lifetime of evident devotion for the sake of a few words of flattery only spoken according to command. When asked to profess their love for their father, Goneril and Regan (Lear's two evil daughters), prove adept in the art of flattery. In a scene littered with clothing imagery, Regan speaks of herself and her sister as being made of the same "mettle" or material (1.1.71). Each weaves so appealing a picture of devotion, declaring Lear to be her only source of joy and the only object of her affection, that when Lear is presented with Cordelia's "Nothing, my lord," he prompts her once more to answer (1.1.89). "Mend your speech a little," he tells her, as though unsatisfied by the plainness of her material, finding her lack of enfolded words unappealing (1.1.96-97). Replying that her "Nothing, my lord" is a "right fit" for the return of her duties towards her father, Cordelia remains firmly honest (1.1.89,

99). Lear, as the proud king that he is at the play's outset, rejects her plain response, refusing to listen either to her or to his honest advisor, Kent, and banishing both for their forthright but unflattering words (1.1.168-181).

Although in the dialogue among the royal family in scene 1.1, Goneril and Regan's lavish "material" seems to be substantially better than Cordelia's "Nothing, my lord", the remainder of the play serves to "unfold what plighted [i.e. pleated] cunning" in this scene "hides" (1.1.71, 89, 282-83). Goneril and Reagan, each as insincere as the other, have need of hiding their true character beneath pleats and folds of the rich "cloth and material" that are their words. Gloucester's wise summation that "nothing hath not such need to hide itself" well describes the quality of Cordelia, who speaks plainly and without the opulent, lustrous embellishment that her sisters find necessary (1.2.34). A theme that is echoed, then, throughout the remainder of the rising action—the contrast between the necessity of clothing to cover deceit, and its removal as a symbol of growing sincerity and honesty—serves not only to highlight the deception of the antagonists, but also to highlight Lear's progression to a fuller understanding of true quality and worth. Accordingly, Lear in the opening scene shows himself to place a higher value on appearance and flattery than on honesty and truth, an error that ensuing experiences serve to correct throughout the course of the play.

Whereas the antagonists in the play seek to disguise and enfold their flaws, the transformations that the protagonists undergo serve the purpose of allowing fuller expression of their true selves. While the evil characters maintain their nominal identities, willingly forsaking their internal character for external power and reputation, the good characters in the play forsake rank, sanity, identity, and reputation for the maintenance of their moral character. Each of Lear's chief companions throughout the lines of the play—Kent, the Fool, and Edgar—plays the part of that which he is not, forsaking his own identity to maintain his internal character. Kent, who was banished in the opening act of the play for speaking out in defense of justice, disguises himself in order to remain the king's true advisor (1.1.122-181). The Fool, already having adopted the character of one not fully sane when he enters the play, maintains his role, professing that he will remain true to the king despite the circumstances, and throughout the play continually offers truthful observations, often in the guise of riddles (2.4.80-85). Edgar, who wholly throws off his identity, taking on the guise of a mad beggar so that he might remain in the kingdom, continues to serve his rightful lords, both father and king, as is fitting, given the quality of his character (2.3.1-21). He, unlike his half-brother who enfolds lies (in the

form of a letter) in the folds of his clothes, both literally and figuratively throws off his garments, ridding himself of human convention (1.2.23-40, 2.3.1-21). Consistent with Shakespeare's clothing imagery, Edgar's physical disrobing symbolically corresponds to his forsaking all human convention: name, rank, and identity. He instead takes on the guise of the basest beggar who could be valued for nothing—save an upright character. Each of these three characters, therefore, though having given up the concrete “materials” that gave them their nominal identities, maintains his internal quality of character throughout.

Lear alone of these four does not give up his nominal identity, but rather, in throwing off human convention by way of losing his sanity, he like his companions gains the ability to speak and see with clarity things in their proper place and quality. Throughout the entirety of the play, Lear frequently expresses his outrage at the wrongs being done to him, calling himself “more sinned against than sinning” (3.2.58-59). In the first half of *King Lear*, Lear speaks mainly of his desire for revenge and the emotional hurt that his daughters' betrayal is causing (2.4.55, 277). It is not until roughly the middle line of the middle scene of the play that Lear first mentions justice and its place in allotting due punishments (3.2.53). Until this point in the play, all of his pronouncements of due punishments stemmed from his authority in his position as father and king, and the subsequent bond between himself and Goneril and Regan as his daughters and subjects. This bond, which Lear lays claim to throughout the beginning half of the play as he attempts to bring his daughters to respect his position as their king and father, is one which he has already made empty in the very first scene of the play (1.1.89-122). In placing no value on Cordelia's love, which stemmed wholly from this filial bond (ultimately stripping her of all that was rightfully hers according to this bond), Lear negates his right to invoke this bond in his necessity. Just as he found the paternal bond (and duty) an insufficient basis for love, so too do his daughters find it an insufficient reason to grant their father his wishes and his rights. Importantly, then, at the play's middle, Lear invokes a new authority—justice—under which he claims punishment is due (3.6.53).

Coinciding with Lear's first mention of justice is the first reference to Lear's beginning to divest himself of human convention, symbolically in the form of clothes (3.2.60). Though later in the play Lear will shed all of his clothing, it is apparent that his head covering is first to go (3.4.112). “Alack, bareheaded?” Kent says, addressing Lear (3.2.60). Significantly positioned just following Lear's crediting of justice as a legitimate authority, the mention of Lear's bare head suggests, at the

very least, that Lear no longer wears a crown. Since Lear has so clearly failed in his role as king, it is appropriately the human convention of the crown that is first taken off. Later on, Lear further shows himself a servant of justice as he exclaims, "Take physic, pomp; Expose thyself... That thou mayst shake the superflux... And show the heavens more just" (3.4.33-36). In this statement, Lear shows a better understanding of the role of a leader, which is to bestow justice appropriately: that is, to be a mediator rather than a standard all his own. Soon after this declaration comes the complete disrobing of Lear, wherein he divests himself of all conventional wares (3.4.112). Though it seems that by this point in the play Lear is no longer fully in his right mind, he appears to comprehend the role of a king better than he did at the play's outset, when he was, to all appearances, fully sane (1.4.278, 2.4.104-105, 285).

