

Kentucky Studies

# The Journal of Kentucky Studies

Editor Gary Walton

Northern Kentucky University

#### **Contributors**

The *Journal* welcomes articles on any theme—art, commentary, critical essays, history, literary criticism, short fiction, and poetry. Black and white photography is also accepted. Subject matter is not restricted to Kentucky. All manuscripts should follow the University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, be double-spaced, and be submitted in triplicate with S.A.S.E. Please include e-mail address.

The *Journal* is published yearly by the Northern Kentucky University Department of English. Statements of fact and opinion are made on the responsibility of the authors alone. All articles and other correspondence should be sent to: Northern Kentucky University, Gary Walton, Editor, *The Journal of Kentucky Studies*, Department of English, Nunn Drive, Highland Heights, Kentucky 41099. Phone (859) 572-5418. E-Mail: waltong@nku.edu

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White Horse With Another





# Kentucky Studies





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# The Journal of Kentucky Studies

# Acknowledgments



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## **Contributors**



**Wendell Berry** is an author of novels, short stories, poems, and essays. His books of fiction include *Andy Catlett: Early Travels* (Shoemaker & Hoard, 2006); his nonfiction books include *The Way of Ignorance and Other Essays*, (Shoemaker & Hoard, 2005). His latest book of poems is *Leavings* (2009). Wendell is also a farmer in Port Royal, Kentucky.

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**Carrie Green** earned her MFA at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana. She received a 2005-2006 Artist Fellowship from the Louisiana Division of the Arts and a 2009 Individual Artist Professional Development Grant from the Kentucky Arts Council to attend the Atlantic Center for the Arts in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. Her poems have appeared in *Gulf Stream* and *ABZ: A Poetry Magazine*.

**Katerina Sloykova-Klemer** is the author of the bilingual poetry book, *The Air around the Butterfly* (Fakel Express, 2009), and the English language chapbook, *The Most* (Finishing Line Press, 2010). Her poems have been published in the US and Europe, including *The Louisville Review, Margie, Adirondack Review* and others. Katerina is the founder and leader of poetry and prose groups in Lexington, Kentucky. She serves as Deputy Editor in Chief of the English language edition of the online magazine *Public Republic* and hosts *Accents—a Radio Show for Literature and Culture*.

**Turner Cassity** died in 2009. His most recent books were *The Destructive Element:* New and Selected Poems (Ohio UP, 1998), Devil & Islands (Ohio UP, 2007), and Under Two Flags (Scienter Press, 2009).

**Bobbi Dawn Rightmyer** is a poet and freelance writer from Harrodsburg, Kentucky. For the past 15 years, she has had a monthly essay column in *Mercer's Magazine*, and for the past two years, she has had a weekly book review column in *The Harrodsburg Herald*. She has had three essays recently published in the book, *The Women of Mercer County*, and she has five poems and one essay to be published in the upcoming *Speaking Out, Volume II*. She was recently an honorable mention in a contest from *New Southerner Magazine* and her essay will appear in the spring edition and the fall anthology.

**Phillip Howerton** is an English instructor at North Arkansas College in Harrison and is co-editor of *Cave Region Review*, a regional journal of literary and visual art. His

poetry has appeared in a variety of publications, such as *Potpourri*, *Modern Haiku*, *American Tanka*, *The Mid-America Poetry Review*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Chain Journal* and is forthcoming in *The Hurricane Review*, *The Foliate Oak*, and *Plainsongs*.

Ron Watson has had poems appear in the *New Mexico Humanities Review, South Dakota Review*, and *Zone 3*, among others. Chapbook publications include My *Name Ain't Bud* (Pygmy Forest Press, 1991); *Pagan Faith* (Nightshade Press, 1992); *Counting Down the Days* (Pudding House Press, 1994); and *A Sacred Heart* (Redneck Press, 1994). He is a past recipient of an Al Smith Fellowship for Poetry, awarded by the Kentucky Arts Council, and lives in Madisonville, Kentucky, where he serves as editor for *The Mad Hatter*, an international journal of creativity for pre-college students, and where he works as a resource teacher for the Hopkins County Schools.

**Matthew Haughton** was born in Boulder Colorado. Early in his life, his family returned to eastern Kentucky where his lineage stretches back over a century in the region. A graduate of the University of Kentucky, his poetry has appeared in *Kentucky Monthly Magazine*, *Still: The Journal*, and *The Heartland Review*. Haughton works as an artist and educator in Lexington KY.

**Rebecca Gayle Howell** is a poet, translator, and documentarian. Her poems and translations have appeared in or are forthcoming in *The Massachusetts Review, Ecotone, Connotation*, and *The Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, and her documentary work had been collected in *Plundering Appalachia* (EarthWise, 2009) and in Arwen Donahue's *This is Home Now: Kentucky's Holocaust Survivors Speak* (UP of Kentucky, 2009). She is also the author of *The Hatchet Buddha* a chapbook by Larkspur Press. She teaches the BFA program at Morehead State University and is an incoming fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA.

**Frederick Smock** is chairman of the English Department at Bellarmine University, in Louisville. His poems have appeared in *The Hudson Review*, *The Iowa Review*, and many others. His new book is *The Blue Hour* (Larkspur Press).

**Travis Du Priest**, a native of Virginia, attended the University of Richmond and received a Ph.D. in 17th century English Literature from the University of Kentucky, where he also studied letterpress printing with master printer Carolyn Hammer. His articles on Eudora Welty and Elizabeth Maddox Roberts, as well as his own creative short fiction, have appeared in the *Journal of Kentucky Studies*. He has published four chapbooks of poetry and two scholarly works on 17th century writers and has been a featured poet in the *Kentucky Poetry Review*. In 2007, he was the inaugural Clay Lancaster Residential Fellow, writing at "Warwick" on the Kentucky River near Salvisa. He is currently working on book on his Huguenot ancestors and on a series of poems entitled "Poetic Post Scripts." He lives with his wife, also a UK graduate, in Racine, Wisconsin, with their dog Buster.

Rhonda Pettit recently completed *The Global Lovers*, a poetic drama that explores sex slavery and consumerism, and that had its world premiere at the 2010 Cincinnati Fringe Festival. She has published two books on the work of Dorothy Parker, *A Gendered Collision*, (2000) and *The Critical Waltz* (2005), and served as a poetry coeditor for both volumes of *The Aunt Lute Anthology of U. S. Women Writers* (2004 and 2008). A recipient of writing fellowships from the Kentucky Foundation for Women, the Kentucky Arts Council, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Hedgebrook,

her poetry and critical essays have been widely published in print and online journals. She is a professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Cincinnati Raymond Walters College, where she teaches creative writing and literature, often using topics related to international human rights.

**Sarah Wylie A. VanMeter** is manager and representative for the James Baker Hall Archive of Photographs & Films, and assisted Hall in the darkroom for many years beginning in 2001. She is a filmmaker - she co-created the film, *Elbow of Light: A Film on James Baker Hall* (2010), with Whitney Baker - an artist, and a teacher who lives in Lexington, Ky.

**Frank X Walker** is a Danville native, and the author of five collections of poetry, including the recently released *Isaac Murphy: I Dedicate This Ride* (Old Cove Press). He is the founding editor of *PLUCK! The Journal of Affrilachian Arts and Culture*. A founding member of the Affrilachian Poets and a Cave Canem fellow. He currently serves as Associate Professor of English at the University of Kentucky.

**Gray Zeitz** is the owner of Larkspur Press, where he publishes hand-made books, in Monterey, Kentucky.

James B. Goode recently retired from the University of Kentucky Community College System as Professor of English and is presently Professor of English on the faculty of Bluegrass Community & Technical College in Lexington, Kentucky. He most recently was a visiting professor of English at Changsha University, China. He is an award winning author of six books and has published numerous poems, short stories, and essays in magazines such as South Carolina Review, Huron Review, Ball State University Forum, Journal of Appalachian Studies, Appalachian Heritage, Journal of Kentucky Studies, and Kentucky Monthly. He is currently a candidate for a M.F.A. degree in Creative Writing: Fiction at Murray State University.

**Maren O. Mitchell** has published poems in the *Red Clay Reader*, *The Richmond Broom*, *The Arts Journal* and *Appalachian Journal*. She has taught poetry at Blue Ridge Community College, Flat Rock, North Carolina, and catalogued at the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site. A lover of origami, she has taught in four states. With her husband and two cats, she lives in Young Harris, Georgia.

**John Cantey Knight** is a past winner of the Pirate's Alley William Faulkner Creative Writing Competition for poetry, the *Louisiana Literature* Prize for poetry, the *New Delta Review* Eyster Prize and the Langston Hughes Prize for poetry. His latest book is called *Body into Earth: Poems by the Signs* (iUniverse, 2009).

**Glenda Barrett** is a native of Northern Georgia. Her essays have been published in *Woman's World*, *Farm and Ranch Living*, *Rural Heritage*, among many others. Her poetry has been published in *Red River Review*, *Mindprints Literary Review* and *Nantahala Review*. Her first chapbook entitled *When the Sap Rises* is being published by Finishing Line Press.

**Jane Stuart** lives and writes on a farm in W-Hollow, Greenup, Kentucky. Her books include *Journeys: A Book of Poetry* (Summit Poetry Press, 1998) and *Cherokee Lullaby* (Big Easy Press, 1995). She has published recently in *Bellowing Ark*, *The Poet's Pen*, *Candelabrum*, *Pegasus* and *Trestle Creek Review*.

**Raymond Abbott** lives in Louisville, Kentucky. For much of his life he has been employed as a social worker, most recently working with severally mentally ill adults in Louisville. He is the recipient of many awards for his writing, including the Whiting Writers Award; Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts; Al Smith Fellowship; Kentucky Arts Council. He is currently at work on a novel, a contemporary story, set in Kentucky.

**Walter Lane** is a controversial Appalachian social commentator. His first person stories about resisting authority, moon shining, dynamiting fish and cockfighting have made him a person of interest. His style of writing is called redneck chic.

Harry Brown teaches in the English Department at Eastern Kentucky University. He has published some three hundred and fifty poems in various magazines, including Southern Humanities Review, Poem, Kansas Quarterly, Kentucky Poetry Review, and many others. He has published several collections of poetry, including Paint Lick Idyll (Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), Measuring Man (Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), Ego's Eye (Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), and Everything Is Its Opposite (Edwin Mellen Press, 2001). His latest collection of poetry is Felt Along the Blood—New and Selected Poems (Wind Publications, 2005). He has received the Mary Anderson Senior Fellowship at the Mary Anderson Center for the Arts and has been a fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. He has also been poetry editor for Scripsit and The Chaffin Journal.

**Sharon Talley** is an associate professor of English at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi. Her scholarship centers on U.S. Civil War literature and culture, including articles on Louisa May Alcott and Ambrose Bierce. Her books include *A Student Companion to Herman Melville* (Greenwood Press, 2007) and *Ambrose Bierce and the Dance of Death* (U of Tennessee P, forthcoming).

**Bob Douglas** is a professor in Geography at Gustavus Adolphus College. St. Peter, Minnesota. He has published in many journals related to geography as a disciple including *Journal of Geography*, *Antipode*, *Georgia's Coastal Illustrated*, *Journal of Sport Geography*, and *Geoscience and Man*.

**Vickie Cimprich** lives in Northern Kentucky. *Pretty Mother's Home—A Shakeress Collection* (Broadstone Books, 2007) was her first poetry collection. "Shade Vines," a poem from that collection, was included in the Spring 2010 *Seminary Ridge Review*. "Seven Little Portions," stanzas about Francis of Assisi, will be reprinted from the 2008 For a Better World in the upcoming *Journal of Franciscan Colleges and Universities*.

**Robert K. Wallace** is Regents Professor of English at Northern Kentucky University. His most recent books are *Thirteen Women Strong: The Making of a Team* (UP of Kentucky, 2008) and *Douglass and Melville: Anchored together in Neighborly Style* (Spinner Publications, 2005). A resident of Bellevue, Kentucky, he enjoys walking the nearby Dayton floodwall.

**Frank D. Moore** was born in Traveller's Rest, Kentucky (Owsley County) in 1936 and died in Santa Fe in 2005. "Night Singer: The Collected Poems of Frank D. Moore" was published by Cyndell Press is 2008. A new chapbook of poems will appear this year.

Mary Ann Taylor-Hall has published two novels, *Come and Go, Molly Snow* (W.W. Norton & Co., 1995) and *At the Breakers* (UP of KY, 2008). Her short fiction has

appeared in many literary quarterlies, including *The Paris, Kenyon* and *Sewanee Reviews, Ploughshares* and *Shenandoah*, and has been anthologized in *Best American Short Stories*. A collection of her short fiction, *How She Knows What She knows about Yo-Yos* (Sarabande Books, 2000) was a ForeWord Magazine Book of the Year, and she has published a collection of poetry. *Dividing Ridge* (Larkspur Press, 2008). She was the recipient of an Al Smith fellowship form the Kentucky Arts Council and has twice received fellowships in fiction from the National Endowment for the Arts.

**W. S. Merwin** is the author of more than 20 volumes of poetry, 8 volumes of prose, and 22 volumes of translations, and was named U. S. Poet Laureate in 2010. His last three books of poems were honored with major literary awards: *The Shadow of Sirius* (Copper Canyon Press, 2008) won the Pulitzer Prize, *Migration* (Copper Canyon Press, 2005) won the National Book Award, and *Present Company* (Copper Canyon Press, 2005) was awarded the Library of Congress's Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry. He lives in Hawaii, where for the past 30 years he has worked to transform a former pineapple plantation into a refuge for native plants.

Whitney Baker is a poet, painter, and filmmaker living in Central Kentucky. *Elbow of Light* (2010) is his first film.

**Normandi Ellis** is the author of six books—three works of fiction with roots in Kentucky and three works of nonfiction focused on her travels and studies in ancient Egypt. Her most recent book *Fresh Fleshed Sisters* (Wind Publications, 2007) was a Kentucky Book Award Fiction Finalist. Two books on Egypt are slated for 2011: *Remembering the Divine Within: Writing Spiritual Autobiography* (Inner Traditions) and *A Field Guide to the Egyptian Mysteries* (Red Wheel/Weiser). She and her husband David Hurt operate PenHouse Retreat Center for writers in northern Franklin County.

**Chris Green** is an associate professor of English at Marshall University. He is author of *Rushlight: Poems* (Bottom Dog Press, 2009) and *The Social Life of Poetry: Appalachia, Race, and Radical Modernism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), which won the 2009 Weatherford Award for best non-fiction book about Appalachia. He has also edited *Coal: A Poetry Anthology* and is working on *Appalachian Literature: A History* for the University Press of Kentucky. A Lexington native, he studied with James Baker Hall from 1988 to 1991, and he feels Jim's blessings everywhere.

**Dan Shope** is an assistant professor of Sociology at Murray State University. His research interests include Race, Class, and Gender, Environmental Studies, Medical Sociology, Urban Sociology, Popular Culture, Sociology of Music, and Appalachian Studies. He is currently working on a book manuscript that examines how Appalachian commercial glass workers in Huntington, WV developed coping mechanisms to deal with massive job loss in the 1990s. He has taught sociology classes at Bowling Green State University, Marshall University, and Morehead State University.

**Ryan Reed** is an adjunct English professor, English Department graduate assistant, and aspiring freelance music critic/journalist with degrees in English and Journalism. He is currently a contributor to PopMatters.com, where he reviews albums, reviews concerts, and interviews musicians. When he is not working, listening to music, writing about music, writing other things (poetry, unfinished screenplays), or spending time with his wife, he can be found writing and recording music of his own. He currently resides in Williamsburg, Kentucky.

**Charles Daughaday** is a professor emeritus at Murray State University's English Department. He has published numerous literary studies and creative writings. Earlier this year, he published a volume of short essays and original poems entitled *Gatherings and Losses* which passionately argues for the value of a humanistic education in our complex and problematic world of today. He is currently working on a second volume, tentatively entitled *Selected Literary Essays and Poems*. He resides with his wife, Lillian, in Graves County, near Farmington, Kentucky.

**Arwen Donahue** is the author (with photographer Rebecca Gayle Howell) of *This Is Home Now: Kentucky's Holocaust Survivors Speak* (UP of Kentucky, 2009), and co-author of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Oral History Interview Guidelines*. Her essays and reviews have appeared in *The Women's Review of Books, Kentucky Humanities*, and elsewhere. She lives and works on her family's farm in Nicholas County, Kentucky.

**Dennis Saleh** has a new poetry mini-chapbook, *Journals* (Choice of Words Press, 2009) and a new feature on the Internet, "Blueprints of the Gods," at *medusaskitchen. blogspot.com*, six poems, photo, and bio. Two of his collage series, *Accretions*, #11 and #12, will be the covers for *Blackbird 10*, due 2010. He also has poems in two forthcoming poetry anthologies, *Reeds* and *Solace in So Many Words*. In 2011, he will be Featured Poet in an issue of *Psychological Perspectives*, with both poetry and prose.

Ann Harding has worked as a reference librarian at the Campbell County Public Library and Northern Kentucky University (along with several other positions at the University). She received her bachelor's degree from Wittenberg University, where she took an Appalachian Semester at Union College in Barbourville, Kentucky, and has held a special love for the people and culture of the mountains ever since. While at the public library, she enjoyed giving presentations on the Pack Horse Librarians of the WPA, 1935-1943. She completed her M.L.S. at the University of Kentucky and, since the illness of Merlin, her dog, necessitated her return to full-time employment, she has worked in the NKU Department of English as a secretary.

**Karah Stokes** has published poems in Kentucky State University's *The Kentucky River* and other literary magazines. Her original song, "The Mourning Cloak," was recorded by Laurie Lewis and The Right Hands, a bluegrass band based in California, on its 2006 release *The Golden West*, and saw airplay on XM Radio. She is a professor of English at Kentucky State University.

**Marguerite Bouvard** is the author of five books of poetry including, *Healing: A Life with Chronic Illness* (UPNE, 2007) and *Prayers for Comfort in Difficult Times* (Wind Publications, 2004). She is a Resident Scholar with the Women's Studies Program at Brandeis University.

**James Baker Hall** was a prolific writer and a visual artist, publishing widely in both arenas. His books include *Pleasure* (Scroll Press, 2007), *The Total Light Process: New and Selected Poems* (UP of Kentucky, 2004) and *Tobacco Harvest: An Elegy* (UP of Kentucky, 2004). In 2001, Hall was named the Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. He died on June 25, 2009 in his home outside Sadieville, Kentucky.



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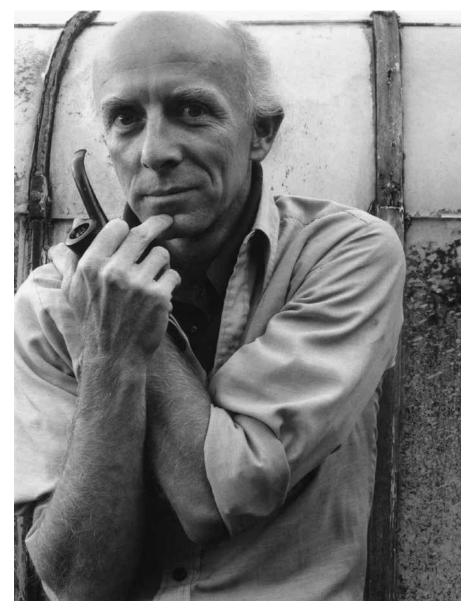
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# A Festschrift for James Baker Hall (1935-2009)

Edited by Rhonda Pettit



# James Baker Hall (April 14, 1935-June 25, 2009)



James Baker Hall, Rochester, NY, 1978

c. 1978, Kelley Kirkpatrick

# Rhythms of Experience: An Introduction by Rhonda Pettit

Rain had been predicted for the tri-state area, but it hadn't reached Blue Ash, Ohio, where I'd spent a long day working on, among other tasks, a promotion file. In fact, the sky there was clear except for the shades of rose and gold offered up by the setting sun. As I headed south on Interstate-71 toward home, toward Kentucky, I could see from the top of the Kenwood hill the storm line below. The contrast was ominous and beautiful. It was the kind of moment that James Baker Hall had taught me to—not notice, but *take in*. I have been doing so, or trying to, for more than twenty years.

I descended the hill, crossing the storm's border, moving from dry to wet pavement, from light to darkness. But no rain – the storm had moved east. About that time I received a phone call from Ann Merritt, a friend who had taken several of Jim's writing workshops with me in the 1980s. She was calling with the news: Jim Hall had died.

\* \* \*

This image has never left me. Late afternoon, autumn 1982 or so, the plaza outside the University of Kentucky Patterson Office Tower and Whitehall Classroom Building, crisp air, low and golden light. Through it strides a thin man in jeans and a hat, carrying a thin leather satchel and a brown paper bag masking a gallon jug of Gallo red wine. White styrofoam cups poking out of somewhere. Long strides, spine and shoulders a perfect T, blue eyes far beyond. Determined. Who he? Where he go? What he after? Is James Baker Hall a Poet on a Mission to Save the World through the Minds of His Students and Their Writing and His Own Poems and Fiction and Photography, or What? I follow to Miller Hall. I argue and resist. I open and learn.

\* \* \*

Sometimes the 1980s seems like The Lost Decade, an era of Reagan policies, yuppie kingdoms, and social conservatism. Too often I felt out of place, out of touch, meaning: the soil (or soul; choose your preferred vowel) was ready for transformation. Jim's writing workshops were an essential part of that process. When Ann Merritt took a workshop without me, we met so I could find out everything Jim was teaching. Sometimes I caught up with the workshop I wasn't taking at High on Rose, and Jim generously included me in the after-workshop beer & conversations about writing, as he did with any of his former students who were serious about their work.

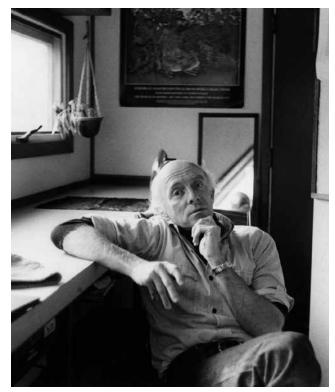
The pedagogy of teaching and learning is a major force in universities and colleges today. The field is full of scholarship and theories, full of good intentions and assessment tools with which to measure success and failure. But there is nothing like the journey one takes with a teacher who is himself on a journey, using craft and knowledge about the tradition for fuel, ears and eyes for rudder. And no way to convert that kind of learning into numbers on an assessment rubric—unless you want to count the number of Jim's students who went on to become published authors, artists, teachers, and university professors. "You, the caretakers of literature," he called us in his graduate poetry seminar.

\* \* \*

Jim exuded an energy that said: There is plenty of work to do. It's time to get on with it.

\* \* \*

This special section is designed to demonstrate and celebrate the work and life of James Baker Hall, as well as serve as a starting point for future readers and scholars of his work. It gives Jim the first and last word about his work, opening with a portfolio of his poems and photographs, and closing with the last poem he wrote, "The Spirit



James Baker Hall
Used by permission, James Baker Hall archive.

Stays." It is also somewhat framed by the last two interviews he gave, both with Arwen Donahue, which chronicle among other things his development as an artist and his relationship to Buddhism and the poet W. S. Merwin. The most complete to-date bio-bibliography of primary and secondary sources regarding Jim's writing, photography, and films, compiled by Sarah Wylie A. Van-Meter, appears early in the section, rather than at the end as might be expected. The reason: it is as much a testament to his career as it is a source for scholars. The need for additional scholarship about his work is also part of the story in which Jim Hall

lived. Critical and personal essays, as well as poems honoring his memory by Wendell Berry, W. S. Merwin, Frank X Walker, Frederick Smock, Mary Ann Taylor-Hall, Gray Zeitz, and others round out this project.

We solicited these items via a Call for Papers sent to Kentucky colleges and universities, distributed at the 2009 annual meeting of the Kentucky Philological Association, and sent to other individuals and groups we thought might be interested. We had no idea what we would receive, so it was amazing to discover the extent to which items spoke to and echoed each other. First one, then a second poem using the image of a horse was received, followed by Sarah Wylie's recommended cover photograph, by Jim, featuring a horse. We had W. S. Merwin's poem\* dedicated to Jim and Mary Ann Taylor-Hall before we knew that Jim's last interview focused on Merwin. Yates Paul, His Grand Flights, His Tootings is discussed in an interview and a critical paper, and Music for a Broken Piano comes up in two brief essays, one personal and one critical. The issue of censorship hovers above an interview, an essay, and two poems, one of them Jim's "The Approaching Sky." The portfolio includes two poems that are analyzed in a critical paper. None of this was planned or is merely coincidental. We seem to be dancing. The spirit stays.

\* \* \*

Jim Hall's photography documents and explores. His work overall ranges from early sports journalism, to documentary and portrait photography, to art photography and photo-montage. He photographed horses and cows, twigs and leaves, nudes and tobacco, people he knew and loved. With shifts of light, line, color, focus, and composition, he captured not just an image, but the moment of and behind it. His close-ups leave room for the viewer to explore further, to look beyond. Compression and expansion simultaneously.

Jim was long fascinated by picture/word combinations. He taught a class on the subject at MIT in the early 1970s, and in 1995 published A Spring-Fed Pond, which combines his photographs of five Kentucky writers with their words. So it seems appropriate to give back in kind, to include a portfolio of Jim's photographs and poems in combination. We have offered an arrangement of our own, but follow Jim's advice in A Spring-fed Pond: "... move the words around and about among the pictures, and watch and listen to what happens."

What do the documents here collectively tell us about James Baker Hall? He was appreciated in Kentucky where he was born, raised, and then educated at the University of Kentucky (and later Stanford). He was part of the UK era that produced Wendell Berry, Gurney Norman, Ed McClanahan, and Bobbie Ann Mason, but his voice and orientation were distinct from theirs. He was a southern writer for whom interior regions, not geographical ones, were the focus. He published six books of poetry, three novels (one of them an epistolary novel in verse), and four books of photographs. He filmed and produced two art films. His poetry and fiction appeared in prestigious journals: Poetry, Paris Review, American Scholar, Kenyon Review, Field, Southern Review, Sewanee Review, Hudson Review, Denver Quarterly, and the New Yorker, among others. John Frederick Nims, Thomas Pynchon, Joseph Parisi, Gerald Stern, and Richard Tillinghast are among those poets and editors outside of Kentucky who admired his work. His photographs appeared in books, anthologies, journals, and exhibits. His work garnered several awards, including the prestigious NEA Fellowship in Poetry, the O. Henry Prize, the Pushcart Prize, and a Wallace Stegner Fellowship. He was named the state's Poet Laureate in 2001. Versatile and prolific are two words that come to mind. He tapped the power a form or genre had to offer without being restricted by its rules. Yet if his work has yet to receive the broader appreciation it deserves, it is nevertheless here. People who need to experience it are everywhere.

\* \* \*

To this day, when I need to have a serious conversation about a poem I am reading, writing, or teaching, I have it first, in my mind, with Jim Hall.

\* \* \*

It is no accident that many of the authors in this special section of the *Journal of Kentucky Studies* are Jim's former students ("Jim" always; nobody knew a "Professor Hall"). When it came to literature and art, Jim was a rare earth magnet, a 12-volt battery. We were drawn in and charged. He would read our work, and listen to our conversation, and know when we were lying to ourselves, know when we were blind to how our unacknowledged pain was bleeding us of insight and compassion. And he would tell us. He spoke of craft and discipline; honesty and focus; integrity, imagination, and rhythm. "The writer trapped in his or her hurt can't imagine the lives of others, and thus can't write," I wrote in my journal following one of his classes. As he was working his way out of such entrapment, creating *The Mother on the Other Side of the World* and *Orphan in the Attic*, he was showing us how it's done. Showing us the way. Not telling. Showing.

\* \* \*

Where to go from here? My guess is that Jim would much prefer a poem about anything to a critical paper about his work, but an informed analytical exploration about his writing and photography is long overdue. His work, combined with the documents collected here, suggests a number of roads to thumb. What does it mean to be a "Kentucky" or "southern" writer in light of Jim's poetry and fiction? Is his rejection of the regional approach a kind of southern postmodernism? What other postmodern elements are found in his work? What might a comparative analysis of Jim's writing with that of other Kentucky writers—of his or previous generations—yield? Jim's approach to nature compared with that of his close friend, Wendell Berry, or his connection to the pastoral tradition could be explored. What constitutes Jim's poetics as demonstrated by the poems themselves, and his comments about them? How has his poetry changed over time, and what are its phases, its use of voice? What might his poems teach us about writing poetry? Can lines of influence from the poets he read be traced? (I think of Whitman, Dickinson, Stevens, Eliot, Merwin, Glück, but there are others.) What is the role of feminine imagery in his writing? (Notice all those moons!) Motifs of light, memory, seeing, and the passing of time also should be investigated. How do autobiography and craft interact in his poems in contrast to those of other lyrical poets? How do these elements work in his fiction? A focused analysis of his fiction, generally, is needed. How might we understand his use of written imagery in light of his work as a photographer and filmmaker? How can we understand his photography and films? What role does humor play in his work?

The poetry of laughter. In the workshop, Jim was Serious and Intense. Art was nothing to make light of. But as the semester proceeded, as you attended his readings, as you watched him in conversation with others, another side emerged. When wit beckoned, Jim would erupt with his strange, deep, bellowing laugh, a monosyllabic "Huh! Huh!" combined with glee that trailed off like tires on a gravel road. Glee! How did he manage to combine vowel sounds from opposite ends of the frequency spectrum?

\* \* \*

No doubt the contents here will trigger additional memories and connections of readers who knew Jim, thus linking these pages to a broader script. For example, I was struck, in his November 18, 2008 interview, by his recognition of the negative influence of patriarchy on his family story. It reminded me of the time in one of his workshops (early 1980s) when he and other, ahem, "gentlemen" of the class questioned the poetic quality of Adrienne Rich's feminist, anti-patriarchal poetry. The "approaching sky" of Poetry & Politics had enveloped us.

Patience. Humility. Silence. Discipline. Listening. Observing. "Meditate without judgment, without expectation," I wrote in a journal after a Jim Hall workshop. Who among the cell phones, lap tops, I-pads, I-tunes, and X-boxes, among texting, twittering, and Facebook, teaches this now? How?

\* \* \*

From one of my journals, after one of Jim Hall's workshops: "Experiences have rhythms. You're not deep enough into the experience if you haven't gotten in touch with its rhythm. Rhythm is related to voice." Yes—and death has a rhythm.

Some deaths encapsulate others, bring home to the mind persons who, for different reasons, were just as important in their own way as the life just passed. The singular loss can bear light on the whole of which you are a part—you see it and feel the weight of it from within. In life, the instant you have comprehended this kind of loss, you have already begun to move beyond it. But in art, as Jim taught it and lived it, you dwell there long enough to create. After the poem, the book, the exhibit, you move on, but "the spirit stays."

\* W. S. Merwin provided the poem "Variation on a Theme" to be read at the memorial service for Jim Hall in Lexington, Kentucky on July 11, 2009. The poem was not available for publication in this issue, but an earlier one from Merwin's volume Travels is included.

# A Portfolio of Photographs and Poems by James Baker Hall

The James Baker Hall Archive of Photographs and Films represents over fifty years of Jim's image-making.\* It is clear, through careful notation of the many sleeves of negatives we have, that Jim was very rarely without his camera. *His* fascinations were people he knew; the nature that surrounded his house in Sadieville, Kentucky; Paris, France; and the history of his family. These subjects run through many of his bodies of work, and his method of working evolved many times over his decades as a photographer, which allowed him to revisit photographs from earlier periods and utilize new techniques to articulate his deepening vision.

Jim's earliest photographs are portraits of people he knew and respected. Because they were all writing students at the University of Kentucky together in the late-50s, he took many photographs of Wendell Berry, Bobbie Ann Mason, Ed McClanahan, and Gurney Norman. Beginning in the mid-60s, and continuing for the rest of his life, he photographed a number of writers—Larry McMurtry, Bob Holman, William Merwin, Louise Glück, Ai, Gerald Stern, and Maurice Manning, among many others. These photographs show a deep connection to the person, and great commitment to the medium. Relying on natural light and the available surroundings for background, they generally bend toward documentation with casual staging of person and place, and at times reveal the influence of his friendships with photographers Minor White, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Bob May, and others.

He worked primarily in black & white portraiture until the mid-80s. By this time, Jim had been making Super 8 films for several years with a lot of dedication. He was shooting with the eye of an experimental filmmaker, which is something like extreme observation, and using the fields around his new home in Sadieville, Kentucky, as the subject. He said that while watching the films with Mary Ann he would want to make the moving images stop, and so he took up still photography again, beginning a series he called Nature Pictures. Dreamlike and cinematic, they are like nature happening but stopped in time. Many of the photos record movement with slow shutter speed and soft focus.

Around the same time, in the late-80s, Jim began sorting through his family's history, particularly as he found it represented in the family album of his childhood. He began using reproductions of the images he found there, which he cut into paper dolls, re-photographing them in more and more intricately staged three-dimensional arrangements. He called this body of work *Orphan in the Attic*. It shared some of the

character of the nature pictures—muted color, shallow focus, movement—but these images are weighted by hindsight and revelation.\*\*

Jim continued to work on nature pictures and the Orphans through the late-90s and early-2000s. Around 2001, he began renting a large warehouse space in Lexington, which he made his photo studio. The space was big enough to accommodate a traditional darkroom, a portrait studio with lighting and backdrops, and a digital printing lab. Jim put all these pieces together: he would sprinkle and paint photo developer on exposed black and white paper resulting in one-of-a-kind calligraphic prints. These prints were scanned, then printed digitally in large sizes with a lot of white space around them. He mined his own vintage black & white negatives to find images suitable to be treated this way. At the same time, he was making new studio portraits of friends and writers and making prints like this out of them. Bodies of work such as A Spring-Fed Pond: My Friendship with Five Kentucky Writers and Appear to Disappear came from this time.

Around 2004, Jim turned his attention back to color, which opened his vintage color negatives back up to him, and he began making new portraits with color negatives. He scanned the prints and digitally manipulated the images into boldly imagined color-scapes. When he revisited nature pictures in this way he called them Creatures; when he revisited Orphans in this way, he called them Elegies. The image, *White Horse with Another*, which appears on the front of this journal, is a Creature picture, from this last season of his work.

Examples of all Jim's bodies of work may be seen on www.jamesbakerhall.com.

#### -Sarah Wylie A. VanMeter, with Mary Ann Taylor-Hall

- \* Jim began making photographs at age eleven, when he worked for his cousin Mack Hughes, a commercial photographer who had the UK sports account. He was paid in darkroom time and use of materials. It was during this time that he was introduced to the idea that he could be an art photographer because of the art magazines that his uncle subscribed to. Jim's work from his youth was not saved, and therefore The Archive's earliest negatives and prints date from the late-'50s.
- \*\* Because these are all made in color, no images from this body of work appear in this essay.



**Shawn, on Bed** photograph by James Baker Hall



**Shayla** photograph by James Baker Hall

# The Family of Man Resides in the House of Philosophy

When the six year old asks the ten year old why he keeps opening and closing the stove on his grilled cheese sandwich, the ten year old answers by asking the six year old why he keeps spreading butter on his bread, and when they keep asking one another those same questions over and over, the parents get into it, asking them over and over why they keep asking one another those same dumb questions—

and

it is decided finally that nobody has the slightest idea why he does anything—

which seems

to make them all feel a lot better, so they shut up for a while, and eat.





**Boy in Cape** photograph by James Baker Hall



Ralph Eugene Meatyard

photograph by James Baker Hall

## That First Kite

in memory of Ralph Eugene Meatyard

That first kite was made of newspaper and strung with fish line. I was lying next to it, alone. Sunlight in the bright shape of a window, X-ed once with the shadow of the sash, moved

slowly across the floor toward me. A way had to be found

to make it work. We were trying. All this took place in the attic where the cat brought the birds.

My mother was downstairs or out back in the cornfield with a gun.

I didn't move. Who knew where my father was. Nothing ever worked. I kept my eyes closed

whenever I thought I was asleep or flying. I awoke

when I felt the light touch my feet, perfect, still.

I didn't move. When it touched my eyes I opened. The crosshairs were on my chest, breathing. I saw my heart. A cold wind rattled the kite.