Having thus divested himself of those conventions which before he falsely understood to make him his own authority, Lear progresses to what is the climax of his relationship with Kent, the Fool, and Edgar. Though insane, or perhaps because of his own insanity, Lear appears to see past the varied disguises of his companions to their valuable, honest qualities. In Scene 3.6, then, Lear takes those whom he has deemed worthy and tells each to sit beside him (3.6.35-40). He, the king who at the play's outset could not endure an honest, unembellished confession of devotion from his daughter, now bids the basest beggar, a fool, and a lowly servant to sit beside him as ministers of justice, a position that he already has marked as the role of one in the position of authority. Lear's recognition of their inner quality of character, and his willingness to elevate them accordingly, shows in him a sincere transformation from the proud, haughty king that he was at the play's outset. A gesture of equality, Lear's command to them to sit beside him marks them as equals in the administering of justice (3.6.35-40). Still maintaining his nominal role as king, Lear commands them (rather than asking them) to sit beside him in judgement. His companions respect his authority and sit, obeying Lear as their king.

The remainder of the play marks no notable change in the persons of Kent and Edgar, the Fool being absent henceforth. Unlike Lear, no alteration in character was necessary for them. While Lear required a great deal of alteration for him to properly perceive right and wrong, Kent, Edgar, and the Fool each possessed this clarity of understanding from the play's beginning. All that was fitting therefore was that they should be recognized for their quality of character. In valuing their inner character over the "mettle" that covers them, Lear, in his second allotment of power, echoes his first, but with a different outcome. Requiring

neither a flattery contest nor embellished professions of fidelity of any sort, Lear seems to repent fully of his banishment of Cordelia, whose “Nothing, my lord” would seem appropriate amongst those who have nothing to offer, save loyalty and fidelity due according to their station (1.1.89). This scene then is the beginning of the end. Following its close, the conflicts of the play begin to unravel: Cordelia returns; Regan and Goneril, as suggested at the play’s beginning, come to shame for their deeds; and though never restored to full power at the end of the play, Lear and his loving daughter die side by side, an end which is justly fitting for the transformed king and his ever devoted daughter. (5.3.313).

King Lear’s gradual transformation throughout the course of the play, from sane to insane and simultaneously from haughty and proud to one right-minded and just, serve as recurring themes around which the play is centered. At the climax in Scene 3.6, Lear, although by this time insane, finally proves his understanding of what is truly valuable by granting authority to those who were externally nothing but internally rich (3.6.35-40). Contrary to his actions in Scene 1.1, when he chose the outward praises of Regan and Goneril over Cordelia’s “Nothing, my lord,” Lear in Scene 3.6 chooses the seeming “nothing,” which, with his newfound clarity of perception, he now understands to be more fitting than the pleats and folds of fabric which, though externally “gorgeous,” practically and actually serve little purpose when tested against storms and gales. Choosing instead that which held firm and with him weathered the storm, Lear takes for his equals a beggar, a fool, and a servant, understanding at last the value of Cordelia’s “Nothing”—the value of what is just. For a king, a father, a daughter, and a servant are indeed nothing on their own, without the standard of justice to which all ought to adhere, lending to each his place and value. Cordelia proved her understanding of this standard in refusing to indulge her father’s desire for undue praise at the expense of what was justly due. It was this standard that Lear sought to replace with his own at the play’s outset, and it is this standard that Lear comes to value, so that, in Scene 3.6, when Lear chooses “Nothing,” it is a choice that restores him to his rightful position as a king – that of mediator of justice.

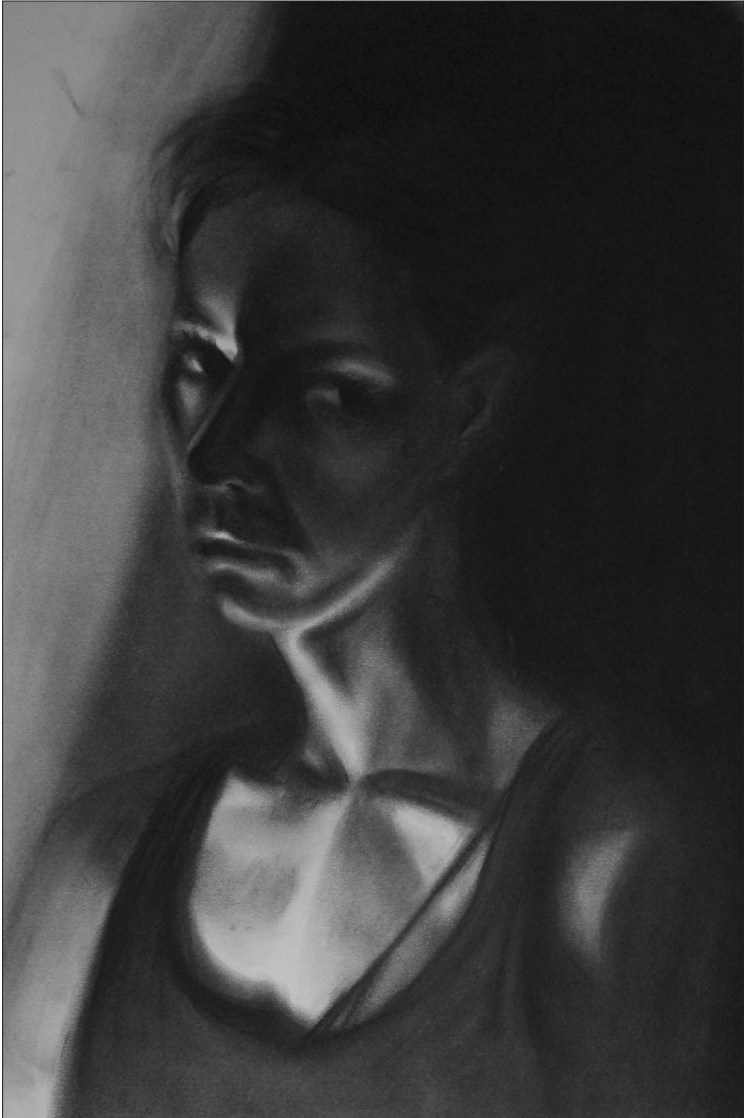
The University Scholar

Catherine Sercer

Self-Portrait

charcoal

2012



The Katherine M. Sorenson Award recognizes one student in Literary Study II whose presentation reveals him or her to be a superior reader of the novel, exhibiting in his or her reading, writing, and delivery Katherine's characteristic virtues: a precise intelligence and wit, a capacious imagination, and a humane learning.