Paris, Les Croixes

photograph by James Baker Hall

# The Maps

All those years he was married, frequenting the map stores. The eight quadrangles surrounding the house in which he lived and worked, he saw them in relief; he pinned them over his desk like messages, justified. He spent long hours studying them. He fell in love

with maps. At night he would lie on the couch with his hands, in the dark, memorizing the mountains. He would lie on the floor in his son's room. in the moonlight, the maps between them. His hands loved the waters, an island at a time. His voice loved distances. At some point he quit, I quit

calling myself he. I fell in love without maps. I carried everything I thought I needed in the back of a truck or in a knapsack, I spent night after night lost in the darkness, huddled on a beach somewhere, or asleep on a stranger's floor. It took years. I had to go all the way

to the white undersides of the leaves before I knew when my own veins were shaking, in the dog's ears, in the wind,

and it could occur to me, more often now, that I need nothing. That I can, even yet, quit calling myself anything.



# Stopping on the Edge to Wave

photograph by James Baker Hall

# **Organdy Curtains, Window,** South Bank of the Ohio

I lived the whole time with my hands cupped to the open eye, the light advancing like a flock of turkeys. If the shadow of the catalpa touched

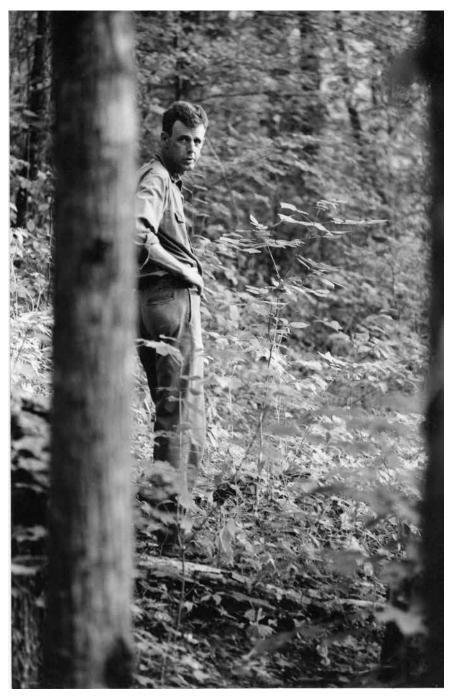
the sun wall of the house at 3:30 I waited several minutes and entered behind it, branching out slowly,

respectful of such a broad expanse of white, of silence, the one small window, a mother's hand, that once, at the curtain. I knew when to look head on, when to squint. Things happened, beginning with her,

the way things happen on a clothesline, flashes of this or that against the sky, colors, faces, lips moving, snatches of faces -

Then suddenly no wind at all. Light hangs in the organdy, south bank of the Ohio, I don't remember the year. I can tell by the way my protective hands move which eye is open, how vast the orphanage of silence, how still each blade of tall grass. Once inside I am alone

briefly, hanging here, in the light.



Wendell Berry in Clearing photograph by James Baker Hall

## **Old Places**

-for Wendell Berry

When the sun reaches the flat rock on which the cat sleeps the heat dreams her. It's as though she is remembering something. She stands up and changes

shape. On the margins of the yard gnats fly out of the tall brown grass

brushing the light. The cat stretches as she enters the shadow of a tree, pulling her last leg in slowly. She crosses the yard as though it were her condition

to change shape with every move. She moves through the shadow of a tree as though it were within her, slowly.

She is the only thing This is the only world Each time she moves

it's as though something further is remembered and brushed away. I'm in Kentucky, early August, Harrison County. A mile and a half down the road,

in an old place between two ridges, there's a pond. The slopes around it are dry, pocked with the hoofprints of cows. The light is flat, unrelenting, threatening

to slap, again, anything that moves. The older a place is the more ways it has

not to move.
The cows are there, some
in the water, dreaming themselves.
They are black. Already their legs are gone. Even
their tails have stopped moving. The longer they
stand there
the blacker they become. This is only the world.
Sometimes they are not there at all.

It's as though they open all the way to the end of something and I follow them

until I cannot move





**Mad Farmer** photograph by James Baker Hall

# **Spring**

I was all up in the eyes when the sun fell upon me shutting me down in the pupils Light and dark became my sudden work I'd been there before among the names of several things I took the closest new firepole of air and spun downwards When I reached stability again the crocuses had arrived Were moving Some one color Others another



**Winter Bush** photograph by James Baker Hall

## In the Middle

The wind comes back. She sits at the table, all the doors open.

Through the back screen she sees the flat stones step across the yard, the four bales of straw at the garden wall, the striped canvas lawn chair blown on its side under the five elms—the woods on the hillside beyond, glimpses of the next ridge over, hazy.

The wind is in the heavy foliage, a flock

of shadows: it scares up: it settles back: the bells catch it on the other side of the house.

Even in the middle

of the summer she can hear the cold. The wind rises to a slow whistle in the kettle as though it were coming through the walls. At dusk it's the house sitting there in the middle with a cup in its hands, not her.

She can see it

as from the garden: the house cups its windows in the corner as though the light within were always on, signifying most clearly at dusk, palm to palm. She approaches, up the slope, drawn always by the way the windows seem to rise, out of the ground, to eye level, the house kneeling down so that one can look in. The light gathers

its colors from its source, from the rough wood of the walls and ceiling, from the way she sits there at the table in the middle of it as though it were hers, warm, low to the ground, bells in the wind. Fireflies appear under the trees and on the slopes. Cassiopeia rises over the lip of her cup, low in its sky.



**SW Tree** photograph by James Baker Hall

## Where We Wait

If the heaviest creature capable of flight weighs forty pounds, only on the moon will we be light enough to fly.

We have always known that for like any creature heavy with death we are forever trying to forget-

as witness our dreams: when at the moment of flight we try to rouse the loved one to go with us.

It is frightening what she does to me, waxing & waning as though I do not exist.

There is a side to the moon that never shows, but we know that it's there, like grace, in the old dreams of falling



Mary Ann Taylor-Hall photograph by James Baker Hall

### The Fox

the blind side of the hill came through an opening in the trees it opened out into the pasture like light poured from a pitcher we were waiting to see what forms would evolve thus the fox appeared gathering its eyes in to drink over both shoulders and straight ahead everything was gathered in it stopped in front of us as though it saw we were not there not even a body moved where would it go for years we've watched this pasture coming through that opening in the guise of different seasons each with its name it takes our eyes away and brings them back blue and blue and again blue these bodies mouths and thoughts these conditions around them when I am restless I think it must be the fox trying to come back but it's a breath on my face my neck of old my heart beating has come for each thing



**Tombstone Shadow** 

photograph by James Baker Hall

# Time

Here Here Here Need I say more How can I Who could It will be left there in time



Paris, Le Select

photograph by James Baker Hall



**Ai, Face in Hand** photograph by James Baker Hall



# **James Baker Hall**

photographer unknown used by permission, James Baker Hall Archive

# A Conversation with James Baker Hall

(November 18, 2008)

#### by Arwen Donahue

By the time this interview took place, Jim had been ill for some time with rheumatoid arthritis that affected his lungs and hindered his breathing. He was hooked to an oxygen tank and stayed home all the time, except for occasional visits to the doctor. We had planned the conversation to be the first in a series, but we would meet only once more (see page 131).

Bearing in mind Jim's deep concern about the dangers of editing and censoring, I have aimed to edit with a light hand. The original two and a half hour conversation, recorded on audio, is housed in the archives of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky, as is the February 2009 recording. I am grateful to Mary Ann Taylor-Hall for her help and guidance in editing this interview for publication.

As a friend and former student of Jim's, I knew the touchstones of his early life as an artist: his mother's suicide when he was eight years old, his encounter with T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" as an undergraduate. These memories and others had a talismanic quality when Jim spoke of them, charged with intensity and mystery. I approached this interview wanting to explore the landscape that held these touchstones, and connected one to another.

JAMES BAKER HALL: I had an early experience with art when I was eleven years old. I went to work in a commercial photography studio. I was the principal dark room person for several years, and that evolved into sort of anything and everything. There was a supply room that had several boxes and shelves of photography magazines that I got into, and I was at the studio sometimes twelve, fourteen hours a day. When I was there alone, I especially was attracted to these magazines, and I found some pictures in them that meant a whole lot to me—not many, but a few that I got very intensely attached to. And it was an experience of enchantment. The pictures in these magazines weren't of use to anybody except me, and I felt free to take the ones that I wanted out of the studio. There may have been, I'm thinking, a dozen pictures that I would go to for solace, for clarity, for peace, and they had a very important role in my life for several years. There was nobody around to share that experience with. My sister wasn't approachable about much of anything; certainly not something like that. My grandmother wasn't interested. I was living with my grandmother

and my sister. The secretary at the studio would look at the pictures if I wanted to show them to her, but that was it. There was nothing to do with that experience except treasure it, and it touched a part of my mind that I didn't even know was there really: the dreaming part of my mind. These pictures represented a very deep, deeply felt and energetic part of my intelligence that was untouched otherwise.

So I had that experience, and forgot all about it. I was a young athlete and when I was thirteen, fourteen, became increasingly consumed with athletics and then motorbikes and cars and girls. I didn't come back to art until I was in college, and

"It was in an introduction to literature class that we read "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." I'd never heard anything like that before. I'd never heard any of the important sounds that the language of that poem strikes: the candor, the honesty, the directness. I'd never heard a loose tongue before."

I knew at that juncture that my playing days as an athlete were over and that my life was going to go off in some direction of my choosing. There wasn't any pressure on me from my family, which was basically my grandmother. But my father was still alive, at some distance.

They wanted me to go to college but no more than I wanted to go to college, and there was no pressure to be this or that. In my family, everybody was either military or business. I think probably I had some idea of going to law school or—it was all very vague until I encountered "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," which spoke to that part of my mind that had been touched by those pictures early on and released an energy and a power and a force; released my dreaming mind, my passive mind. It gave it a shape, gave it something to be attentive to.

That experience is so enhancing and so enlarging. You go into it a much smaller person than you come out of it, and it's so powerful, undeniable, transforming, exciting, that if you get it deep enough, art becomes really very important in your life. And Eliot led me to this that and the other thing, to many other writers—immediately, of course, to Pound, Wallace Stevens, Hemingway, Faulkner, Fitzgerald—and to painting, not directly from literature but from other influences that were concurrent. I got very responsive to modern painting, and then very quickly back into the history of painting.

**ARWEN DONAHUE:** Were these interests that you were pursuing on your own lead, or was one of your professors or some of your . . .

JBH: Well, these things came to me in classes, but it wasn't any teacher who inspired my interest. There were several teachers. Hollis Summers was the first one. It was in an introduction to literature class that we read "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." I'd never heard anything like that before. I'd never heard any of the important sounds that the language of that poem strikes, the candor, the honesty, the directness. I'd never heard a loose tongue before: I'd never heard soulfulness that's so loud and clear in the language of that poem.

**AD:** Did that have repercussions on your friendships and on your relationships with your family? It sounds like it was such a lightning-strike, sort of burning down what had been built already.

**JBH:** Yeah. It was. It changed my life in a way that separated me from my entire received culture, and family was the basic agent for that.

**AD:** What kind of fallout did that have?

**JBH:** Well, I was left so much on my own from the get-go. My grandmother took over the caretaking of my father's children after my mother's death with great purpose and intent. [She] had been left with the charge, received probably from her own conscience, for sure from her husband on his deathbed, to take care of these children, to raise these children. My father had been discredited as a parent in their eyes, and we were all living together in my paternal grandparents' house when my mother died. So, my seventy-five-year-old grandmother took up the responsibility to raise these two children, and I was, like, eight years old at the time she was seventy-five.

And she hung in there and did everything that she was expected to do. She provided us with order, a place to live, with meals, but after that it was sort of up to us. I had at least two jobs all the time, sometimes three. She would buy clothes if I needed them, but if I wanted this that or another pair of shoes or a suit or a motorbike or a car or something, it was up to me to get it. So I was independent early on as a youngster. When I began to find my own way, it wasn't a conversation going on with the remnants of my family, such that [my family] was changed or distressed by this change in me.

I was born in Lexington, lived out on the Paris Pike until my mother's death and then my grandmother moved into town and I lived in town with her until I finished college, and then I left for the west coast to go to graduate school. And I thought that (laughs)—how to put it, that whatever she felt about me leaving, there was going to be some kind of separation involved, some kind of grief, that she was not going to want to see me leave. But I think she was as relieved as she could be when I said, "I'm going now," because she was worn out and she'd done all she could do.

It was absolutely essential to my well-being, what she did for me. She gave my life order, and she made me feel cared for and loved. So when I left, whenever it was—twenty-one, twenty-two—to go to the west coast, I was then completely on my own. I continued to be in some kind of communication with my father and with his second wife. Until my grandmother's death, I would come back and visit her with some regularity, but I guess you'd say there wasn't any fallout. There wasn't any.

**AD:** You were really free, in a way.

**JBH:** I was free from early on. And my sister never was interested in anything that I was involved in, after I left athletics. There was a really very dramatic public scandal that preceded the tragedy of my mother's death, and we were a very respectable family who had fallen into the middle of this scandal, and my father's scandalous behavior. And [my sister's] response to that was just to focus exclusively henceforth for the rest of her life on regaining respectability, and I didn't care.

**AD:** Was she worried when you started getting interested in literature and truthtelling?

**JBH:** Yeah. (Laughs.) The truth-telling part of it scared my father and my sister.

**AD:** How did that play out?

**JBH:** Well, my first novel [Yates Paul: His Grand Flights, His Tootings] was [about] a kid who was on his own and worked in a photography studio. It was autobiographical in many ways, but Yates lived not with his grandmother but with

his father. It's the two of them in the house together, and the father was pretty inept and unattractive, an incompetent, emotional child. And I thought, well, this book might cause my father some distress. [But] I don't know whether he ever read it or not.

He was, in his Gary Cooper-ish way, withheld, and not technically voiceless, but he had very little to say about anything in my life except to give me such advice as he thought was part of his responsibility to deliver. But I did at some point in my mid-twenties write him a letter. I remember very vividly spending some time writing him a letter asking him to tell me something about my mother. Nobody would talk to me about my mother. I begged my grandmother to, tried to manipulate her into it many times, but she didn't want to talk about my mother. And so I asked my father, I said, "Listen, I don't know nothing about my mother. Would you tell?" And the letter went unanswered. I think I might even have said in the letter, "Look, I'm a writer. I got to know about my mama." You know, you got to know where you came from. I didn't know the story I was in, for God's sakes, and I'm sure that whether or not I said that, surely he did not want me to know the story of my mother because he didn't look so good. He looked like a scoundrel, and when he was off living with another woman and my mother was, in effect, a prisoner in the house of his parents, with the children being held hostage, she killed herself. And he looked like a scoundrel.

The only other thing I remember in particular is I had a story published shortly after the novel was published. I guess I was twenty-six when I wrote the novel and maybe I was twenty-eight [when] there was a story of mine in the Saturday Evening Post which, I remember, he did say he had read. He said, "I read your article." His wife was a reader and she was intensely uncomfortable with my father's children, as you can well imagine. She was the woman he was living with when my mother died, and she was very deeply implicated in the responsibility for that whole situation, of course. But she was a reader, and she and I used to have conversations about reading. She was a great lover of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, and I was a great lover of T. S. Eliot. [Laughs.] The two things represent reading, but of a quite different sort. And I liked her and enjoyed her company, but it, would last only for about ten or fifteen minutes at a time. Then she had to go to the kitchen or upstairs. Maybe she had some kind of generic appreciation of the fact that I was becoming an author. She certainly was likely to have read these things that I wrote, but as you can well imagine, it was all threatening.

**AD:** Was the story in the *Saturday Evening Post* something that was related to your family situation?

**JBH:** No. No. It wasn't an autobiographical story at all.

**AD:** And did your father say anything about it other than that he read it?

**JBH:** No. No. And, I mean, I could make up explanations or descriptions of what all was involved in their silence, but who knows? But art has a central role in my life. It is where I go to have my spirit delivered to me, clarified, enlarged, deepened, enhanced, guided, and it just didn't play any role at all in any of my family members' [lives].

**AD:** Did your granny have any response to this direction that your life began to take?

**JBH:** She just wanted me to (laughs) do anything I wanted to do, and to be a good boy, to stay out of trouble.

She had seen what was in my genes (laughs)—you know, had lived with the horror of it, and she was very, very, very successful as a single parent. And when you look at the fact that she was seventy-five years old when she started, it's quite remarkable what she did. She kept her mind to herself for her own reasons, and she might have understood that she was maybe the only one who was going to tell me what I needed to know about the story that I was in, but decided not to for her own reasons. She couldn't have seen my need to know that, and understood that she was maybe one of the two or three people who could tell me—I mean, I'm talking about *facts*—she couldn't have seen all of that and not risen to the occasion unless she had powerful reasons. You know, she'd been through it once. She was partly responsible for my mother's imprisonment. If it hadn't been for her presence, the children couldn't have been held hostage, so there was a great grief in that story for her. She was a victim, and she also had, I think, a role in it that she was deeply sorry for.

**AD:** You talked about how she was relieved when you said, "I'm leaving." Was the first time that you left Kentucky when you went to Paris?

JBH: Yeah. I was twenty years old. I had money saved from the paper routes that I had had for ten or some years, and I said, "Granny, I'm going to Paris." And I thought she would say, "Oh." [Tone of voiced surprised, perhaps dismayed.] Well... she said, "Okay." I said, "I don't know when I'll be back." She said, "Okay." [Laughs.] And that was remarkable. You know, I thought there would be some kind of trouble in that eventuality for her, and there wasn't.

**AD:** Huh. Well, she was glad to see you spread your wings.

**JBH:** Well, I really couldn't tell you what terms she brought to that turn of events, how she understood it.

There were occasions, I can remember now that I'm thinking about it, when I had a buzz from Edgar Allan Poe, when I was in high school, from "Ulalume" and "The Raven"; Poe's "misty mid-regions of Weir" poems and stories. They spoke to me from a world that I knew, personally; the "misty mid-regions of Weir" [Laughs.] I had grown up in the swamps of, in the middle of, in the miasma of. And I remember once wanting to talk about Edgar Allan Poe with her, and sitting on the hassock in front of her chair where she crocheted. She crocheted the last fifteen years of her life, and worked jigsaw puzzles. I used to love to be around her. She was one wonderful, neat, loveable spirit, and I can remember not showing her the picture of Edgar Allan Poe's home that was in the textbook for fear it would scotch the whole deal, you know. Poe's Baltimore house was a little shack; wasn't respectable at all. It was a distinctly lower class domicile, and thinking that whatever the name Edgar Allan Poe might mean to her would be completely displaced by the shabbiness of the life implied by that picture. I mean, Poe did have a pretty shabby life. But all of the excitements that I had having to do with the inner life, having to do with the dreaming mind, were my private experiences. I didn't know anybody who had anything like that going on.