John Corrales

**“This is not the scene I dreamed of”:
Narration, Modes of Reading and Moral
Progression in Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians***

J.M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* presents a magistrate’s account of losing the mastery of his small realm to the power of the “Empire.” Set in an unnamed time and place, the magistrate narrates his story peculiarly, using a tense some call “historical present tense” or “simultaneous present tense,” which are inaccurate terms used to describe this: “I find my way to the granary by the back alleys. The guard is not at his post, the door to the hut stands open. I am about to enter when I hear voices inside whispering and giggling” (*Waiting for the Barbarians* 14). By virtue of narrating himself, the magistrate simultaneously creates the novel to be read. However, the magistrate does more than narrate himself: he is also engaged in a process of reading himself when he explicates his experiences and interprets how and what his life mean. Because the magistrate narrates himself, the events of his life become literarily apparent according to his conventional form of narration. The literary apparentness of his life-as-narrated requires that he must also read his life to give it form or meaning. In other words, in order to offer an account, the magistrate narrates his life as it happens, and that narration requires that he also read himself. *Waiting for the Barbarians*, then, in utilizing this peculiar first person self-narration, illustrates that life cannot escape our mediating the experience of it — our lives are always mediated by interpretation. Allow me to emphasize that I believe that the mediation of life through interpretation is fundamental to the human condition, and the way in which Coetzee aesthetically introduces the magistrate’s process of narrating and reading himself and the tension therein is central to the ethical development and import of the novel itself. The magistrate of *Waiting for the Barbarians* mediates and makes sense of his life relative to how he reads himself. In giving his life form and meaning by reading it, reading, then, also must be a means of moral understanding. To paraphrase Dr. Brett Bourbon, if

the practice of reading is not inextricably linked to the development of one's morals, then we are wasting our time in the English Department.

I argue that the magistrate's moral progression is a development he makes because he can further develop his ability to read. He goes from a state of daydreaming "placid concupiscence" (10) to realizing "that the world as it stands is no illusion... that we can neither forget it nor dispense with it" (164) by virtue of becoming a better reader of himself. That is to say, his moral progression is intimately linked with the way he progresses as a reader. I wish to examine what seem to be the magistrate's five incipient modes of reading himself. The first mode shows that the magistrate has an idea of himself based on the quiet and simple life he has led until the moment when the novel begins. That mode shows the magistrate interpreting his new experiences relative to an outmoded idea of himself that is incompatible with his new experiences. These new experiences will crush his old idea of himself. The second mode shows the magistrate as a one-man-audience who must reinterpret himself relative to others' readings of him. The third mode of reading shows the magistrate incarcerated, where he must reassess his new character as the "One Just Man." Confinement will break this conception of his. The fourth is an even stranger mode in which the magistrate reads his own torture. The last mode will be revealed as an agglomeration of the prior four where the magistrate understands himself as a character within his literary-narrative mediations. He has ceased to daydream by this point. Accordingly, there will be five sections in this paper devoted to each mode of reading. The purpose of this examination of *Waiting for the Barbarians* will be to consider the magistrate's strange modes of reading himself as a simultaneous exercise of his morals, showing how the two acts develop together throughout the novel. In this way, J.M. Coetzee displays his fine literary mastery by offering a beautiful justification of *his novel's* aesthetic framework as it relates to and forms the novel's content.

I.

The magistrate begins telling his story in a daydream kind of haze, where the pastoral landscape and languor of the dying summer permeate his voice. The magistrate has a visitor from the capital, Colonel Joll, to whom he proudly relates wonderful scenes, like a quaint local spectacle where fishermen "carry flaming torches and beat drums over the water to drive the fish towards the nets they have laid" (1-2). The magistrate sounds more like a visitor's center employee. When he awakes before dawn the next morning, he soliloquizes: "From the sky thousands of stars look down on us. Truly we are here on the roof of the world" (2). The magistrate understands his realm

as peaceful and lovely, where a learned public official like himself devoted to serving the community can see out his days in quiet.

However, Joll has arrived with one intention: to get the ‘truth.’ Joll reveals that the Third Bureau (or CIA-like body of Empire) is convinced that barbarians from the north and the west of Empire are uniting to launch a total assault. In order to ‘justifiably’ engage in preemptive measures, Joll is out to get his evidence, which he will torture out of barbarians he captures. The magistrate is restless at the prospect of Joll torturing the barbarians currently being held in the frontier town on prior charges of petty theft, and he attempts to cleanse himself of his present by daydreaming scores of contingent presents where he cannot be complicit with Empire:

If I had only handed over these two absurd prisoners to the Colonel... if I had gone on a hunting trip for a few days, as I should have, a visit up-river perhaps... if I had done the wise thing, then perhaps I might now be able to return to my hunting and hawking and placid concupiscence while waiting for the provocations to cease and the tremors along the frontier to subside. (10)

The magistrate argues that “the *wise* thing” [my italics] is to avoid recognizing the Colonel’s immoral practices when, on the other hand, his profession requires that he correct society’s moral aberrations within the law-court. The magistrate lacks the fortitude to deal with this morally compromising situation and as a consequence, he refuses to read into his situation by daydreaming up contingent realities. These early developments in the novel pressure the magistrate’s tendency to daydream in ways that further illustrate his habit of reading his present according to an increasingly outmoded idea of himself. However, the magistrate is indeed a man of conscience, and he eventually though reluctantly reacts fittingly: “For a while I stopped my ears to the noises coming from the hut by the granary where the tools are kept, then in the night I took a lantern and went to see for myself” (*WB* 10). The consequences of such instances, where the magistrate acts upon a nagging sense of conscience, will increase in degree as the novel progresses.

Feeling the compiling guilt from his associations with the Empire, the magistrate obstinately engages in old hobbies expecting they shall distract him and fulfill him. Unsurprisingly, he finds that these activities have lost their former zest. For example, the magistrate goes on amateur archeological digs at the site of ruins outside of town. Based on yet another daydream, the magistrate wants to feel something mystifying while he stands in the site and imagines himself to be standing inside where a courthouse once stood over the seat of where some past forgotten

magistrate once presided. Then he quiets himself as if to supplicate an oracle: "I sat watching the moon rise, opening my senses to the night, waiting for a sign that what lay around me, what lay beneath my feet, was not only sand, the dust of bones, flakes of rust, shards of ash. The sign did not come" (*WB* 18). Here, the magistrate projects an idea from his present into the ruins of the past, thereby reimagining the past, and then waits for a sign to magically reaffirm his projection by transforming the ruins' sand and bones into something more meaningful. In order for the ruins to do such a thing, the magistrate must rely on signs to divine their significance. But signs are ceasing to exist for the magistrate: instead of waiting for them to transform into meaning, he will soon learn to begin reading them. While still in the ruins, the magistrate recognizes his hermeneutic foolishness and chastises himself thus:

Ridiculous, I thought: a greybeard sitting in the dark waiting for spirits from the byways of history to speak to him before he goes home to his military stew and his comfortable bed. The space about us here is merely space, no meaner or grander than the space above the shacks and tenements and temples and offices of the capital. Space is space, life is life, everywhere the same. (18)

The magistrate suddenly considers himself in the third person, and by virtue of his changed perspective sees the ruins *as they appear*. This is a grand step for him, but he oversteps by reducing the ruins' meaning to insignificance or ordinariness. The magistrate's hermeneutic frustration coincides with his compromised moral frustration such that he shackles his capacity to interpret anything. Now his hobbies, but soon even his life will become meaningless. The magistrate's mode of reading is shifting in a painful way to where he is no longer the master of his interpretations.