**AD:** Did you have any close friends before you got to UK?

**JBH:** Yeah. I had plenty of them, but they were athletes and girlfriends.

**AD:** Did you maintain those friendships after you encountered . . .

**JBH:** No. There was a very significant and dramatic split at that point. I went off in a direction that none of my high school friends were interested in or responsive to or understood in any way that allowed our caring about one another to continue.

With most people that I had grown up with, that I was still in the same town with, and some of whom I was going to school with, there wasn't even any possibility that I would say, "You've got to read this poem. You've got to look at this picture. You've got to get interested. You know, let me show you what I'm excited about," because they weren't. They didn't care.

AD: Did they just let you go, or did they ask you, "What's gotten into you?"

**JBH:** Well, they just let it go. I mean, we didn't have to deal with one another, and I was getting prematurely bald at a fierce rate, and there was that. I didn't want to see these old friends because they'd stare at my hairline. Should I be saying this?

**AD:** You say whatever you want to.

**JBH:** I know, but I obviously am saying (laughs) — wondering whether or not I want it part of the public record in such a brief, sketchy form. Okay? Now if this story's going to be told, I ought to tell it, and not have somebody who might listen to this tape pick it up and do what they're going to do with it. (Laughs.)

**AD:** I think anytime you start talking on tape there's the possibility that what you say will somehow be distorted, and that's an intimidating possibility.

**JBH:** Yeah. And taken out of context and made of what the—well, that's the risk. And it is the liability of a loose tongue and of candor, and I seriously have been damaged and distorted and confused and misled and misused and da da,

"Art loosened my tongue for a very good reason, and the list of things that I was taught that you weren't supposed to talk about, and if you were you were supposed to be self-protective and guarded, circumspect about, was long and deadly."

by reticence and edited stories and tied tongues—my own among them—and I discovered, through the agency of an engaged mind, and literature as a guide and art as an aggregate spirit, that I don't want to continue that sort of censorship.

Art loosened my tongue for a very good reason, and the list of things that I was taught that you weren't supposed to talk about, and if you were you were supposed to be self-protective and guarded, circumspect about, was long and deadly. And so I have been at war with that spirit and letter of censorship, as a working artist, all my adult life, and this conversation, which is being taped, is just another manifestation of that. If it was worth saying, if it was important—this business about my premature baldness—as an influence on my behavior at that time, then say it. Name it. Don't hide it.

**AD:** I think that's what was so unique and amazing and wonderful for your students, that you brought us all back to that again and again, recognizing the ways that we all censor ourselves, and the power that gets packed into those things that we censor by virtue of not saying them.

**JBH:** For fear somebody will use them against you. Yeah. I mean, many, many, many lives are fairly seriously distorted and diminished by that kind of fearfulness, and I know what it's like not to show up for your own life. I know what it's like to be ashamed and self-protective. I know it as well as I know anything, and shame has been one of the inescapable givens of my emotional life. I *never* forget it. I know what it's like to be imprisoned by shame, and the fearfulness

that that brings to you; that you can disappear into. It's very easy not to show up for your life, not to take responsibility for it, not to have the ability to respond to it. It's real easy, and whose life is *easy* the friend of? You know? I mean, comfort is the enemy of joy, and there's a kind of nakedness and matter-of-factness that attends a full life that is full of abrasiveness and difficulty. It's a whole lot easier to keep your mouth shut than it is to talk about certain things, and if you want a full life, it's going to be full of regret, shame, hurt, failure, weakness, fear.

**AD:** Those friends who you encountered, did you feel at the time that they were more interested in whether or not you had hair on the top of your head than anything else about you?

**JBH:** Sure. Sure. Of course they were. The way in which you look, your appearance, was the given of your social life, and I don't know that I even knew I had an inner life until art made me aware of it.

That's not true. I mean, of course, I've been talking about ways in which I made a connection to my inner life in the story that I'm telling, but there was no social sanction of it in the culture that I grew up in. There was no interest in it. People did not want to know what your spirit was and how it was faring. I mean, in the language that I grew up with, your spiritual life was something that your church was responsible for, and it was all just formulaic, depersonalized injunctions.

**AD:** Did you go to church growing up?

JBH: Yeah. I did. We were members of the Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church. Granny wanted me to go to church and so I did. I went to Bible school, but it didn't have anything to do with my spirit. And I don't think it had anything much to do with the spirit of any of the people that I knew who were going to church. It had to do with their social respectability, like it was in your best interest as a member of the social set and especially as a businessperson (laughs) to go to church. Certain assumptions were made about your trustworthiness, about your acceptance of the social norms.

**AD:** After the rupture that "Prufrock" represented, did your friendships themselves change?

JBH: Well, I just made new friends. All the friendships that I had had before that were abandoned. I made new friends from the people that I was meeting in school, especially in writing [classes]. Hollis Summers was the teacher of that introduction to literature class that brought me to "Prufrock," but he was also my first creative writing teacher, and his interest in my talent was important to me, and nourishing, and his attentiveness to the early things that I wrote was meaningful, important. And my peripheral conversations with him in his office during conferences and such were important to me, and encouraging, and he was the only working writer that any of us knew, and we cherished Hollis in many ways. I'm talking about Wendell [Berry] and myself, and later on Gurney [Norman] and Ed [McClanahan] and other people who were taken seriously as aspiring writers at that time who had to do with the literary magazine Stylus.

Hollis was important, but he was not nearly, not *nearly* so important as Robert Hazel, who came in to fill in for Hollis when Hollis was on sabbatical leave, and then Robert stayed for six years and became a mentor. Hollis was really good in the classroom. Bob wasn't particularly interested in the classroom, but he was interested in a profound way and in an ongoing way in mentoring, in drawing out, the talent that he saw in his students. He would pick and choose

a few. The few that he picked he would pay a lot of personal attention to, and Wendell and I used to go out and visit him at his house all the time.

I do want to say something on this tape about Bob and about his influence. I'll also start out by saying that I have thought about this with some care, and I have written about Bob with some care. Anybody who wants to follow up on it and have it in a much clearer, more thoughtful and discerning way, should look up an essay that's called "Robert" that I wrote several years ago.\*

Hollis, the first writing teacher, was the son of two Presbyterian ministers, I think, and was a very kind, gentle, decent, absolutely decent and very gifted man, but he was deferential and circumspect and was embarrassed before the ambition that attends most serious artists, could not be brought to think in such self-regarding ways about himself or anybody else, and Robert was the exact opposite. He was a young man, an ex-high school quarterback, and was in the Marines for a while. He prided himself on his looks and athleticism and his manliness. He had lived in New York and been a fan of jazz and came to UK from an editor's job at McGraw-Hill; considered himself on a first-name basis with all of the artists that he loved, living and dead. Whitman was Walt, Hart Crane was Hart, and so on.

He brought us into the circle of brotherhood and sisterhood that is available to people who are taken over by art. I have no problem at all in feeling very close to Rothko. I mean, I don't call him "Mark," but there are certain artists that I have a very deep spiritual intimacy with, and bond with, and think of with more affection and clarity and indebtedness than [I do] all but my close friends, all but my loved ones. And they *are* among my loved ones.

So Robert brought a bunch of us into the charmed circle of such thoughts and attitudes, and that was transforming. Nothing that Hollis had to offer was transforming, or if you would say that it was, it was only because you didn't know how deep transformation could be, and what being delivered from very obvious provincialism into something larger and deeper—what the consequences of such a transformation would be in your life.

Certainly Wendell and I were very close during those school years and thereafter, and we looked to Bob for confirmation of everything that we wrote, or the lack of confirmation, and we received from him—without being nearly so aware of it at the time as we would become—received a release, a permission, to take ourselves seriously in the brotherhood in a way that was essential to the force and direction of our lives. Bob thought that if you weren't trying to write the next "Wasteland," if you weren't living in literary history in that way, and if you weren't trying to enter literary history, that your basic question then was, well, why not? It's a very glamorous and infectious attitude for youngsters who want to take themselves seriously, who think they've got talent, to lay claims on some role in literary history.

So, Wendell and I were out there all the time, and became very good friends, or very close. We were Bob's chosen students, and then, later on, Gurney and Ed and then Bobbie Ann Mason. We were all at UK at, let's say, the same time, although I didn't know Bobbie Ann. She was a couple years, maybe three years behind. I knew that Robert took her seriously. I got to know Bobbie Ann later on. But there was a community of young aspiring talents under

<sup>\*</sup> The essay appears in the Spring 2002 issue of Southern Quarterly: A Journal of Arts in the South (Vol. XL, no. 3, 27-40).

the guidance of a mentor who took his role quite seriously and who attended to us and prodded us.

Let's say, as an example of his guidance and influence, the fact that he thought we were all provincials—I mean we all were provincials in a very obvious way that we could do something about, i.e. go live in New York. His attitude towards that was to be taken at face value, and it also was emblematic of a larger, more encompassing attitude: get us out of the Kentucky idea of ourselves, into the idea that we were artists, and brothers and sisters at large with artists great and small.

All of that goes down in a fairly unadulterated way with youngsters, and as a very powerful and transforming influence, but there was a kind of *craziness* in thinking of your work in terms of literary history. I mean, Bob was an alcoholic and a seriously damaged man in a lot of ways; loveable, especially by his students, but not what you'd call a good model. He was a loose horse and a drunk, and when he'd get drunk enough, he would coerce his beautiful wife Pat Kacin into saying, oh, what was the line, "Whitman, Crane, Thomas . . . and Hazel." And there was something crazy about that as a frame of reference, about that as a way of thinking about yourself.

Robert's poetry, the best of it, is really very significantly undervalued. His fiction's another matter. I don't think there's anything in his fiction that I want to push people toward, but I think he's deserving of attention he hasn't received. And the poetry, some of it, is astonishing, and he *is* the inheritor of Hart Crane's language and spirit, and maybe to a lesser extent Dylan Thomas's, and [he] left his own signature on the continuation of that spirit. People ought to read his poetry. I think you hear a lot—at least in the circles that we're in right now—about him as a teacher, and not enough about him as a poet.

**AD:** Did you read his poetry at the time that you were a student?

**JBH:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. In manuscript. And he was writing a many-volumed novel about a young hero that was autobiographical and quite absurd, and he was writing two different kinds of poems: one dense, Crane-esque, Thomasesque, and another very thin, minimal, sparse language. They were always in spring binders there in his house, and he would give them to us to read and we would read them and be influenced by them.

There was nothing quite like taking your latest manuscript to Robert and, you know, leaving it with him or sitting there while he read it. He had books that he would talk about, writers that he would talk about. Of course, we read everything that he told us to read, and we had a lot of conversation about what we were reading, what we were thinking.

At this time, many of the poets of interest to us were also men of letters and wrote criticism, and so we were reading, as well as the poetry of Pound and Eliot and Stevens and William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore, the fiction of—well, we'll get off on that list if we want to—but we were reading Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom and Yvor Winters and R.P. Blackmur, Kenneth Burke, [William] Wimsatt—we were reading books of criticism and talking about that.

**AD:** That was near the time that the New Criticism was really coming to the fore.

**JBH:** That was the New Criticism. The single most important book, for probably two generations, was *Understanding Poetry* by Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks. Cleanth Brooks was not a poet, but he was a critic. He wrote a book called *The Well-Wrought Urn* that we all read. He and Warren collaborated on

a book called *Understanding Poetry* that was the standard textbook used in all universities. I say all, I think probably *all*, and probably in high schools, and so it had very wide circulation in our generation of students, and then had a very deep influence on us, which we then carried into teaching.

So it really did have a central life for two generations and maybe longer, in which the way to read poetry was taught to you by Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks, and it involved analysis. The poets that had a leg-up, if you approached poetry in that way, were the poets that you could talk about; the metaphysical poets were very big. Irony [and] paradox were very significant considerations in the poetry that was fostered by that approach. I didn't give up the influence of *Understanding Poetry* or books of Warren, their way of reading, until—God, I was in my fifties, well, maybe before that, before I said, "That's not the way I connect with poetry anymore."

**AD:** What was it about it that wore out?

**JBH:** It tended very powerfully to confuse your thoughts about a poem with the poem, and to favor explanation to experience. We didn't memorize poems under the influence of Brooks and Warren. We weren't taught to listen to poems. We were taught to think about them and to take them apart and then put them back together again, and it was always part of the drill, after you had taken a poem apart and discerned how it worked and the way all the elements were mutually influen-

"It's very easy not to show up for your life, not to take responsibility for it, not to have the ability to respond to it. It's real easy, and whose life is easy the friend of?"

tial, that you read the poem aloud, and this was supposed to be putting it back together again. And that was an insubstantial claim. I mean, it's not so

easy to put a poem back in its own realm after you have . . . .

**AD:** Turned it into a machine?

**JBH:** Yeah. After you have appropriated it, turned it into something to think about and to write about. The way in which "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was approached in the classroom was quite different from the way I ended up related to it. I had to work through all of that. I had to work through the academic overlay in order to get to the poem, and if you are working in a classroom with a bunch of poems, you're obliged to get something out of them, you know? You're going to go to the next class and somebody's going to ask you what you got out of this poem, and your credibility as a participant in the conversation, as a student in the class and da da da, is predicated on getting something out of it. And I don't think you're *supposed* to get something out of a poem. I think a poem is supposed to find something in you, and if that doesn't happen, it's not a poem for you.

The passive mind is *persona non grata* in the classroom, in school in general. The educational establishment cannot distinguish between the passive mind and laziness. You've got to be using your mind, and the part of the mind that you can use is the part of the mind that you can *use*, and that you can pursue with, that you can ferret out, that you can track goals. It's a very powerful resource in our intelligence. I don't mean to diminish it in any way, but it's a *part* of it, and the passive mind is equally important: the dreaming mind, the part of the mind where you're open to things coming to you. When I read a poem, I listen to it and I let it go in one ear and out the other. I deal only with what sticks, and

if something sticks it usually draws me back to the poem. I listen to it again, and if I'm called back to listen to it again then it's starting to be poetry. It's starting to be a poem. It has found something in me.

I'm not saying that I don't think inquiry has a role; that you can't ask questions; that you can't say, "I don't understand what this means. What does this mean?" But I am saying that there's a very limited role for that inquiring mind in the experience of art. You know what I mean?

AD: Sure.

**JBH:** A friend of mine was telling me, [who is] living in New York City and whose daughter is enrolled in a high school of choice for aspiring young artists there, that the first conference that they had with the teacher, the teacher said, "Your daughter's too dreamy. She sits around dreaming all the time." And I mean, yeah. (Laughs.) Most artists do. They sit around daydreaming, and they're very attentive to what goes on in their nighttime mind and the part of their mind where inquiry, analysis is not running the show.

Was inquiry and analysis running the show when you went over to Bob Hazel's house and talked about poetry?

**JBH:** It had a role, but no. As a matter of fact, that's a very interesting question, Arwen. No, it didn't, but we didn't read out loud very much to each other. If you said, "I really like 'Ash Wednesday'," Bob would say, "Have you read what Blackmur's got to say about 'Ash Wednesday'?" Where analysis and thoughtfulness was eloquently laid to the page, but we rarely sat around saying, "What does this mean? What's this got to do with that? What's part two got to do with part one?" We didn't do that.

When I say we, I should try to be more precise about it. I'm usually talking about Wendell and myself, because we conversed on the subject many times over the years and tried to sort out what was invaluable and transforming in Bob's influence on us from what was embarrassing and childlike, childish, crazy, testosterone-poisoned, foolish, at times almost cartoonish. We, in our own quite separate ways, came to be-I don't know what the right word is—confused about Bob. We owed him so much, and tried to act like it. He didn't get tenure at UK, but wherever he was, wherever we were, we stayed in erratic touch and we continued to visit, and he went through one marriage after another in increasing physical deterioration because of his drinking and his aging. We tried to ignore what we didn't know how to respond to, and that worked sometimes. Sometimes it didn't. And tried to stay in touch with what we held dear: Bob's work, certain of his personal characteristics; and tried to keep clean our deep indebtedness to him.

One of Bob's problems was he kept coming on to women of all (laughs) ages and positions, his students included, and I think that his relationship with most women was complicated by a kind of vandalism, a kind of sexual posturing and—I'm missing the word that I want—and maybe that was the case with many of his female students of talent, because the students that remained the most expressive of their indebtedness to Bob were mostly male.

**AD:** Through Bob, you were connected with a lineage of world-class artists, none of whom would have necessarily had any connection with the culture that you came from. Did he have any sense of where you came from?

JBH: Yes. Yes. He prided himself on being from rural southern Indiana. He prided himself on knowing something about country people, country ways of life. And he was a poser, and that caused Wendell considerable embarrassment when he would come to visit Wendell [at his home in Henry County] and act like he knew his way around the people that were around Wendell. It was very often false, and Bob thought that he was a country boy and that that was where he began and got to be a city boy because he wanted to be and needed to be in order to round out his experience. And he never gave up writing about things rural and farming people and rural sensibilities, rural ways of life.

**AD:** What about southern sensibilities? Did you all have a sense of yourselves . . . .

JBH: As southerners? Yes. Very much so. It was the case at that time that southern literature was in its heyday, Faulkner being the principal international southern-American widely-read writer, but there were many others: Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, Robert Penn Warren, Peter Taylor, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and then [James] Dickey, William Styron and others. I'm probably forgetting some people that are on that short list, but southern writers were hot when we were coming on, and that lasted into, let's say, certainly the late fifties, maybe on into the early sixties, then it was displaced by Jewish writers and Jewish subject matter and then that was displaced in short order by black, African American writers and subject matter and then homosexual, gay literature. In the publishing industry, it got to be a kind of a marketing device that a new group was identified. And then the feminists and then da da da, and now it's international writers.

We were identified in our thinking about ourselves very much as southern writers, but not very much with the Civil War. A lot of people who think of themselves as southerners, certainly in my generation, very much identified with the Civil War and with the families that were formed by the war, and the war did not loom large in our southern identities at all.

**AD:** Well, was part of the magic that Hazel offered the ability to give you a sense of connection with that southern literature that you were related to while also expanding it beyond that?

**JBH:** A little, but we had a particular affection for Faulkner that was above and beyond and around the edges of his greatness as a writer, because he was a southerner, and not so much with Robert Penn Warren, or Miss Eudora, or—Carson McCullers is another writer on that short list that I didn't think of. But part and parcel of thinking on the grand scale about all of these things was that nothing so potentially local as regional identification got very far.

Joyce, Eliot, Pound, the French that preceded them, all of these writers were equally important in the realm of our imagination in the brotherhood who of course had no southern connections at all; no southern American connections at all. And there were a couple of other teachers at UK, one especially—Robert Jacobs—who taught southern American literature, and so had taught a course on Faulkner.

And when all of those writers—Bobbie Ann excepted, but Wendell, Ed, Gurney and myself—went to Stanford as Stegner Writing Fellows, and no other school had sent four people to the writing program on fellowship at Stanford, much less bang, bang, bang right four in a row, the assumption was there was a writing program at UK and it was particularly successful. The fact is, there was no writing program at UK. It was Robert Hazel. There was a 207 class called creative writing; there was a 507 class called creative writing. That was it. And I think that Hazel's presence and influence and the brotherhood of those four or five people—or six or seven. There's a couple that were sort of in the same group on a short list, if you had one, that didn't go on to be writers. But

it was the presence of us together that helped each of us. I think that certainly was the case with Wendell and with me. We walked one another up.

**AD:** Was Wendell the first significant friend that you made after that break occurred in your life?

**JBH:** Yes. Yes. Wendell and Bill Pemble—W.W. Pemble, who was the most brilliant at the time of all of the students there at UK, but he was only there for two semesters, I think, and had just gotten out of the coastguard, was twenty-six, was worldly, cynical, and everybody that met Bill thought he was something special; not just as a writer but as a spirit, a traveling spirit. And he was. He was quite unlike anybody else. So he was a friend, but Wendell was the one that I hooked in with, who hooked in with me.

**AD:** Do you remember how that happened?

JBH: Well, we met in a writing class. I remember that. He had a reputation already as the favorite of Hollis. As a writing teacher, Hollis had a very high opinion of Wendell, as anybody would. So he was known to all the rest of us who were in the classes. Wendell was known to me before I actually saw him, but I actually saw him, I remember, for the first time in a class. He was sitting over next to the window, staring out the window with his long leg up on the chair next to him so you couldn't sit close. (Laughs.)

And then we really took up. I started visiting him in Henry County on a kind of regular basis. He'd stay over, and we hung out in town. We exchanged manuscripts. He never wrote anything that he didn't give me a copy of. I never wrote anything that I didn't give him a copy of. We were full of anticipation of the ongoing conversation, passing books back and forth, and that connection continued for years. I was his principal reader for a work in progress for twenty years, and he likewise. I did a lot of very close reading and editorial work on Wendell's early work, and on up through *The Memory of Old Jack*, whenever that was published. I did a lot of cutting on *The Memory of Old Jack*, and argued with him about some things, and he took my advice in the main. I cut a lot of pages out of that book, and then the next one, the Sierra Club book. What was that called? *Culture and Agriculture*.

**AD:** The Unsettling of America.

**JBH:** The Unsettling of America. There wasn't so much that I could do with that manuscript and some of what I did—I didn't do very much—some of what I did, I remember, he didn't take my advice. Maybe some he did. (Laughs.)

**AD:** When he started writing more explicitly about agriculture, did that represent the . . . .

**JBH:** Well, the more he became a polemicist, the more he became an essay writer, the less use I was to him. As a poet and as a fiction writer, I heard very clearly when the preacher came in, usually unsuccessfully, and could help him keep that kind of didacticism, if not out, then tuned-down. But the more he became an essayist, the more he became the author of *Citizenship Papers* and a lecturer, the more empowered the voice of public debate and public policy became in his writing, the less use he had for me. I mean, he can think much more deeply and clearly and inclusively about those matters than I ever could, and I'm not as interested in that language as he is.

We reached a point by the time he published his first *Collected Poems*, we had been at it for twenty or twenty-five years, you know, passing manuscripts back and forth, and we had worn out our usefulness to each other. He knew everything that I was going to say, I knew everything he was going to say, and

we sort of quit listening. And I remember writing him in response to his first *Collected Poems* and saying, "I've read these poems more times than you have over the years, more times. I couldn't be more familiar with this work, and here are the poems that I think are the best, and they're all the singer poems. And here are the poems that I think are messing your work up. They're the preacher poems and the didacticism," and we'd been through it so many times by then, it's like, "That's the last time."

**AD:** Was that dynamic in place between you from the beginning?

**JBH:** Yeah. You could not find two more different people than Wendell and myself; absolutely, fundamentally, oriented differently. He thinks judgment is at the heart of intelligence, and I don't. He receives in order to correct, and I receive in order to get. I don't know how to put it.

We've been, you know, at loggerheads over that from the time we were kids. The arguments that we've had have been fierce, intense, unyielding, ongoing and irreconcilable. I can remember Tanya once listening to us go on. She was in the kitchen with her back to us. We were at the table, and at some point at a lull in the argument, she said, "You guys are the most different" [Laughs.] – "you're the most different people I've ever seen in my life," and she was right.

Part of my value to him was that I would argue with him. He loved the resistance, the clarification that came to his thinking when he had to argue with me. And I didn't. It wore me out. It exhausted me. I don't like to argue.

**AD:** Well, what did he offer to you?

**JBH:** Oh, God. His contribution to my life is *immense* and profound. I mean, he introduced me to nature, for one thing. Being out and about in the natural world with Wendell was just marvelous. He's at his best. He didn't feel obliged to judge nature, you know. (Laughs.) He let the squirrels alone, and he knew stuff, and he was always pointing things out. And I was always looking to see what he was pointing at and

"[Wendell] had an interesting mind, and he had a lot of talent, and he knew what his subject was from the get go. What most of us have to live twenty or thirty years to get in the presence of, he started out with."

getting something from it. I was taught how to be a good boy, and his heritage taught him how to be a good man, and the difference was very significant.

He had this extended family that I

knew, I mean, I knew everybody he knew. He had this neighborhood, all these people around, and he loved them, knew about them, talked about them; I cared about them, I knew about them, I talked about them, I went to see them. He gave me a whole world, a family-centered world. I got to know his father and mother. His children grew up in front of me. And his mentor, Owen Flood, I'd go over there all the time. So he gave me a role in a formed, coherent world, and I was the cherished friend from Lexington. And I knew how to behave, like Bob didn't. (Laughs.) You know, I knew to keep quiet, to speak when spoken to, to listen, and I mean it was no problem. I was privileged to be in the presence of all of that. And still, when we see Wendell, I have a long list of people I want to know about, you know. How is so and so?

**AD:** So he offered you not just a friendship, but a family and community?

**JBH:** Sure. Absolutely. And a literary intelligence that was—he had an interesting

mind, and he had a lot of talent, and he knew what his subject was from the get go. He knew his attitudes. What most of us have to live twenty or thirty years to get in the presence of, he started out with. I mean, I don't like this way of talking, but he knew what he had to say. He knew the stories he had to tell, or wanted to tell. He knew the point.

**AD:** So, did it seem determined from the start when you knew Wendell that he was going to go and write about Port William?

**JBH:** Yes. Yes. He was doing it right, you know, for the classes in school. He was writing about Nathan Coulter and his brother in the stories that we were reading in the workshops. Yeah. There never has been, that I know anything about, such continuity in a person's work from age twenty to seventy-five.

**AD:** Were Gurney and Ed more reverent of Wendell than you were, do you think?

**JBH:** They weren't interested in arguing with Wendell. I remember out on Wendell's front porch once, there were a bunch of us standing out there, and somebody said, "That son of a bitch has got to be right all the time." Gurney said, "He *is* right all the time." (Laughs.)

[But] I revered Wendell. I was the first president of the Wendell Berry fan club, and I was the first person who insisted at length that he was a national treasure. I had reverence for Wendell and still do. For years I knew what Wendell was thinking, you know, however silent he was, or at least I thought I did, and I usually had reason to [think that]. We were very intellectually intimate. I mean, when I say we're arguing all the time I mean that, but you're very intimate with who you're arguing with all the time. Right?

Well, there were several controlling images in the formation of Wendell's preoccupations and his attitudes, and one of them was "something to come up against." He was raised to believe that there were certain hard-asses that were essential to your maturation—always a guy. "Something to come up against" was something that you wanted to come up against; you wanted to test yourself—you wanted to measure yourself.

There were two or three of those in his life, and a couple of them were teachers at UK that he and I shared. We used to love to talk about A. K. Moore, Arthur Moore that way. Arthur Moore was a real hard-ass, and it was down to the point where there were only two or three students who would take his classes because he was so hard. I remember taking his class in the lyric in English. There were three people in there: Wendell and me and Marilyn Jones. And we used to love Dr. Moore's belittling, and, you know, he talked out of the side of his mouth and he called us "boys." And, I remember Arthur Moore said, "Here comes Hazel with his dick in one hand and his poems in the other." (Laughs.) We just loved that, and that's one of the things I got from him, was love and affection and respect for "something to come up against." It didn't last all that long with me. About twenty years of that is enough. Less.

But there were several of those. Another one was "the few good ones left." That was a formative idea in Wendell's inheritance, "the few good ones left," and I didn't exactly understand what that meant at first. "A few good ones left." Well, am I one of them? Of course not, you know. I mean, of course not.

**AD:** Was it about art?

**JBH:** No, no. It's about manhood and stewardship and patriarchy and a way of life. You couldn't be one of the few good ones left just by wanting to be, but if you did want to be one of the few good ones left, you looked like Wendell. (Laughs.)

You didn't have a TV or a computer or da da da da, you know what I mean. I'm interested how you traced that Wendell was a polemicist basically from the AD: beginning to some extent, and that he over the years became more and more of a polemicist and that you parted ways over that, because your sensibility is so opposite. Yet you also mentioned that you have a real interest in each others' minds. And I'm wondering how that interest engaged at that time in your life. The atmosphere at UK that Hazel was bringing in of encouraging you to think about being at the center of the universe, not thinking of yourselves as being off to the side in a little backwater province—well, even though he was saying you are off to the side, he was saying you don't have to be. And at the same time, you've got this phenomenon, Wendell Berry, who's totally fiercely devoted to this particular place, and you've got your sensibility, you have this ability to plug into a self that's embodied but that is not dependent on the cause and effect of historical action or the things that are happening. It's not that history isn't relevant to you, but more relevant is something that's lying underneath that story. This really isn't a question. It's sort of an observation.

**JBH:** Well, it's a very good one. I know what you're driving at.

**AD:** And yet somehow you and Wendell and Gurney and Bobbie Ann and Ed all wound up staying here in this region, and . . . .

JBH: Well, I think Bobbie Ann and Wendell, and certainly Gurney and Ed, all four of them stayed for reasons quite different from mine. I stayed because I had unfinished business here and I came back because I needed a job. I found out that I needed the job (laughs) for more than one year and then more than two years, and so I kept the job and it wasn't long until I realized that I was here for deeper reasons than that; that I had unfinished business; that I did not know what story I was in. For all of my autobiographical writing and musings and preoccupations, I hadn't known what story I was in, and I was in the story of the [Laughs.] – sort of guy who didn't know what story he was in.

So I had to find out, you know, and I was in my fifties before I found out that my mother loved me. Jesus, you know, get your head around that. My mother killed herself in my bed when I was eight, and if you get down to psychic bedrock, I thought I did it. I did not know that my mother loved me. I found out from sort of pure out and out investigation, talking to the people who had known her, and figuring things out, that I was the last thing in the world she loved. I was what she was holding on to when she went down.

It's like Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were loved by God and they got expelled from it. They got driven out of mother love. They got driven out of unconditional love into the fallen state. I had mother love that I didn't know about, and I was in my fifties before I discovered that I wasn't responsible for my mother's death. I was a victim of my mother's death, and I didn't cause it—it wasn't a failure on my part. She was in a story that overwhelmed her, and I happened to be in there with her. And then I was in the story thereafter of somebody whose experience was erased. Mother love was replaced by shame. That's fucking what happened to Adam and Eve, isn't it? I mean, it's rudimentary stuff. If you've never been loved, if you've never experienced mother love, unconditional love, that's one thing. If you have experienced it and then forgot about it and it was replaced by shame, that's another story, and that was the story that I was in, have been in. And I was fifty-plus years old before I figured that out and then, you know, it was like, *Doing*!

**AD:** How did you figure that out?

JBH: Well, by talking to people and by—one of the things that kept me from understanding that was I had seen my grandmother's life differently than I ever had before, and I had to see that the only adult that I trusted, the only adult that really took care of me and that looked after me, was much more complex than that and she had been complicitous in the unintentional but irrevocable imprisonment of my mother. And she was complicitous in her destruction—not in a fundamental way; certainly not, I don't think, consciously. But I couldn't face that. I mean, it's hard to face a protracted ignorance of that sort about yourself. I did not want to face my father. I did not want to see how paralyzed my heritage was. I did not want to see the ways in which my grandmother could have helped me, should have seen the need to help me, that she was unable to.

The story that I'm telling makes my father out to be much more of a simple person and much more of a simple scoundrel than he, I think, was. A lot of people—women loved my father. I'm telling the story of his son, and it is not fair to Walker R. Hall. There was more to him than being my father, but my father should have helped me, and he should have seen the ways in which only he could help me. And I didn't want to know that [he wouldn't]. I didn't want to see that. I didn't want to see what a fucking fool I had been all those years. I mean, I was an adult, dealing with him after a while, and I should (laughs)—you know, I should have gotten up in his face and said, "What the hell happened, you know, that you left off on me?" I didn't want to do any of that, and if you're mind-fucked that deeply, that deeply confused, after a while you get beholden to that confusion. After a while you get implicated in it as an agent of it, and so it's hard to unlock. It's hard to—what do you call it—dismantle.

So it just took a long time for me to want the truth of my life badly enough, right at the last minute, to be able to talk to people who knew my mother. My aunt had been waiting for years for me to come and say, "What the hell happened?" And then she just, she unloaded. She said, "I didn't think you were ever going to want to know." And I did not want to know as much as I needed to know about my grandfather, after whom I'm named, James Baker Hall. I'm James Baker Hall, II. I didn't want to know as much as I needed to know about my sister. She was thirteen [when my mother died]. I was eight. She just turned her back and walked off on the whole thing, and left me there in the middle of it. I was the only person in town that didn't know the story I was in, and . . . .

**AD:** So she knew what the scandal was?

JBH: She knew what was going on. She knew what had happened, what had gone down, and so all of this was, basically, fundamentally in defference to patriarchy. Didn't want Jimmy to know what happened to his mother and what happened to him because it would hurt Walker's feelings. And I didn't want to know that about patriarchy. I didn't want to know any of these things. I didn't want to know what a danger to stability and to full realization patriarchy can be. I didn't want to know how paralyzed we all had been for so long at such consequences, and it wasn't just what had been visited upon me. What had been visited upon me, the confusion, was visited in turn on my loved ones. I acted out of that ignorance and confusion and perpetrated it. So, I broke up my second marriage, as the first in the early stages of breaking up that monolithic paralysis in the middle of my psyche. Who was it that said that art's main purpose in our life is to break down the frozen soul?

All of this commenced out of a question that you asked, that I've forgotten.

**AD:** Well, it wasn't even a question. It was about the circumstances that led to you being here, to staying in Kentucky.

**JBH:** Oh, yes. When you said that history had nothing to do with my history, you were absolutely right. It's got a great deal to do with Wendell's mind and heart, history, and Gurney's; not so much to do with Ed's. But Bobbie Ann, they're all living in history, of the sort that is shared by other people. I'm living in the history that's not. It's outside time, and it's private, and it is – I don't know how to say this, you know. By outside time I mean, it's in eternity. It's timeless.

**AD:** Do you think it would be fair to say that as a writer, as an artist you're more of a modernist than the rest of the people that you just mentioned? It seems to me that what you're talking about is a sensibility that informed Rothko, that informed Motherwell, that informed Kline, that informed Eliot and Stevens: just a basic interest in the qualities of language and the qualities of vision, and that you've remained kind of circling around that very basic experience in a way that it seems the rest of your UK colleagues have been more interested in regional issues, whether Kentucky or elsewhere.

**JBH:** Uh-huh. I think there's probably some real insight involved in that question and that, yes, there is fundamental difference and it does sort out along those lines. I remember a conversation I had with Jane Vance who was, still is, the poet laureate of Kentucky—will be for another few months—a conversation I had only a few days ago, in which we were talking about the role of the poet laureate. There's one qualification in the description of the role of the job: How is the work that this writer has done informed by living in Kentucky? And you're supposed to get a pass on that question before you meet the job description, and certainly my work

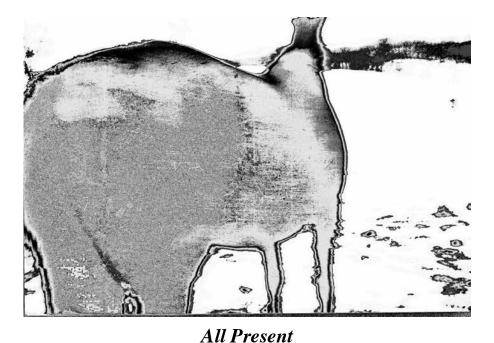
"... art has a central role in my life. It is where I go to have my spirit delivered to me, clarified, enlarged, deepened, enhanced, guided ..." has been informed by living in Kentucky, but certainly not in the same way that Bobbie Ann's or Wendell's or Jane's is. I mean, the difference between Jefferson County and Fayette County, Knott

County and Knox County and Bell County and all that doesn't interest me. I don't think they interest artists.

I was saying, "Look, the poet laureate goes into this one room after another after another after another with different people, and the basic resource that's involved is being able to figure out who you're in the room with and what common ground you have and how to seed it." And Jane said, "Yes, I agree, but if you have Kentucky and things Kentucky in common, the ground is larger." Well, the common ground is larger, and I think that the common ground is, you know, childhood, family, parenthood, sickness, suffering, jealousy, love, betrayal. I think that those are the common grounds. It's got nothing to do with local color. Local color is the texture in those stories, and the difference between Knox and Knott County and Bell County, Fayette, central Kentucky and eastern Kentucky, they don't bear on those things. I don't mean to carry on an argument with Jane in her absence. What she was saying was to be taken at face value and credited.