II.

After Joll has departed on an expedition to capture barbarians, without any prior survival training for the frontier landscape, the magistrate encounters a barbarian girl who must have been kept with the prior bunch. He reasons "[my] eye passed over her; but I have no memory of that passage" (38). She is left nearly blind by Joll's torture and can only see peripherally. He offers her shelter and work so that she no longer has to beg in the town square. Their relationship soon becomes intimate, but in a discomfiting, short-of-sexual way. He bathes her and massages her, watches her undress without fully sexually engaging her: "I feed her, shelter her, use her body, if that is what I am doing, in this foreign way" (35). Though this initially seemed like a proactive step for the magistrate, where he thought he was being anti-imperious, he nevertheless wishes to exercise a degree of interpretive mastery

over the girl and what she means. For example, he thinks he knows how the girl must see him: "When she looks at me I am a blur, a voice, a smell, a centre of energy that one day falls asleep washing her feet and the next day feeds her bean stew and the next day—she does not know" (33). The girl affords the magistrate a further attempt to cleanse himself of his complicity with Empire if he acts contrary to Joll. The girl will nevertheless interpret him in a way contrary to how he reads himself.

In another attempt to evade confronting the situation he is embroiled in, the magistrate leaves on a hunting trip, where he has an experience similar to the one among the ruins:

With the buck before me suspended in immobility, there seems to be time for all things, time even to turn my gaze inward and see what it is that has robbed the hunt of its savour: the sense that this has become no longer a morning's hunting but an occasion on which either the proud ram bleeds to death on the ice or the old hunter misses his aim; that for the duration of this frozen moment the stars are locked in a configuration in which events are not themselves but stand for other things[...]

'Never before have I had the feeling of not living my own life on my own terms,' I tell the girl, struggling to explain what happened. (45)

It seems that the magistrate is granted that elusive kind of hermeneutic revelation where he sees what is beyond the things seen. But the magistrate *does not see beyond*, he sees what is, and in the moment of perceiving the exactitude of his and the buck's circumstances in relation to the fullness of the consequences contingent between them both, he experiences some kind of beyond where "events are not themselves but stand for other things." This new vision frightens the magistrate because he knows he utterly lacks interpretive mastery — the terms by which he mediates this experience are somehow no longer his own. This means that the magistrate cannot convert his experience into terms that are meaningful to him. He knows what this experience implies, i.e. the consequences present within the moment, but he struggles to experience the event fully, so to speak: he cannot make inferences, analyze or make the experience mean anything to him, so he cannot hermeneutically engage in and fully experience the hunt. Mysteriously, the event just is. While he may have been cognizant enough to notice something different about the hunt, he could not engage in the ceremony-like process because he cannot describe or put into terms just what the process means to him. The girl, on the other hand, responds startlingly, in a way that challenges the magistrate to act more responsibly: "I do not see," she says. She shakes her head. 'Didn't you want to shoot this buck?'... 'If you want to do

something, you do it,' she says very firmly. She is making an effort to be clear; but perhaps she intends, 'If you had wanted to do it you would have done it'" (45). The magistrate grammatically revises the girl's statement into the *pluperfect* tense, and by making the past have some continued relevance to the present, he salvages the semblance of his potential to act. But that is not what the girl said. The girl reads his situation to mean that he did not act because he did not have the will to, and she is right: the magistrate's revision of her statement shows that he resists her reading.

Torn by the eventual realization that his adoption of the barbarian girl is itself an imperial gesture, the magistrate resolves to deliver her back to her people. The expedition is grueling: horses freeze to death, food is scarce and members of the expeditionary force lose faith in their leader, who seems to have developed suspicious sympathies with the barbarians. The magistrate sees her off and never sees her again throughout the novel. Upon the force's return to the frontier town, they are arrested and the magistrate is brought to his office, where a young lieutenant sits behind his desk. The lieutenant wastes no time reading the magistrate: "'You have been treasonously consorting with the enemy,' he says," to which the magistrate replies joyously, given that he has found a new way to interpret himself: "My alliance with the guardians of the Empire is over, I have set myself in opposition, the bond is broken, I am a free man" (90). However, it is not as though the magistrate reformed his ethico-political stance through an act of moral defiance: rather, he adopts the lieutenant's understanding of him as if it was his own and then proceeds to interpret his oncoming incarceration relative to this new understanding. The magistrate abdicates from his responsibility to know himself in favor of how the lieutenant knows him. The loss of his interpretive mastery will quite literally turn the magistrate into a prisoner. All the while, this progression of his moral redefinition to its current status as an enemy of the state coexists with this new mode of reading, within which he reinterprets himself based on how he is read. The lieutenant further reads to the magistrate reports filed by his own men:

[He] gave orders for myself and two other men (named) to prepare at once for a long journey... It was only after our return that we understood that his purpose had been to warn the barbarians of the coming campaign... The girl returned to her people.

He was besotted with her, but she did not care for him. (97)

At this point, the magistrate must confront how others have gossiped about him and misread him, and he must do so in the confines of the makeshift jail cell where the barbarian girl was tortured. He tries to maintain that he will justly emerge from his incarceration, but he finds

it difficult to live in the shadow of others' misreadings of him and further finds it difficult to live in complete solitude. In the confinement of his cell, the magistrate is at last fully stripped of all his interpretive mastery and becomes a prisoner to others' interpretations of him. His reputation as a "treasonous consort[er]" has been officially documented in the form of reports, rumors of his failed tryst with a barbarian reduce him to a pathetic traitor — history in its many valences is in the process of interpreting him without his consent. But in the confines of his incarceration, he begins a grand transformation within which he starts to see himself *without projecting an idea of himself, such that he can see himself as he is* — as in the moment with the buck, the cell now affords the magistrate the opportunity to "turn his gaze inward." His prison cell is a space where he reassesses his own significance in light of the readings of others that haunt him so. But the cell is an even further recapitulation from the magistrate's story: unlike the scene at the ruins where the magistrate *imagines* the history of the site, which he thinks will reveal something about his own existence, he instead must engage in an explication of his significance in a room where he *knows* the history of what terrors have transpired there. He must read himself in a room haunted by Joll's torture of the barbarians.

III.