**AD:** But in some way you see yourself as having landed in Kentucky as not being out of a commitment to the place per se, but as being a commitment to the story that you need to tell.

**JBH:** To the unfinished story here for me. Yeah. I mean, pertinent to this whole subject is the fact that the first time I crossed the Continental Divide I felt more at home than I ever had before, you know, and I was grown. If you're talking about a place where I feel at home, it's California, the coast. I mean, there are places out there, one after another after another after another, where I want to stop and live the rest of my life.



photograph by James Baker Hall

# X. From Sabbaths 2009

In Memory: James Baker Hall by Wendell Berry

The old know well the world is the place of the absence of many known, loved, and gone, as the mind might contain a sky empty of birds, an earth without landmark streams or trees. The young, the husbands and wives, know and the old must recall that all the absent are not gone. Many are still to come. The spring of grief also is the spring of joy. The cup is dipped and drunk, and the space of its taking again is filled.

# James Baker Hall: A Bio-Bibliography

# Compiled by Sarah Wylie A. VanMeter

With additions by Rhonda Pettit and Andy Mead; includes sources from this issue of JKS. At the time of his death, Jim Hall did not have on-hand a complete collection of his published work. Page numbers and image titles of some entries, for example, are missing, and full entries are likely missing as well. Adaptations were made to MLA documentation style to provide as much information as possible. Corrections and additions to this bibliography are welcome.

Visit: http://www.jamesbakerhall.com/ or send an e-mail to archive@ jamesbaker-hall.com.

# **Biographical Information**

# **BIRTH**

1935 Lexington, Kentucky

# **EDUCATION**

1953 Henry Clay High School, Lexington, Kentucky

1957 B.A. University of Kentucky 1961 M.A. Stanford University

# **TEACHING CAREER**

1973-2003 University of Kentucky. Associate Professor of English, Assistant Professor of English, Director of Creative Writing.

1971-1973 University of Connecticut. Lecturer in Art.

1969-1971 Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Visiting Assistant Professor of English, Visiting Assistant Professor of Photography.

1968-1969 University of Kentucky. Visiting Assistant Professor of English.

1964 New York University. Visiting Assistant Professor of English.

1957-1961 Stanford University. Instructor in Creative Writing, Teaching Assistant in English.

# **EDITORIAL POSITIONS**

(l. 1960s to e. 1970s), Contributing Editor, Aperture

# SELECT AWARDS (WRITING AND PUBLISHING)

2001 Poet Laureate of Kentucky

1993 Southern Arts Federation Photography Fellowship

1986 Al Smith Fellowship, Kentucky Arts Council

1986 Honorable Mention, San Francisco Art Institute Film Festival

1983 Pushcart Prize

1980 National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Poetry

1973 Juror's Prize, Photo-Vision '72, Boston

1967 O. Henry Prize

1960 Stegner Fellowship, Stanford University

# **DEATH**

June 25, 2009 Lung fibrosis, age 74

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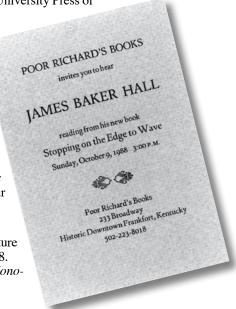
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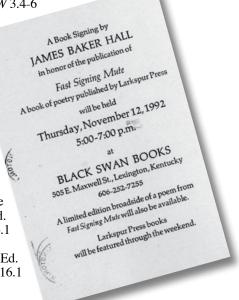
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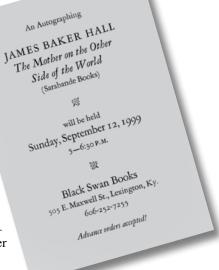
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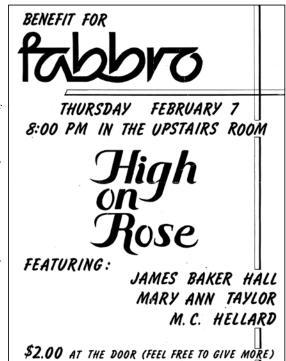
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# The Three Foxes: Animal Representation and Forms of Intelligence in Poems by James Baker Hall by Rhonda Pettit

The poet is the proud snail Billy
We watch him for the whaleroads
he makes on stone & concrete
The waving stalks
of his eyes
in the early light
The rhythmic contractions
of his slimy sidelit body
The colorful wakes
of his secretions — Prace

- Praeder's Letters, James Baker Hall

Motherless children have a hard time when the mother is gone.

—"Motherless Children" (Traditional Song)

The fox, like the proverbial cat, has at least nine lives. As an image in literature, the fox has long been associated with the human attributes of artfulness and cunning, with the ability to outwit larger, more powerful opponents. From Native American and European cultures to Russia and the Ch'u Kingdom of China, fox mythology has embraced the creature as hero, healer, and the embodiment of generative power. At the same time, its contrasting role as the prey of the English hunt is both literal and literary. Other literal elements of the fox's life—it hunts alone, conceals itself well, and constructs its den in any available space above or below ground, such as dense branches, hollow trees or unused sheds—round out the creature's natural image. In terms of contemporary American popular culture, the word fox has been associated with film and television programming since the mid-twentieth century, and in 1996—a year relevant to this essay's focus — Fox News Channel was launched on cable television, rising to prominence in the late 1990s and establishing a conservative bias. In terms of gender, fox has been slang for a sexy female, shorthand for a fox collar or wrap worn by a woman, and defined (via vixen) as an ill-tempered woman. Bandit, seductress, victim, victor: given its broad use as a symbol, and its amalgamation of real and projected traits, particularly that of a less powerful creature capable of victory through the use of its wits—its quickness of mind, its imagination—we can see why the image of the fox would continue to appeal to poets. Common and familiar as the fox image is, I find it nevertheless intriguing to see a cluster of poets using the same image within a given time period.

During the 1990s, at least six poets—James Baker Hall, W. S. Merwin, Philip Levine, Adrienne Rich, Mary Oliver, and Lucille Clifton—wrote and/or published poems using fox imagery. These individuals are members of the well-known generation of poets who came of age in the post-World War II era, a generation that, influenced by Pound, Jungian archetypes, eastern philosophy, and surrealism, produced several related poetics — Beats, Black Mountain School, Deep Image, Feminist, to name a few. In varying ways these movements sought unity of self and of society in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the atomic bomb, and in the face of a conservative, alienating, corporatized American society. This generation also developed a mistrust of language itself. Their position as summarized by Alan Williamson is "that language is one of the most powerful agents of our socialization, leading us to internalize our parents', our world's definitions, and to ignore the portions of our authentic experience—the experience of the body and of the unconscious—that do not express themselves directly in verbal terms" (3). Non-human creatures who communicate with nonverbal vocabularies become valuable subjects and figures for the poet who mistrusts language. Animal life figures prominently, repeatedly, in the work of this generation as a way of comprehending collective and individual human failure, and as a source for alternative approaches to modernity. For this reason, their work should be of interest to the growing field of animal representation studies in which the hierarchy of human over animal is challenged in favor of a species-neutral outlook, applied at times to political advocacy regarding animals and humans. Among other concerns, many scholars in this multi-disciplinary field favor a literal representation of animal life over anthropomorphizing metaphor. This outlook, which Marianne Dekoven calls a "posthumanist view of animals" and Rosi Braidotti refers to as "bioegalitarianism, a recognition that we humans and animals are in this together," predates these twentiethcentury poets in some ways, though the field itself has been shaped by the animal rights movement of the 1970s.2

With these concepts in mind, I will focus the following discussion on a smaller cluster of poets from the post-World War II generation whose fox imagery appears in poems published from 1996 to 1999: Merwin (born in 1927), Rich (born in 1929), and Hall (1935-2009).3 Both Merwin and Rich also use the fox image to title their poetry volumes. Merwin's *The Vixen*, in part an extended elegy concerning his periodic residence in southwest France since the 1950s, was published in 1996 and includes "Fox Sleep" and "Vixen," as well as other poems that use the fox image. 4 Rich's Fox, published in 2001 with its title poem written in 1998, offers a broad critique of late twentieth-century humanity. Hall's use of the fox image during this period occurs in three poems from his 1999 volume, The Mother on the Other Side of the World, appearing in the book in the following order: "Ars Poetica" (written in 1998), "The Fox" (written in 1981), and "It Felt So Good but Many Times I Cried" (written in the late 1980s). This volume, dedicated to his mother who committed suicide when Hall was eight years old, explores not only the meaning and effect of his mother's death; it observes and interrogates the nature of the search for meaning itself. To some extent, all three of these poets use the image of the fox to represent inspiration.

Following a brief consideration of the poems by Merwin and Rich, I will offer an extended close reading of Hall's fox poems, with occasional brief forays into related poems and prose by Hall, to demonstrate: 1) his place in this generation of poets, 2)

his technical mastery as a poet, and 3) a recurring motif in his work: the poet's need for rational and non-rational forms of intelligence in art and life as seen in his use of animal imagery. By non-rational intelligence I mean that which is achieved by one's sensory perceptions of the world, and by attention to the subconscious processing of those perceptions. Those who approach animal representation studies by way of post-structuralist analysis of Enlightenment rationalism might object to the human/rational, animal/non-rational terminology I will apply here, but in using this dichotomy I do not intend a hierarchy of human over animal, only a difference between the two, one that Hall's poetry recognizes and honors.

Merwin's *The Vixen* concerns itself with the passing of time and its relationship to remnants and disappearances. The volume opens with "Fox Sleep," a five-part poem that presents three related images of the fox that broadly represent an awakening from false and simplistic assumptions about reality. He alludes to this theme in part two, where he asserts what a lesser poet would have used as the poem's conclusion —"What I thought I had left I kept finding again / but when I went looking for what I thought I remembered / as anyone could have foretold it was not there" (2.1-3)—thus allowing us to engage with his three foxes on their own literal and metaphorical terms. The first fox appears in the image of an old mill's grinding ring that had been carved in the shape of a fox sleeping head to tail, and worn from use. The ring, which sits among other mill items being sold off piecemeal, offers an image of decay, and is visible only "if you looked closely" (1.26). The second image, also suggesting a sleeping fox, moves the poem from the pragmatic to a parable of shape-shifting. A man speaking before a crowd is turned into a fox after answering "yes" when asked: "When someone has wakened to what is really there / is that person free of the chain of consequences" (3.9-10). The man is later freed from the body of the fox, and thus awakened, only after he hears the correct answer to the question he was asked: "That person sees it as it is" (3.17). He then asks the crowd to bury the body of the fox he was—a literal fox body found on the other side of the mountain—as "one of your own" (3.21). In doing so, they, too, are awakened, one individual by asking the question, "what if he had given the right answer every time" (3.28), and the others by hearing it and thus, presumably, having to deal with it. The third image is also a literal fox, a dead vixen the poet finds in a field the night before he is to leave the area for good. He carries it home and buries it in his garden, in a show of respect, as one of his own. Without denigrating animals or humans, Merwin has used a combination of literal and metaphorical fox imagery to register not only loss, but a movement toward clarity of perception, essential to the poet's trade as well as to the life well lived.

This subtle connection between the fox and poetic inspiration is more directly asserted in "Vixen," the next-to-last poem in the volume. This poem addresses the fox, and from the first line grants it elevated and paradoxical status. The vixen is the "comet of stillness princess of what is over," and ultimately the symbol of the lost or missing material the poet seeks, the "keeper of kept secrets / of the destroyed stories the escaped dreams the sentences / never caught in words" (l. 3-5). The poem later links the vixen to perception and clarity: "When I have seen you I have waked and slipped from the calendars / from the creeds of difference and the contradictions / that were my life . . ." (l. 16-18), echoing themes in "Fox Sleep." By the end of the poem, the fox has become the embodiment of loss as a driving force of the imagination. Merwin writes, ". . . when you are no longer anything / let me catch sight of you again going over the wall / . . . . let my words find their own / places in the silence after the animals" (l. 20-21, 23-24). The tension between its presence and absence leads Merwin to write what is essentially an elegy for inspiration.

Rich's critique of humanity in her volume Fox responds to its shortcomings with a quasi-elegaic longing. In the title poem, Rich embodies what she seems to lack in the image of a female fox, using both "fox" and "vixen" to represent the female. Taking advantage of the indeterminate gender identity that the term "fox" permits, Rich draws on both the cleverness associated with fox behavior in literal and metaphorical terms, as well as its link to female sexuality in popular culture, and the vixen's secondary definition in the OED as an ill-tempered, quarrelsome woman. The fox Rich craves would have every right to be ill-tempered; she has survived the "briars of legend" and the "truth of briars," and thus with "lacerated skin calling legend to account" could offer an example of "a vixen's courage in vixen terms" (lines 6, 9, 13, 14). For Rich, this desire itself provides further evidence of human failure: "For a human animal to call for help / on another animal is the most riven the most revolted cry on earth" (l. 15-17). The human in Rich's poem is both animal and somewhat different from animal, searching for some kind of ability or knowledge that humans lack and should not have to seek from a non-rational being, implying a hierarchy of sorts. The extreme nature of the call is emphasized by the alliteration of "riven" (split, torn apart) and "revolted" (rebellion and disgust). By the end of the poem it serves as an analogy for "the birth-yell of the yet-to-be human child" (1. 22), suggesting the extent to which humanity has yet to evolve. Though bearing scars, Rich's vixen is similar to Merwin's: both represent an elusive and feminine muse or source of needed knowledge.

James Baker Hall is the youngest and lesser known poet of this trio. A native of Lexington, Kentucky, his first book was a novel, Yates Paul, His Grand Flights, His Tootings, published in 1962 following his Wallace Stegner fellowship to Stanford. The novel's poetic allusions—the title character "Yates" a homonym for poet William Butler Yeats; and the presence of Wallace Stevens' poem "The Sleight-of-Hand Man" in both the novel's title and its conclusion—seem to forecast Hall's later shift to poetry. Given his debut as a novelist, it is not surprising to see character-driven work in Hall's early poems published in the 1970s. Several of these focus on his observations about friends and fellow writers—Bob Holman, Ed McClanahan, Gurney Norman, Wendell Berry—and other individuals he observed. These poems, with their long, prosy, verb-driven titles; their use, at times, of informal speech and verb-deprived voices; their cataloging description; and their humorous insights are externally driven; their focus is on an individual as largely separate from the speaker/observer. In later poems, Hall's use of the external world will serve less as stand-alone subject matter, and more as the vehicle of his truth-seeking. What kinds of intelligence can we draw on to comprehend our selves over time, our time in any given place and moment? Hall's poetry becomes a pursuit of that kind of knowledge, drawing on both rational and non-rational forms of intelligence, and acknowledging at times that the mystery remains. Animal imagery abounds in both The Mother (1999) and in many of Hall's poems in Stopping on the Edge to Wave (1988), and is often present when rational and non-rational processing of experience intersect in a poem.

One of Hall's early poems, "The Family of Man Resides in the House of Philosophy," alludes to this concern. The poem's opening stanza describes a humorous domestic scene in which two young brothers annoy each other with a repetition of two food-related questions, prompting their now annoyed parents to ask them why they keep asking each other the same questions. The second and last stanza brings this ruckus to a close:

has the slightest idea why
he does anything—
which seems
to make them all feel a lot
better, so they shut up
for a while, and eat.

No animals are mentioned in this poem, but the mystery behind human behavior is boldly asserted. For all our philosophy—our rationalizing, theorizing, and intellectualizing—we often can't grasp our motivations: "nobody / has the slightest idea why / he does anything." The line break following "... feel a lot" (l. 19), with its emphasis of feeling over intellect, reinforces this sense of the limits of rationality. But like the animals, we do instinctively respond to hunger; we eat to stay alive. A certain amount of what we do is animal, is instinct, and thus mysterious to the rational, human mind.

Hall's fox poems explore this theme more directly. "Ars Poetica" is actually Hall's second poem by that title. The first one, dedicated to his UK writing teacher Robert Hazel and appearing in Stopping on the Edge to Wave, also draws on animal life but offers a striking contrast in form: a four-poem sequence consisting of "Whatever Happens," "The Eye," "Moonlight," and "The Ear" in which the rhythms of called and grazing cattle, their gradual shifts from darkness to light, their invisible presence in the sound "of grass tearing" (l. 11) evoke the poet's search for subject and language. At one point in the sequence, facilitated by a line break, the poem creates a speciesneutral zone. "The Eye" first presents an unseen premature birth and subsequent death of a fetus—"The weather turns on the creature, inside, / before her time" (l. 1-2)—and then identifies the "creature" as a calf, briefly blurring the line between human and animal. This blurring of boundaries recurs later when human memory and forgetfulness become an "instinct" in "The Ear," but the speaker also acknowledges another kind of unknown:

In the ensuing darkness a grid

is implied, the work of the world continues; though only a tiny portion is within human range, and all of that a mystery (1. 6-9)

With the stanza break visually representing the "grid" of blankness or of "mystery," these lines reveal what the poet continually pursues: what isn't made knowable through rational human endeavors alone, what lives in the blankness between stanzas. Or as stated later in the poem, "the moment / given form" (l. 15-16) becomes the poet's quest.

This awareness of the poet's task in light of rational and non-rational processing will get distilled down to the flash of inspiration itself in "Ars Poetica" published in *The Mother on the Other Side of the World.* This four-line poem creates two implied metaphors in which is nested a parenthetical simile:

the way a fox slips into one side of your headlights and carrying his tail (like a pen running out of ink) slips out the other—

Imagist and concise as the poem is, it embodies issues that feminists and animal representation theorists would find relevant. How does a poet in the postmodern age

describe inspiration without drawing on the antiquated image of the feminine muse, itself a non-rational construction with an excessive life span? Hall's fox that carries "his tail" defines a masculine muse—unlike the female fox-as-muse in the poems of Merwin and Rich—acknowledged for its literal quickness rather than for anthropomorphic projections of wit. By comparison, the lingering, ephemeral feminine muse seems lethargic, and the phallic overtones of "pen" and "ink" are reminiscent of Seamus Heaney's poem, "Digging." Nevertheless, the concrete image of the fox provides a fitting metaphor for the speed with which thoughts enter and leave the mind, sometimes lodging in the den of memory, and other times not. This postmodern, revisionist muse remains somewhat elusive when it interacts with the rational mind as represented in the poem by images of human invention.

The fox, a non-rational being, is encountered via "your headlights"—not just the metaphorical light of one's perceiving mind, but the light of the automobile, a literal, physical product of the rational mind. The headlight and its vehicle, like the human life, moves on just as the fox does; for the two to encounter each other, and for the encounter to stick involves both chance and effort. The fox's tail is "(like a pen running out of ink)"—another human invention, and one that can fail if its other half, ink, is missing or used up. The fact that this simile is contained within parentheses invites us to read the poem without it, suggesting that the comparison itself is less important than the quickness of the fox, the thought or inspiration it represents, and the poem, which both relies on and potentially rejects the comparison. Simile and metaphor are not just literary devices; they provide a way for the rational mind to comprehend new experience. This mental processing takes longer to complete than the event or moment that set the process in motion. The use of the parenthetical simile and its optional reading allows the poem to demonstrate two experiences: the flash of unexpected inspiration, vision, or thought which can seem to arise from a non-rational source, and the slower, more rational processing of that experience.

Another aspect of the poem's form reinforces its expression of speed and of inspiration's relationship to non-rationality: it is a four-line sentence fragment ending with a dash, replicating a thought snatched at random, its prior and subsequent connections remaining unknown, mysterious. And yet, by title it is presented as that most rational of texts: an *ars poetica*, an explanation, a theory. This is not a how-to *ars poetica*; it is a what-is *ars poetica*; it describes a moment of inspiration rather than explains it; even its undermining of the simile works against the concept of rational explanation that drives the typical *ars poetica*. A sense of loss interwoven with the creative process itself also permeates the poem: inspiration comes in a flash by chance and just as quickly disappears. The imagist and intellectual density in this poem is reminiscent of Pound's "In a Station at the Metro," but I am also reminded of Ruthmarie Mitsch's comment about Dorothy Parker's ability to capture, in her poem "Iseult of Brittany," many elements of a large legend in two quatrains: such a feat, she argues, "is true poetry."

The arrested moment and its relationship to vision, rather than quickness, is the focus of a second and longer fox poem (29 lines), "The Fox." This poem also blurs the distinctions between rational and non-rational mental processing. Although it is a single-stanza, free form poem with no punctuation, it can be organized into three sections based on its presentation of time. The first 15 lines recount the experience of the speaker and at least one other person (in reality, Hall and his wife Mary Ann Taylor-Hall) who encountered a fox in a pasture. The next seven lines refer to the more distant past, making it clear that this walk and setting are a familiar one: "for

years we've watched this pasture" (l. 16). The last seven lines bring us to the present and allude as well to the future, opening with "when I am restless" (l. 23). Although the sudden appearance of the fox seems to prompt the poem, its importance is both essential and nearly negated by the end of the poem.

Vision is a recurring motif that is attributed not only to the people and fox watching each other, but made relevant to the landscape as well. The poem opens with: "the blind side / of the hill came through / an opening in the trees it opened / out into the pasture . . ." (l. 1-3), blindness setting up a sense of mystery and the unexpected that the poem explores. A phrase from Hall's first "Ars Poetica"—"the moment / given form"—is echoed in "The Fox" while the speaker and his companion observe the pasture: "we were waiting / to see what forms would evolve" (l. 5-6), literally referring to the creatures or events that might transpire in the pasture, metaphorically to the poem that might result. Eventually, a fox enters the pasture and though it carefully looks around, the speaker reveals:

... it stopped in front of us as though it saw we were not there not even a body moved where would it go (l. 11-15)

Both fox and observers are caught in an arrested moment where what will happen next is unknown. The line breaks and run-on sentences suggest the inevitability of movement, the poem revealing its knowledge formally rather than linguistically. Eventually the fox and observers will move, will disappear—as will this arrested moment unless it is captured in art—but the mystery of when that will happen and what the movement beyond this moment will bring is unknown. Animal and human relate in other ways. The experience of coming upon an animal suddenly brings out in humans what it brings out in animals: an immediate halt to motion, a quickening of the senses, a tensing of muscle and nerve until it is determined whether or not danger is present. It brings out the "animal nature" in humans. What appears to be the fox's blindness with regard to the presence of the still, observant humans also suggests a leveling of human superiority. Neither posing nor intending threat, the humans become part of, rather than master of, the natural world.

In the poem's second section, the speaker tells us, "for years we've watched this pasture / coming through that opening" (l. 16-17); this in combination with the previous phrase "we were waiting" creates a sense of expectation, planning, and possible routine: the observers have previously experienced events of this kind. But in spite of this repetition, the fox still arrests them, still draws from them the sudden, keen observation that, in the animal world, keeps creatures alive; in the human world makes humans most alive. Expectations are not just met, but defined: the form that evolves this time is a fox, though it is not named in the poem's second section. It reappears in the last section, revived and then rejected as representative of a yearning the speaker has but cannot or refuses name:

when I am restless
I think it must be the fox
trying to come back
but it's a breath
on my face my neck

of old my heart beating has come for each thing (1. 23-29)

The vagueness of "thing" returns us to the poem's subject: the mystery of unexpected encounters, their occurrence as well as their possible meaning, echoing "the blind side" that opens the poem. In postmodern fashion, the fox that inspired the poem and the poet's reflection has nevertheless led the speaker to a point of departure rather than an epiphany. It offers no moral, solution, or answer.

Whereas the foxes in "Ars Poetica" and "The Fox" were initially observed as living creatures prior to representing an encounter with inspiration or a search for meaning, the fox in "It Felt So Good but Many Times I Cried" refers to a fox fur wrap or collar— "her piece we called it" (l. 20) — that belonged to Hall's mother before she committed suicide. The voice of the poem is an adult looking back through the perspective of a young boy who periodically disrobes, climbs into the den-like enclosure of a cedar closet containing his mother's garments, and begins to caress the fox fur. The poem guides us through a ritual of grief the young boy has created in which the fox fur represents his missing mother. He is conscious of the fox's "missing body" (lines 27 and 37) and the scent of the mother it carries (lines 16-17). The encounter with the fox fur becomes increasingly sexual, creating a metaphorical journey from innocence to experience. The speaker first "ask[s] permission" (l. 10) of the fox "to touch" it (l. 9), also an early indication of a child's perspective in the voice of the poem. The action then proceeds with "smell" (1. 16) "rubbed" (1.26), "kissed" (1.30), "I may even have stuck my tongue inside its mouth" (1.31), and "mounted it rode it" (1.35). The poem's sexuality with its climax of comfort and tears is designed to bring the reader into the trauma of the loss itself as experienced initially by the boy emotionally and physically, and later by the poet intellectually and creatively. Boundaries between human and animal, rational and non-rational, blur throughout the poem.

Key components of this strategy appear in lines 9-17 where the speaker shifts from the first person "I" pronoun to the second person "you" and "your" pronouns that serve grammatically to draw the reader into the experience with the speaker. The section also presents a set of instructions one must follow in order to participate in the speaker's ritual:

in order to touch the fox first you had to go into its face and ask permission then you had to take its yellow eyes to the door to the crack only when it knew where it was were you free to run your hands up and down the whole length of its fur . . . . (l. 9-14)

Rituals themselves are a paradoxical construct, embracing the rational in pursuit of the non-rational, be it religious, spiritual, or mystical. They typically employ a set of rules or procedures that, while invested in symbol and/or mystery, nevertheless suggest a rational, more or less linear process for achieving the desired effect. The presence of this construct in the poem provides another layer of rational/non-rational interaction in the poem's exploration of a boy's grieving for his mother.

This section of the poem also personifies the fox fur for the first time, a way for the child to instill life in the empty pelt. But after the section closes with the speaker's ability to smell the scent of the mother, the fur becomes an "it" (l. 16), a "piece" (l. 18), and the poem returns to its first person pronoun and increasing sexuality. Naked in

the den with the fox, the boy becomes more animal-like in both a sexual and mystical sense. After completing the caressing and kissing that constitute the poem's foreplay, the boy is "ready" (35):

I mounted it rode it Mother's fur was there right there its missing body was there entering mine and many other things as well as entering me . . . . (35-39)

These lines move back and forth, between presence and absence, mirroring the tangible loss the boy feels. The phrase "Mother's fur" as a reference to the fox also alludes to the mother's pubic hair, certainly a sexually charged image but also suggesting origins, birth, life. The "missing body" in the next line, however, brings us back to loss. The mother's absence permeates "many . . . things": the fox pelt and the boy, including the boy's sense of his own missing body, at least for the duration of this encounter. The boy's merging with the fox pelt is simultaneously a merging with the loss of his mother, and with loss itself as a defining element of his life. Readers experience the recurrence of this loss and the trap it creates formally. The poem's title is repeated with slight variation in line 29, and again in the last two lines of the poem, returning the reader to the poem's beginning, placing us in the speaker's cycle—a den of sorts—of desire and loss, comfort and grief.

This image of a den-like enclosure where rational, non-rational, and sexual encounters take place is seen also in Hall's first novel, *Yates Paul*, *His Grand Flights*, *His Tootings* (1962, 2002). Yates Paul, the novel's protagonist, is a young adolescent boy who never knew his mother. His father, a portrait and wedding photographer, runs his own studio where Yates spends much of his time and feels "more at home there than in the lonesome house" they share (22). The novel tracks his movement within two den-like, interior spaces from which Yates considers the world of adults: the darkroom of his father's studio where he develops prints, and his own imagination.

A complicated and essential place for Yates, the darkroom represents power and creation as well as mere technique. Hall provides a Whitmanian catalog of the darkroom's contents, a place that was "the most orderly and the most changeless," yet nevertheless offered the power to change one's view of reality (50). It both isolates and empowers Yates:

The darkroom was a kind of world to itself: the temperature was constant, the humidity controlled, it had its own knowable laws, and the man who worked there, if he knew his business, had almost God-like control over everything. No one could enter unless he wanted them to.... In negative the world was black and dead, as lifeless as a blue baby, and he was the God-like doctor who could leave it that way or enlarge it with light into life as he saw fit. He didn't have to take any guff—if anybody messed with him, he'd crop their heads off. In the darkroom, Yates was boss, and he loved it. (51-52)

In the darkroom where Yates has the god-like control of a technician, the creation of images requires an eye for composition, thus some imaginative vision is involved. However, their creation is also dependent upon chemicals, temperatures, precise timing, and procedures, a process that is scientific and rational. Images are locked into place on the paper, becoming concrete, archival, and to a large degree literal.

However, like the den-like enclosure of the mother's closet in "It Felt So Good but Many Times I Cried," the darkroom is also a sexualized space. It becomes the recurring scene of Yates' voyeuristic encounters with sexuality. While his father's married assistant, Bob Barret, conducts secret liaisons with Dunster Bingham near the air conditioner in the darkroom, Yates develops prints at the sink. Only eleven years old and busy with his work, Yates "was never sure exactly what happened over there—it was dark (only not that dark)... but he had a general idea," and concluded that "a general idea was enough, at least for the time being" (35). Later, Yates would observe from a vent in the darkroom his father taking photographs of a nude model (202-203). This Blakean rupture of innocence by experience—or more specifically, by the experience of observing—brings the external world into the darkroom. Exposure becomes a process beyond that of chemicals and images on paper that Yates can control.

The "grand flights" and "tootings" of Yates—his imagination—construct the second interior space he occupies. In one he is landing a B-24 while manning the tail gun (17); in another he is a baseball star, "Yates the Splendid Splinter Paul" (70). A more revealing fantasy involves his darkroom and photography tasks. While Yates is proud of being, in his mind, "the best darkroom technician in Lexington," he also recognizes that the darkroom is not world enough; one of his grand flights is to be "an artist of landscapes. The pictures he dreamed of taking didn't have people in them" (54). His choice of subject matter, however, provides not only the familiar image of the lone artist, but that of a young boy's loneliness and Oedipal tensions with the wifeless father. The work his father did was "commercial bunk, none of these dumb people and their dumb weddings for Yates Paul" (55). Boredom with the routine nature of this work is not the only issue alluded to here; the "dumb weddings" represent that union of two people, the complete family unit, missing from Yates' life. An eventual escape from the darkroom will mean an escape from the constant reminder of his mother loss, but it will also put him in the imperfect world where that loss occurred. For Yates, the mother's absence permeates the darkroom and the world beyond it, just as the mother's missing body as represented by the fox pelt in "It Felt So Good" entered the speaker and "many other things"—a deliberately generic phrase that expresses the ubiquitous nature of the loss experienced by the boy.

In his poetry and fiction, Hall explores loss as both a defining element of his personal life, and as a broader aspect of creature existence. The foxes in "Ars Poetica" and "The Fox" are literal animals that, in the life of the poem, conduct their own, natural lives. They enter and exit the speaker's vision in their own time. Experienced in this way, the foxes allow the human observer to come into contact with his own anima—his spirit—and with the instinctual, non-rational aspects of his intelligence. Another word for this, of course, is inspiration; like Merwin and Rich, Hall seeks a non-verbalized knowledge he can translate into poetry. "It Felt So Good" differs from Hall's other two fox poems, in that its fox ceases to exist before the poem begins; its pelt can only serve as a representation of the mother, her death, the child's loss, and the physicality of that loss. Yet all three poems achieve their insight or wisdom when the line between human and animal existence is made permeable.

Although I have drawn on concepts associated with animal representation studies for this analysis, I am not claiming that the poems discussed here were consciously shaped by these concepts. This essay suggests that this field somewhat follows, rather than leads, this group of poets. More importantly, animal representation studies raise thorny questions about lives and texts, ranging from actual relationships between human and non-human animal life, to a poet's use of language, metaphor, and imagination. Can the poet who uses anthropomorphizing animal imagery offer insight and

understanding without being accused of slighting the integrity of animal life? Is there such a thing as compassionate anthropomorphizing? Is this a question of creating responsible metaphor? An answer might be found in the first epigraph to this essay. The humanity embedded in the work of Hall, Merwin, and Rich (and many in their generation) generally extends to the broad spectrum of existence, out of respect for, connection with, and responsibility to that existence. Their poetry derives in large part from close and long-term observation of the natural world. To extend a bit the epigraph by Hall, the poet is "the proud snail," by virtue of never withdrawing into its shell, thus capable of seeing the world and all its creatures on their own terms, even if by way of metaphor.

# Acknowledgments

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# **Endnotes**

Epigraphs: "11.7.56 SJPR," Praeder's Letters in James Baker Hall, The Total Light Process: New and Selected Poems, Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2004 (211-212). "Motherless Children," author unknown. Well-known and recent recordings are by Eric Clapton, Lucinda Williams, and Roseanne Cash.

- 1. For those poems not discussed in this paper, see Lucille Clifton, "Telling Our Stories," "Fox," "The Coming of Fox," "Dear Fox," "Leaving Fox," "One Year Later," and "A Dream of Foxes" from *The Terrible Stories* (1996) and included in *Blessing the Boats* (2000); Philip Levine, "The Fox" (1982); and Mary Oliver, "Foxes in Winter" in *House of Light* (1990), "Foxes in Winter" in *White Pine* (1994); and "The Fox" (1993) in *Poetry Comes Up Where It Can* (2000).
- 2. See Braidotti and DeKoven. This issue of *PMLA* devotes a section of "Theories and Methodologies" to animal studies. Some of the poets in the post-World War II generation use anthropomorphizing metaphor in their animal poems; see for example Philip Levine, "The Fox," and Ted Hughes, "The Thought-Fox." Richard Webster has argued that Hughes' fox is subject to the violence of the poet's imagination; it "lives triumphantly as an idea—as part of the poet's own identity—but dies as a fox" (5). Merwin, a friend of Hughes, may have known this poem.
- 3. Merwin and Hall were friends and admirers of each other's work, as were Merwin and Rich.
- 4. See for example "In the Doorway" (30) and "Completion" (54). For an earlier fox poem, see "Plea for a Captive" (from *The Drunk in the Furnace* (1960)) in W. S. Merwin, *Selected Poems*, New York: Antheneum, 1988 (59).
- 5. Dates provided by Mary Ann Taylor-Hall, electronic correspondence, February 15, 2010.
- 6. "The Poet Finds an Ephemeral Home in a "Truck Stop on the New Jersey Turnpike, C.A. 1970 (3-5); "Captain Kentucky" (for Ed McClanahan, 6-7); "Gurney Norman, Kentucky Coal Field Orphan, Is Gurney Stronger Than History, or What?" (8-9); "The Mad Farmer Stands Up in Kentucky for What He Thinks Is Right" (about Wendell Berry, 10) in *The Total Light Process*.
  - 7. "Parker's 'Iseult of Brittany," Explicator 4:22 (Winter 1986), 37-40.
- 8. Hall probably did not intend for the poem to be read in "parts" given its single-stanza form, and its use of enjambment and run-ons.

# The Song Remains the Same: Utilizing Selections from James Baker Hall's Novel *Music for a Broken Piano*to Teach Race Formation Theory in Introduction to Sociology Classes by Dan Shope

There is seldom a time when questions of what constitutes good college classroom teaching in Sociology go unexplored. It is reasoned by Sociology faculty that each year college freshmen arrive on campus eager to experience higher education. They have hopes of grasping the various lessons taught in their college courses in much the same manner as they had in their high school classes. However, within a few weeks of listening to sweeping remarks made by their Introduction to Sociology class professors, inexperienced college students begin to realize that a disjuncture exists in how topics such as racism and prejudice are theorized and discussed in their Sociology classes when compared to how high school class lessons concerning race were conducted. Regardless of their final course grade expectations, many freshly minted college freshmen become confused while searching for the intellectual touchstones concerning such lessons that made their high school experience easy or at least tolerable. Developing ways to teach entering freshmen how sociologists discuss race is the subject of this essay, which itself is part of ongoing research into the subject.