The magistrate desires anything over which he can reestablish his interpretive mastery, and perhaps goes crazy in the process:

...I am not taking easily to the humiliations of imprisonment. Sometimes, sitting on my mat staring at three specks on the wall and feeling myself drift for the thousandth time towards the questions, *Why are they in a row? Who put them there? Do they stand for anything?*... Then I respond with movements of vertiginous terror in which I rush around the cell jerking my arms about, pulling my beard, stamping my feet, doing anything to surprise myself, to remind myself of a world beyond that is various and rich. (98)

The magistrate no longer invents or imagines narratives to give meaning to that over which he speculates. As a responsible reader, he admits that there is not much to contextualize the specks' significance, so they remain meaningless. Moreover, the meaningless material he is left to interpret in a way mirrors his diminishing self-worth: he colludes his sense of himself with what he interprets the room to mean. However, he is developing a humbling ability to confront and embrace his newly diminished significance given his current situation:

The truth is that I am not myself, I have been terror-stricken... I

walked into that cell a sane man sure of the rightness of my cause... but after two months among the cockroaches with nothing to see but four walls and an enigmatic soot-mark, nothing to smell but the stench of my own body, no one to talk to but a ghost in a dream whose lips seem to be sealed, I am much less sure of myself. (110)

His confinement allows him the time to realize that he is not who he thought he was. He understands himself as reduced to the stature of his cockroach-infested surroundings, where his body is but a stench and his dreams present him with mute ghosts. The magistrate's new understanding of himself as a reduced man also shows the magistrate's reduced capacity to interpret. Though he attempted to set himself counter to Empire, initially reacting with joy to that sense of new-found character, he soon found that he could not sustain himself solely on the dream of justice, and he allowed the reality of his confinement to yet again break how he read himself. He has been reduced to rumors and government documents and he begins to understand the validity of these reductions through slow, painful and lonely recognition. Soon, though, the magistrate will be reduced by even more awful and gruesome means.

IV.

Colonel Joll returns from a raid with a new batch of barbarians — they are lined up in a row and a thick wire is strung through their palms, into their mouths and once again into their other palms so that they must move hunched over in unison to avoid further pain. The magistrate joins the crowd forming in the town square around the strung barbarians. Joll has knelt them down and has written "ENEMY" on their backs with charcoal. He then devises a game whose objective is to strike the backs of the barbarians with a cane until "ENEMY" is wiped clean. The community joins in this sick, live propagandistic showing. A small girl even has her try. Meanwhile, Colonel Joll's eyes meet the magistrate's. Rather than address the magistrate directly, Joll seems to speak to him through the spectacle. Joll realizes he has the magistrate in his grip and he picks up a hammer, bringing it over his head to signal to the crowd his intention of bashing in a barbarian's skull:

"No" I hear the first word from my throat, rusty, not loud enough.

Then again: "No!" This time the word rings like a bell from my chest...

"You would not use a hammer on a beast, not on a beast!" (122)

The magistrate's protests are met with eager violence by his men: I hear the blow coming and turn to meet it. It catches me full across the face. "I am blind!" I think, staggering back into the blackness that instantly falls. I swallow blood; something blooms across my face, starting as a rosy

warmth, turning to fiery agony. I hide my face in my hands and stamp around in a circle trying not to shout. (122)

This is the magistrate's first act of moral courage. He reads the situation, understands himself to be an ethical component in whether or not this atrocity occurs and therefore morally engages himself. As a consequence, he assumes full responsibility for this act when the hammer meets *his* cheek rather than a barbarian's. Back in his cell, the magistrate weeps as uncontrollably as his pain throbs and ceases.

The hammer to his face was only the beginning of the magistrate's torture. They leave him in his vomit without any water to drink for two days, then they shove a pipe down his throat and dump gallons of salt water into him. They make him run or jump rope in the town square while children and peasants watch him, and one day, they dress him in a woman's smock and hang him by his arms from a tree. He has this to say about his torture:

Little of what I call suffering is even pain. What I am made to undergo is subjection to the most rudimentary needs of my body... [My] torturers were not interested in degrees of pain. They were interested only in demonstrating to me what it meant to live in a body, as a body which can entertain notions of justice only as long as it is whole and well... They came to my cell to show me the meaning of humanity... (133).

In attempting to take away the magistrate's humanity, the Empire officials inadvertently give it back. They give it back because the magistrate reads his torture as a new endowment of his humanity. In other words, unlike all else that has progressively lost meaning, his torture is on the other hand quite useful and therefore meaningful. His torture is a "demonstrat[ion]" and a "show[ing]" of "what it mean[s] to live in a body, as a body," which the magistrate takes to mean as "humanity." This is perhaps possible because pain refocuses the locus of knowledge through the body and not through the mind. In the case of pain, the magistrate must know his experience of pain through acknowledging pain through the senses and not through abstractive daydreaming. He understands and acknowledges his torture as the singular excruciating present he owns, and that ownership implies with it new ethical consequences.

In one such haunting scene, the magistrate relates how his torture is a literal explication of himself: "[When] I look at him (the torturer) I see simply the clear blue eyes, the rather rigid good looks, the teeth slightly too long where the gums are receding. He deals with my soul: every day he folds the flesh aside and exposes my soul to the light" (135). The magistrate reads his torture as an explication, or unfolding, of himself. He is interpreting his torture as a revealing of his significance where he

understands how he exists in his world as a body in a present. As in the scene with the buck, the magistrate is fully aware of the consequences of his place within the schema he observes, but in this scene, he has exchanged places with the buck (had the buck been wounded) and thereby fully and actually experiences this experience. The magistrate understands that the torturer is teaching him how to explicate himself, gruesome as that image is. Though the magistrate previously attempted to unfold the meaning of his experiences, he would do so relative to an unexplicated version of himself, thus his hermeneutic frustration. The magistrate's torture is a horrid, unjust punishment that nevertheless makes the magistrate more fully responsible for his opposition to Empire. Therefore, his torture also serves as an explication of a kind of character waiting to surface from within the magistrate. This is a stunning development: the magistrate's ability to comprehend his torture as a process of explication that reveals his soul coincides with his understanding of torture as a kind of moral education, where his torturers "show [him] the meaning of humanity."

V.

Colonel Joll departs on an even grander barbarian raid, but does not return for months. Meanwhile, the barbarians have flooded crops, ruining the year's harvest, and have sent a horse back to the frontier town with a dead and decaying soldier on its back fastened upright to a wooden frame. The magistrate reclaims his office and tries to maintain order. Then one day Joll returns, having lost nearly all his men just by chasing the barbarians in the cold, *à la* Napoleon in Russia. In awful desperation, Joll's men ransack the frontier town for food and supplies and abandon it for safety in the walled capital. Sensing the end is near, the magistrate attempts to compose some flowery written record of his idyllic civilization, but he stops himself short: "Perhaps by the end of the winter," I think, "when hunger truly bites us, when we are cold and starving, or when the barbarian is truly at the gate, perhaps then I will abandon the locutions of a civil servant with literary ambitions and begin to tell the truth." (178) He reads himself impeccably and stops himself from interpreting his history as something it is not. The magistrate has grown in his hermeneutic abilities and can now look to reestablish his interpretive mastery through the gesture of regaining the office of the magistrate. Likewise, the magistrate has grown to become a responsible official whose moral growth despite immense adversity was vindicated by the beaten and retreating Colonel Joll.

To conclude, *Waiting for the Barbarians* tells the story of a man who learns to read himself responsibly, and in so doing he also becomes a morally aware person. To do either requires that he leave the pleasure

domes of his romanticizations and permit himself to be confounded by interpretive difficulties, which is easier said than done. However, by being confounded and being wrong and being misread and being tortured, the magistrate can start completely and utterly afresh. His progression through modes of reading coexists with his engagements and developments in both his hermeneutics and his ethics. This relationship between reading and morals is paramount to Coetzee's aesthetic enterprise throughout *Waiting for the Barbarians*, where Coetzee illustrates that his novel's aesthetic quality inextricably bonds itself with the content of the novel. To develop a fuller understanding of the novel's problems in addition to the relationship the novel connects between hermeneutics and morals requires looking at the ways the magistrate reads himself, given that reading himself is his sole narratorial condition throughout the entirety of *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The development of his moral fortitude relative to his more responsible hermeneutic modes is far more than coincidental, but is stunningly deliberate and quite genius. The novel, then, is an application of how one cannot cease to mediate that which he lives through interpretation by stylizing the magistrate's existence into a conventional kind of first-person narration. Though the magistrate never ceases to narrate himself, he must begin learning how to read his narrations.

Finally, the magistrate reads himself one last time, in an eerie, near-metaphorical way, fully aware of his condition within his own interpretive schema. He continues reading himself seemingly aware that he is reading himself as a kind of character in a scene within his literary and narrative mode of mediation: "This is not the scene I dreamed of. Like much else nowadays I leave it feeling stupid, like a man who lost his way long ago but presses on along a road that may lead nowhere" (180). This is perhaps where the magistrate's learning begins, where he rebuilds his mastery, walking away from the scene he did not dream of, wary of what his future will mean.

The Frame

Man's expansion entails enframing.
Dead center, an abortion facility,
Squat, grey-brown, a careless configuration of colored rectangles,
Like an old woman who never in her life gripped a man with passion,
The color of her shawl as uninteresting as she.
The neighborhood was nice in the fifties,
If it ever was.
Sheer mass draws me to the construction next door.
My eyes roam the great grey structure,
Soon to be offices, waiting rooms, operating wings,
Each space divided from the others, bounded.
Yet here we see the ancient emergence of teleology,
Of systems within systems constrained and thus
Transcended. The lines draw my eye upward
To the great yellow cranes. Which is essentially
First, I wonder? The machine or the bird?
A relative catches my eye in the foreground,
A Great White Heron: head pulled in, yellow legs
Stretched languidly. Far in the back,
A Southwest jet makes a slow diagonal,
Bringing the eye's journey to Consummation.

Where the danger is, there lies the saving power.
Later that day I walked into a long building
Atop a hill, it's middle bowed,
As a weakling trying to do pushups.
From far behind it the green light of Dallas crawled toward me.
On the first door I saw within: Human Resources.
And so have we become.
But remember the paradoxes.
To bring the ring to the Mountain of Doom,
To bring the king to the Place of the Skull,
Is to free oneself from the frame, the chains, the Cross.
And in techne is the reflective cure of the technological.
We become vigilant in our leisure,
And we create in the bringing-forth of art,
Art not as an economic sector,

But as the revelation of Le Dejeuner,
Where lines draw us through the red paradise of flowers,
Past the peaches, parasols, and hazy light
To the lady in white.
In the painting Monet enframed the world and himself.
And this way is well,
For it follows that ancient master
Who first framed the world by Himself
And then framed Himself in the world,
In the womb, in the shop, on the Cross.

Kelly Anderson

Vino (Aqua Vita)

—a blue-red haze and a dizzy madness,
dancing to an uneven step. Rythmic pulsations through the pressure
of the earth
rising up through the balls of unsteady feet.
Mothers have left their children and the whole world wanders,
drifting in and out of the Bacchian night. Fruit up above, held high in
exaltation,
in celebration of the divine—

I remember well the first time that I saw a grape on a vine, hanging
heavy with ripeness.
I remember the first one that I picked,
how I held it in my hand for an instant

—gasping for air, the dark red haze. Through the streets of the mad
the world is growing madder, insane with desire and anger,
collectively bound
to harry and hate, to spurn what it shall find. He stumbles through
the streets,
a weight on His back, growing heavier heavier as, drunk on what they
do not know, searingly sober in a way that they cannot convey, cannot
understand,
they clamour about Him and in their own haze press Him sharply
on—

felt the weight of it in my palm, the balance between my fingers,
the roll of it, so perfect and round.
After an instant, I crushed it carefully
with what was almost regret

—the god has come, the God has come
Tear the flesh tear the flesh rend it and hold
The dripping figure up high—

In the aftermath I waited, breath held,
expecting to see darkness in my skin,
to watch, transfixed,
as the scarlet stain crawled, accusing,
across my guilty palm

—Hold the goblets up to catch the red drops as they fall—

But instead I was surprised to find that the liquid ran not red
But clean, and clear.

Daniel Fitzpatrick

Stoicism, Spinoza, and Christianity: The Resolution of Tensions in Stoic Thought Through Revelation

Stoicism posits a number of seemingly paradoxical tenets. It preaches the importance of detachment from the world yet recommends a robust engagement with it. God's providence rules everything, yet apparent evils continually manifest themselves. Again, God guides all, yet man's actions are attributable to him. These propositions concerning God's providence, the evil in the world, and free will present difficulties which seem unanswerable in the Stoic system. These tensions seem born of a kind of common sense, though, that common sense whereby men of all civilizations and all times have detected the presence of the divine and have intuited the human power of free will. This common sense underlying the hastily erected scaffolding of Stoic thought has echoed sonorously through history, and the weak points in it have been bolstered and abandoned by later schools. Early Christians adopted Stoic philosophical standpoints, 17th Century Christian theodocists utilized Stoic ideas, and a kind of Stoicism pervades the modern mechanism born

of Spinozistic natural atheism. The placid Stoic stream naturally rose up into the impossibly powerful flood of Christianity, though it was also later diverted into the useful but uninspiring reservoir of Spinozism. By means of a brief exposition of Stoic cosmology and its implications for free will, I hope to demonstrate that Spinoza's adoption of Stoic notions to some extent adulterated them and that the transition from Stoicism to Christianity arose naturally out of compatibility on two main points: belief in a praiseworthy, providential God, and an ethical system founded on free will and its attending assignment of personal responsibility.

The Stoics, as all Greek and Roman schools after Aristotle, sought a sort of ataraxia or unperturbedness. Whereas the Epicureans did this by completely excluding the possibility of ultramundane influence, the Stoics argued that God guides all events in the most appropriate way. They posit two cosmic principles: a passive one, which is "unqualified reality or matter;" and an active one, which is "the reason inherent in the matter or God" (SVF II, 300). In this sense, the Stoic God seems less similar to a true deity and more akin to the Aristotelian immanent form, that which causes a thing to be what it is. Stoicism also identifies God as a sort of creative fire or *pneuma*. Eusebius relates, "Zeno said the fundamental substance of all existing things is fire...and the principles of fire were matter and God" (SVF I, 98), while Augustine says that "the Stoics thought that fire... was both animate and intelligent...that it was in fact God" (SVF II, 423). In this way, Stoic cosmology hearkens back to Heraclitus and other pre-Socratic thinkers, and its God seems more material than truly divine; indeed, we must be careful in using the same, unqualified term for God in dealing with Stoic, Spinozistic, and Christian theology. The Stoic *theos* is the active principle which guides the universe providentially, inseparable from that universe except in thought (Lapidge 163). In Christian thought, individual beings, while causally and ontologically dependent on God, are still not identical with God, who is a loving, providential being. Finally, Spinoza's God is not a thinking, providential, loving being. He simply is; everything else is a necessarily existing mode of His infinite substance.

All the same, the Stoics do not always give perfectly concordant views, and their descriptions of God seem sometimes Spinozistic, sometimes Christian. Take, for instance, Seneca's statement that "the whole universe which contains us is one, and is God; we are His associates and His members" (SVF II, 637). Lapidge also identifies nature and God in the Stoic system, arguing that *physis* and *theos* are equivalent (164). In this, Stoic theology sounds eerily like Spinoza's famous description of the world: "*Deus sive Natura*" (Preface, Part IV). While for Spinoza the things in the world are not necessarily identical with God, as

Seneca seems to indicate, Nadler claims that in Spinoza's system, "[o]utside of Nature, there is nothing, and everything that exists is a part of Nature and is brought into being by Nature with a deterministic necessity." The Stoic system also contains the rudiments of the modern mechanism which took root in Descartes and blossomed in Spinoza. As Cicero says, "[I]f there were a man whose mind could discern the inner connections of all causes, then surely he would never be mistaken in any prediction he might make" (SVF II, 944). Spinoza argues similarly that "all things are from the necessity of the divine nature determined to exist and to act in a definite way" (Ip.29). Modern mechanism as propounded by Laplace agrees with this assessment (Pepper 208), and it often dispenses with the notions of God and free will.

This dismissal of the loving God and free will are symptomatic of the different attitudes motivating Stoic and Spinozistic thought. Despite their similarities, Todd argues that the Stoics differ from the materialism of Spinoza in that their God plays a cosmogonical, as opposed to merely a material, role (156). The Stoic God undertakes an actual creative process, albeit a determined one, at least for the early Stoics, one which produces the exact same world after each conflagration (Saunders 93). This still deviates from the strict necessity governing creation in Spinoza's system and arising from God's infinite set of infinite attributes. A more important difference, indeed the most important difference, obtains in the attitude each system takes to God. Stoic theology contains elements of religious awe and piety. Cleanthes sings: "O God most glorious...Nature's great King... who by the just decree controll'est all" (149). The "Hymn to Zeus" utilizes the honorific language which might be found in a Psalm. Spinoza does not consider God something worthy of awe or praise, and his mechanism denies free will. How can there be awe and praise, good and bad, in a world where there exists no logical possibility of anything else, where everything, including the most astounding natural events and human beings ourselves, is simply a mode of the infinite substance that is God?

This attitude toward divinity suggests a closer alliance between Stoicism and Christianity than Spinozism. For Christians, God underlies all things, yet He cannot be identified with His creation. The Stoics are somewhat unclear on this subject of identification: some like Seneca seem to indicate that God is the world, while the language of Cleanthes suggests a personal God separate from His creation. And that creation, in its beauty and simplicity, demands praise for its fashioner. These differences in conception of God are crucial: Spinoza, in rejecting a providential God, resolves the tensions in Stoicism by eliminating them, while Christianity's embracing of a loving God allows it to retain

the chief Stoic doctrines, derived from common sense, coherently. This Stoic common sense lends their system its force. Their cosmology may serve Spinoza's project of naturalizing divinity well, but their emphasis on free will proves an important link in their natural tendency toward Christianity. In the Stoic universe, Divine Providence guides all events. Thus, the greatest propriety attends every happening. As Plutarch says, "Nothing...rests or is moved otherwise than according to the reason of Zeus" (SVF II, 937c). This providential direction creates strong determinism in the Stoic universe. However, the Stoics were highly concerned to maintain free will, and for good reason. Humans have strong intuitions that their decisions are up to them. Whatever reason might tell us, I still must decide what to eat for lunch each day, where to study, whether to perform rightly or not in each situation I face.

A certain contradiction arises here, though, one which has concerned thinkers both pagan and Christian: if there is a God who is causally implicated in all events, how can there be free will? If God guides all our actions, how can they be "up to us," and how can praise, blame, etc., be attributed to them? The Stoics counter this problem by maintaining that even if one action is determined to occur, others are logically possible (SVF II, 959-60), an argument which later Christian thinkers such as Leibniz employ to preserve free will. Here I am at work in the basement of Braniff. A clock sits on the wall. It is perfectly within my power to take the clock down and smash it. My nature prevents me from doing this, and in that sense I am determined against it; yet the logical possibility of it keeps my free will intact. Moreover, the Stoics assert that, though all events are determined, man may seek ataraxia by assenting to the Divine Reason which governs all events. Man is compared to a dog led behind a cart: he may either follow cheerfully or be dragged miserably, but at any rate he must follow (SVF II, 975). Say a man's wife suddenly dies; this ought not to sadden him. God calls all of us at some time. Why be sad over something which is ordained by a providential God and which does not harm one's virtue? In short, man cannot control all that happens to him, yet he will achieve blessedness in striving to understand and live in accordance with what is right, accepting that everything results from God's will.

Our discussion of free will suggests that, in addition to cosmological similarities, Spinoza maintains some ethical propinquity to the Stoics.

Nevertheless, we shall bear calmly those things that happen to us contrary to what the principle of our advantage demands, if we are conscious that we have done our duty, that the power we have could not have extended itself to the point where we could have avoided those things, and that we are a part of the whole

of nature, whose order we follow (IV, Appendix).

Diogenes Laertius relates that “the virtue of the happy man” lies in “the harmony of the spirit dwelling in the individual man with the will of him who orders the universe” (SVF III, 4). Spinoza claims, similarly, that human blessedness lies in intellectual love of God (Nadler). However, Spinoza does not believe that God wills, and he flatly denies human free will. For him, every action on man’s part is fully determined by God’s nature. And because God’s nature admits of no alternative logical possibilities, there are no such potentialities for humans either. Christians, in teaching that happiness consists in aligning one’s will with that of God, seem to approximate more nearly the Stoic ethical conception of adjustment of human to divine will.

Furthermore, Christianity affirms the Stoics’ support of free will in contradistinction to Spinoza. Leibniz’ system of compatibilism, for instance, allows God to be causally involved in everything but preserves the freedom of man’s will. Indeed, Leibniz claims that a notion similar to the Stoic one of logical possibility of different courses of action pulled him back from the brink of the Spinozistic chasm and allowed him to maintain his conception of a personal God (Nadler 234). Of course, Leibniz does not represent Christianity as a whole. Christians argue that God, though constantly the cause of our existence and presently aware of all of our actions because of His extratemporality, leaves our free will intact that we might freely choose to love Him. Several books might be devoted to a study of the relationship between God’s providence and free will. The important point to consider here is that Christianity, by a combination of reason and revelation, succeeds in coherently maintaining that an all-knowing, all-loving God is causally involved in all events and that man is yet free and thus responsible for his actions. Indeed, the moral teaching of Christ cannot be taken seriously without the reality of free will. If we believe that Christ is God and that God does not demand the impossible of his people, then it seems we must believe that we are capable of carrying out his commands through the exercise of will. It is through this Christian *modus vivendi*, as revealed by Christ Himself, that Stoicism joined itself to the Christian movement.

History demonstrates the amenability of Stoicism and Christianity. As Stoicism entered the auspices of Roman practicality (and thus, later, the sphere of Christian influence), it became more and more a system of life compatible with the Christian one. Jevons notes, for instance, the similarity between the Stoic moral street philosophers and St. Paul (175-6). Christianity provided a theological framework for Stoic moralism, and Stoicism provided a philosophical apparatus for Christian

apologetics. Christians, as Stoics, are detached from the world, travelers in a land not their own, yet called to engage that world for their own betterment and that of others. Epictetus writes of the voyager who leaves his ship for a time but abandons all and returns to the Helmsman when He calls (135), just as Christ calls His followers to leave all else behind and follow Him. The Stoic and the Christian owe allegiance to no one other than the God whose providence directs their lives.

Indeed, without the aid of revelation, the Stoic system seems to offer a way of life ideal for man. Flawed cosmology aside, the ideas that Providence guides all, that we cannot control--and thus should not worry about--changes of fortune, that our happiness is within our power, hold high appeal. Spinoza, through his adoption of Stoic elements, also allows for a fulfilling ethical life for man without a loving God. As Pierre Bayle so boldly claims, a society of atheists is just as capable of morality as one of Christians (Nadler 89). Christianity, however, does not offer mere morality, the best way of life for man, but rather the best way of life for God (Fitzgerald). I have continually referred to the paradoxical tensions one finds in Stoicism; Christianity is a faith based on paradoxes. It is a story in which God can die, in which man lives eternally, where weakness is strength and death is life. Stoicism gives man what is possible for him, Christianity what is possible for Him, as encapsulated in the lines from Auden:

We who must die demand a miracle.

How could the Eternal do a temporal act,

The Infinite become a finite fact?

Nothing can save us that is possible:

We who must die demand a miracle.

Thus the life of Christ provides the key to the consummation of the Stoic striving for security against a world which so often seems bent on man's demise. Christians, through a combination of faith and reason, allow for and embrace God's guidance of all events and free will, for detachment from the world and engagement with it, for safety against any turn of fortune and life beyond death. In Christianity, the common sensical paradoxes of Stoicism are vindicated and clarified, and its eloquent preaching of the good life ending in the finality of death becomes joyful celebration at the prospect of eternal life in the personal God who loves and guides His people.

If Rain were to Turn Crystal

If rain were to turn crystal in the air—
When the dove coos, grey squirrels on the branches stare,
And the sun overwhelms the vernal sky
In silence, glaring through the fetal clouds,
Precipitous with pregnant import—and cry
Diamonds, like graupel, on the muddy ground,
We would want
To read them like some prophetic font—
Some Ezekiel, Daniel, some Isaiah, some John—
To imagine them into the very words we'd burnt
Onto the soiled walls
Of our public bathroom stalls,
And we would grope
After them until all were gone,
Swallowed down like hope,
In the condemned man's gulp, into the soil,
So late deprived of drink. To sacrifice life-liquid
For the Midas spoils
Of commercial-gems would be to rid
The earth of nature—is the earth of man
So grafted to a twisted abandon
Of his imaginings as to be warped
Past nature? When the diamonds fall
And litter the furrows like sterile seeds, twinkling sharp,
There shall be no crop and the barefoot boys' feet
Shall bleed. The vengeance complete,
The imagination shall overdose itself, if all
The rain were to turn crystal.

She Chose the Reddest

Most people would say it was an apple,
but some—in dark corners of the world—
tell of a pomegranate that was our undoing.

She must have plucked the reddest and marveled
at how difficult it was to detach
something so weighty from so frail a twig
and tried to bite, but the skin
was thicker than calluses or scars.

She had not wanted the serpent
to tell her how to eat it. So next,
she tried clawing through, mixing
in the soil from her planting.

She tested the cartilage, expecting honeycomb
but instead received ash and wax. Quickly,
she spat it out. She noticed the beads
of flesh, catching the light like jewels.
Nimble, she plucked the reddest out.
She put it on her licking tongue and bit,
and the sand in the center got caught
in her molars, so this too she spat.

She wondered if to be as gods
was like this, making such fine distinctions
between what is serviceable and what
must go back into the ground.

Like this, he found her, eating from
the ragged fruit cupped in her palm
and spitting to her side. Here,
she said, and he slid his hand forward
so that they shared equally.

Careful. There is an unpleasantness
inside. It has to be rid of. Wordlessly,

he began eating and spitting.

Afterward, they looked at each other's stained
mouths then worked their way down
and noticed their bodies in the shade, and
the eviscerated pomegranate caught
the shadows in its crevices and enclosed
them in shabby skin, even when the two
of them had dropped it and fled.

They fled, and we kept running, stopping
only long enough to build homes with fences
like honeycombs. Inside, we rest,
spitting out what we inhale,
trying to plant something not all callus or scar
or will drip like wax or catch like dirt
and require more plucking. We resign
ourselves to eating our bowls of shadows in quiet.

The University Scholar

Mary Bloch

Tree in Color
ink on mulberry paper
2012