Each academic year begins with faculty discussions of ways to build an intellectual bridge that could help bring college freshmen to the banks of mainstream college academia. This process has been adumbrated by me and has been often discussed while teaching in the Sociology program at Murray State University located in Murray, Kentucky. I am always searching for ways to improve my teaching of sociological concepts, especially to entering freshmen. When I learned of an upcoming special edition of *The Journal of Kentucky Studies* dedicated to memorializing the works of noted Kentucky Poet Laureate James Baker Hall, I recalled reading one of his novels entitled *Music for a Broken Piano* (1982). I remembered how a small group of budding academics remarked on its significance concerning how race could be conceptualized and how individuals in various race categories were tied to those designations regardless of their individual accomplishments. This memory inspired me to consider how I

could tie Hall's novel to the methodology of teaching how race was/is constructed in the United States and how race construction affects how people are treated.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the 1990s, I listened to emerging Sociology students who attempted to relegate racism and discrimination as attitudes related to the behavior of past generations in the society at large. <sup>2</sup> These students opined that given current politicized social movements, racism and discrimination have all but disappeared. Similar arguments that declare that racism is a thing of the past are now addressed in college Sociology classrooms. Many entering college freshmen now conversely argue that racism and discriminatory practices have reared their ugly heads once more, and in many ways these social practices have become more difficult to unravel.<sup>3</sup> However, this begs the question, "Is the racism of today radically different than in the past?" How the subject of race was treated in Hall's novel Music for a Broken Piano, which examines the behavior of residents living in a summer commune called Farmington, could be a great tool to compare how race was viewed in the time the novel was supposed to take place (1969), in 1982 when the novel was published, and today. During spring semester 2010, I began the task of exploring Hall's thematics on race and discrimination to see if they were consistent with Michael Omi and Howard Winant's Race Formation theory.<sup>4</sup> The results were quite compelling.

Hall's novel is set in the summer of 1969, which for many Americans is known as the end of the "summer of love" which culminated with the completion of a three-day concert billed as the Woodstock Festival held in Sullivan County, New York. Woodstock, regarded as a watershed cultural event, represented a time of questioning for a generation wishing for equality. Placed in this era, Hall's novel allows the reader to connect with a time when many in the United States protested the legitimacy of the Vietnam War, which also generated an increased desire, especially among America's youth, for equality.

Hall's novel represents the quest for social and racial equality that took root during the national upheaval that was earlier activated by the Civil Rights Movement and the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, both central figures in the drive for such equality.<sup>5</sup> Hall created the setting of the novel, Farmington, as a utopian retreat for social refugees who were weary of the boorish nature of everyday life in the late 1960s, a decade which was saturated with racism and social repression. Hall's notion was that many readers might relish the idea of retreating to their own whimsical Farmington to attempt their own racial and social self-analysis.

However, as the story unfolds nothing could be further from the truth. Hall develops characters who play important roles that set up how race formation would perhaps work in 1969. The characters were named Nathan, Farmington's director; his wife Meriwether; Toni McHugh and Warren Medders, two of the few Farmington residents who had been sought out by Nathan as paid employees for the summer at Farmington; and of course, Makar who is the only African-American in the community. These characters are quickly sorted out in a sort of psychological inventory presented early in Hall's novel. Each has a different past that will eventually cause racial tensions.

Makar, the only African-American at Farmington, was given the task of teaching Farmington residents about art, life, and ultimately racial inequality emanating from a process of race formation, a process which was initially socially imbedded into each individual's social self, which later permeated as a sort of default mechanism for handling questions of race in tense social situations. His favorite and often repeated line in the novel was, "It loves to happen." Farmington residents were continually confused by this declaration. Makar was exploring the social construction that each

Farmington resident brought with him or her. When confronted with confusing social data or pressured to think quickly, a Farmington resident's seemingly instantaneous response in many cases was to rely on the training of his or her social self, and reify the racially stratified social arrangements that were already present outside of Farmington's protective walls. Makar taught the lesson of social construction to Nathan when he was explaining his flight schedule after returning from an interview for a college teaching position at the University of Chicago in their Black Studies Program. The conversation between the two was about clearing up confusion over whether Makar would fly with American Airlines or Trans World Airlines (TWA). Makar finished the conversation paraphrasing what he thought was Nathan's comment, "What you're saying is a man in his TIME don't confuse actuality with reality?" (Hall, 76). In this passage, Hall demonstrates that even though separate races did not exist, most people thought they did and treated what they thought were different people accordingly. This was their reality even though in actuality it wasn't true.

Consistent with Winant and Omi's Race Formation, the characters in *Music for a Broken Piano* have their own history of race formation that was socially constructed. Makar took on each resident and challenged his or her place in a racially stratified world. Hall demonstrates the technique of depending on a social default mechanism when he wrote of Farmington residents first meeting Makar. They are puzzled by Makar's arcane manners during conversations that often yield frightful consequences. Makar is often insolent, insisting that those around him listen deeply to what he has to say, and he interprets a world of words that for those listeners is difficult to disentangle and reassemble into accessible meanings. He shares with his pupils how race formation works at both conscious and unconscious levels and the possible damage that could be caused by incorrect interpretations.<sup>6</sup>

Nathan's findings concerning the idyllic social experiment called Farmington are that we are social beings affected by our socialization at both the individual and societal levels. We cannot hide from that which emanates from our social selves. While we cannot change the entire world, we can change ourselves. Perhaps this is Makar's greatest lesson and most difficult to learn? The lessons of society, whether good or bad, do in fact, "love to happen," a phrase used several times by Makar.

Each character faces his or her personal social demons as time and place catapults each character into what could be considered a re-enactment of race performance. As one might predict if applying Omni and Winant's Race Formation theory to a reading of Hall's novel, the characters created by Hall ultimately contribute to the restoration of the social drama that occurs in much the same way as the society from which they sought refuge.

Ultimately, losing one's historical race baggage as suggested in Hall's novel would prove difficult if not impossible for most people. 1969 was a time, especially for the young, where sitting at the feet of another would prove difficult, especially the feet of a black man. To do this, one would have to let go of his or her own history. One would have to truly desire to develop the ability to sing the song, and not just know the words. Hall's novel *Music for a Broken Piano* questions how far race relations in the United States had progressed from 1969 to 1982. The same question remains today. How far has racial equality actually progressed? One could argue that little in the way of substantial gains have been made in the last 41 years. Perhaps the last presidential election is evidence of some progress. However, the sociological lists that Makar mentioned in *Music for a Broken Piano* continue today. Makar wished to no longer be on those lists of disenfranchised American citizens. To avoid disenfranchisement, Makar and everyone else would have to leave behind the history of

race formation, a tall order for a culture that has yet to learn not just the words, but the song of equality.

Using selected readings from Hall's *Music for a Broken Piano* will connect students to the relationships between historic and current ideas concerning how racial difference was and is perceived. They will become engaged in an ongoing discussion of how many in the American mainstream perceive racial differences and how that perception over the years has changed, yet in many ways has remained the same. Moreover, these students will gain a greater understanding that the term "race" is not a concrete category, but is subject to change in an increasingly politicized social world. Ultimately, my hopes are that by using selected readings from James Baker Hall's novel *Music for a Broken Piano* many incoming Introduction to Sociology students at Murray State University will recognize that in terms of race over the past 41 years, many of the words have changed, but the song remains the same.

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#### **End Notes**

- 1. I wish to note that Hall's novel *Music for a Broken Piano* is quite complicated and a number of other social problems are addressed including sexism, sexual violence, and gender discrimination, as well as issues related to class formation. This novel could also be used to address issues concerning these matters. Therefore, I am not suggesting that Hall's novel only be used to only teach matters concerning race formation.
- 2. Many students declared that racism in the United States was dead or at least dying and within a few years would be taught as a historical blight that occurred in America in much the same way that the rise of Adolph Hitler was an historical anomaly in German history. It is important to remember that most of the classrooms were filled with students who identified themselves as progressive whites who defined racism and discrimination as a distasteful, antiquated social practice that was only visited by folks as old as their grandparents. Interestingly, the few African-Americans present in those classes often disagreed.
- 3. One could argue that many citizens in the United States are questioning the difference between objective news reporting and opinion manipulation posing as factual news. The result is a segment of the Unites States populace that believes less and less what appears in many mainstream news media outlets.
- 4. In terms of understanding the complexities of race, Winant argued that early sociological theories were problematic though many early theorists were sympathetic towards groups negatively affected by racist ideologies of the day. However, according to Winant, early theorists in small ways contributed to misperceptions concerning racial difference, rather than

remedying faulty perceptions. The misperceptions of racial difference and the inequalities generated by such perceptions remained in place until the publication of "Race Formation," which proposes that race is socially constructed. It changes from time to time as social forces influence the essence of racial categories and the changes that are sometimes necessary to fit an ever-changing social fabric.

- 5. It should be noted that Robert Kennedy was assassinated by Sirhan Sirhan at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, California only nine weeks after the assassination of Martin Luther King in Memphis, Tennessee. Robert Kennedy's brother, President John F. Kennedy was fatally wounded nearly five years earlier in Dallas, Texas while riding in the backseat of a convertible limousine.
- 6. Karen Sternheimer commenting on Omi and Winant's race formation stated that in each of us is a version of racial classification, "....Thus we are inserted in a comprehensively racialized social structure. Race becomes 'common sense'—a way of comprehending, explaining, and acting in the world..." (Sternheimer, Karen. "Racial Formation." *Everyday Sociology Reader*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007, 215).

## Approaching Censorship: James Baker Hall's "The Approaching Sky" and Central Kentucky's Memorial Event for 9/11

by Chris Green

At the climax of his tenure as Poet Laureate of Kentucky, James Baker Hall was invited to read a poem at the 2002 United We Stand memorial event in Lexington, Kentucky. Conducted at The Red Mile, a harness race track in Lexington, the event drew a crowd of more than 2,500 representing a cross-section of race, class, age, occupation, and religious belief. The event offered a moving variety of performances, speeches, prayers, music, and processions. But Hall never appeared on stage.

Sponsored by a coalition of civic and corporate groups, this public gathering was designed to commemorate those lost in the terrorist attacks in New York, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania that took place on September 11, 2001. The memorial event's chairperson explained that the goal was to create "a fully inclusive opportunity for people of all races, religions, and ethnic backgrounds to come together." <sup>1</sup>

When Hall offered to read a poem by Keats or Yeats, an organizer insisted he read one of his own poems. At the request of the event organizers, Hall submitted the poem he planned to read, "The Approaching Sky," assuming that its performance time needed to be verified. Instead, Hall was notified by letter that his poem was being reviewed by the organizers. He responded with a letter of his own: "I appear to be in a situation in which my poem is subject to approval or disapproval by somebody or somebodies. That situation is intolerable. I had no idea I was submitting myself to a situation of this kind."

Hall withdrew his poem while the event's primary organizers were deciding to reject him as a participant. Several explanations for excluding Hall were offered at the time during interviews I conducted. One organizer claimed that the poem's representation of the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians lacked solemnity.<sup>2</sup> Another organizer claimed that Hall's poem was weighed equally against all other community submissions, and concluded that its quality was offset by the danger that the poem would offend people of various religious perspectives.<sup>3</sup> A third organizer found the word "bullshit" offensive and inappropriate for a family atmosphere. The rejection of Hall's poem was also justified by the claim that the committee had received so many talented submissions that, in addition to rejecting Hall, they had to reject a Veterans of Foreign Wars group and a barbershop quartet.<sup>4</sup>

"The Approaching Sky," reprinted with permission from the University Press of Kentucky, recognizes America's role in the cycle of violence that led to the 9/11 attacks. Its call for love and prayer-clarified vision as a way of preventing further violence is a call to moral action. At its writing, then-president George W. Bush was planning to combat terrorism by invading Iraq, a response that would cost thousands of lives. Should the families who gathered at the United We Stand event have heard this four-minute poem, nested among other speakers and songs? Would "The Approaching Sky" have created discord?

"If we can't see that 9/11 belongs to us all, and that there are various responses to it, then we don't understand totalitarianism at all," Hall told me in an interview. "If that poem is denied a place in a public event a year later in the name of security and unity, then that's scary."

#### **Endnotes**

- 1. Marty Kish (Chair of United We Stand Committee, Vice-President of Public Affairs for Valvoline, United Way of the Bluegrass's 2002 Campaign Chair), email to author, October
  - 2. Anonymous, telephone interview with author, November 4, 2002.
- 3. Marty Kish (Chair of United We Stand Committee, Vice-President of Public Affairs for Valvoline, United Way of the Bluegrass's 2002 Campaign Chair) taped interview with author, United Way of the Bluegrass Headquarters, November 2002.
- 4. Ron Mossotti (President of Hammond Communications group) and staff, taped interview with author, Hammond Communications Headquarters, Lexington, KY, November 2002.

## The Approaching Sky

by James Baker Hall

I told the story of a child in a big place of wandering from window to tall window fearful of the approaching sky and then forgot I ever told it until I heard the story again today on the news

There were two of them Boys A settlement the Israelis called it Spring 2001 Both in the joy of their bodies thirteen and fourteen playing hooky in a nearby power place known for its caves

The younger bolder by nature got closer

Once his eyes adjusted what did he see inside looking back at him How many were there

Or did they come up behind heard before seen How many were there picking up stones

Imagine a conversation There may have been one

Can I stop now Isn't this enough

Who wants to see what happened next which Arab wielded how many stones in what fashion

As he had had done unto him no beginning

To see the skulls broken and bleeding at the cave entrance and witness the exultation of children hand-painting in blood

the walls and the exaltation of the elders before these new cave paintings Get back get back get back

you leaders in Tel Aviv Jerusalem Ramala History is upon you as it always has been Your children are in the bargain and now mine

What would we teach them in thought and in deed beyond our hatreds

Our tactics and strategies
Our sense of history our pride
What is it we're proud of
Is it love or something less
than love

Has our power driven us crazy so crazy we don't know what crazy is any longer

Or is it our pride Or is it our money Can it be our money

Who wants to know what our money has done to us what we have done to others under its spell

Let's teach our children
to pray why not
we could use the challenge
In the presence of eternity
how do we present ourselves
Do we pray in thoughts
or in deed only
off camera
the rest bullshit
Is it easy to pray
I was taught that it's easy
to pray but not taught what prayer is
Loss taught me that
And then again

Here's one of its lessons Pray to yourself only and often Pray for love in your heart Enough for your thoughts to clarify

Here's what we have to look at The floors give way within the towers White dust settles over the city Wandering loss holds its pictures up begging for us to look please please look Has anyone seen the loved ones

I'm only a guy another guy off here in the boondocks thousands of miles away How can anyone formulate the challenge

Oh

we leaders
Some day
one of us
or more
will put an end
to this madness
Clear the way
for the next
Is that what we have to offer
Love forgotten ignored lost

## **Public Verse**

—for James Baker Hall

#### by Travis Du Priest

Warning: This poem may, or may not, contain adult content. We aren't exactly sure yet, are we? I mean, it's really up to us—To decide together. So, leave now if you fear clicking on Enter: Anything you hear from now on can and will be used against you.

This poem is not being written from any compunction or inner drive, Nor is it being written for any kind of pleasure. Believe me, No one writes for personal pleasure. Writing is hell, and no One puts herself through that for any reason less than fame.

And, rest assured, all poems are public; don't buy the line Of the humble: they lie, they lie. The only truth they might Have stumbled onto is a thought. I freely confess to you right Now that this poem has not one iota of thought. Actually,

You are the theme of this poem; what you hear is what you get, Nothing more, nothing less. The only content is what you invest in the experience as I read. Shall I pause a moment? Perhaps a thought will come to you? Perchance a dream?

After this poem is finished, you have the right to remain silent, But even that is not my call. Your rights are your own, and you May wish to disassociate yourself not only from this poem, but From all poetry you ever read in the future. The only virtue

I hold before you is that this verse is perhaps the least egotistic poem ever written. No grants made this experience possible, nothing from the Park Foundation or The Arthur Vining Davis Fund, not a cent. This poem was made possible entirely by listeners like you.

## Perfection in Scottsdale; or, Unneeded Armor

-for James Baker Hall

#### by Harry Brown

I watched a Latino woman walk along in Old Town; her dark blond hair, perfectly sculpted, spread wide across shoulders and back, cut off straight as Arizona interstate just above her hips. Plank starched and knife creased without a wrinkle, her blue jeans touched but didn't the sidewalk as if levitating in contact with concrete but showing no disturbance, no thread touched—full foil to the holey, washed-out jeans hanging on youth slouching about in the post-Christmas crowd, proud of their high fashion. Thirtyish and stiff upright as a new-set locust post, the woman must have worn spikes, for measured and almost slow, she had a loping step like the arm of a metronome moving in one direction only. Slender, she wore a fitted camel coat that came below her waist; solemn-faced with light brown skin and dark red lips, chin lifted and eyebrows slightly arched, she looked straight ahead as if above—and ignoring—a staring world.

I alone watched.

The tone,

imperiously sullen, seemed an aloof tank against the confident holiday bustle that didn't know she breathed.

## One Moment with James Baker Hall, circa 1975

#### by Normandi Ellis

He lived on East Maxwell Street behind a tall hedge in a house that he designed as if it were his own Bollingen Tower— a sanctuary to the creative process, grounded in memory and spiraling upward. He filled this house with people. He was generous with his students. I remember more than once meeting a "great poet" who had come to the university to read–Richard Wilbur and Diane Wakowski in particular I remember.

He filled the white walls on the lower floor with his photographs, black and white. The camera's eye liked to linger on the detail of a line or the texture of a whole. His look into image seemed simultaneously micro-and macroscopic. I recall that his house had but one door inside, a concession even at that. It separated a private space, his darkroom. Upstairs his walls were lined with books; it was a kind of Borgesian library in that wherever one walked, one walked among books. His writing desk was up there and his bedroom. Image at the ground floor–transcendent metaphor above. All this was corralled by a railing on the second floor landing. The banister was all that separated the poet and photographer from the chasm below him.

Words and typewriter clacks, epithets and exclamations all veered off the bookshelves, pinged and tumbled onto the hardwood floor downstairs where I sat on this particular day with our friend, Susan. She and I were writing in journals. Jim was above us clacking away on his typewriter. We three were separated by our separate internal spaces, but writing together. I heard above me, a loud slap of annoyance, the flat palm against a glistening forehead. Slap! like swatting an idea of pesky fly.

Iheard Jim exclaim, "He said *That*!" I could almost feel the palm of his hand sliding over his bald head and scuffing the ruff of white hair at the back of his head. "Well, *That* changes *everything*!" Here came the grinding whiz-zip of a sheet of paper being snatched from the manual Royal typewriter and whisked away. A few seconds later came the crick-crick, the slow turn of the platen as a fresh sheet was cranked into place. Slowly, light collected itself in the skylight and streamed in. The typewriter keys tap-tapped a staccato, halting at first, then soon fell into a rhythmic sound. He found a stride between keystrokes and so moved on through the afternoon sunlight until his other students dribbled through the front door and it was time for class.

This was how I learned what it would mean to write a novel. The very scary reality of creating characters that began to talk and then would take off all on their own, veering from their intended dialogue, turning a wry smile and letting unheralded words drop from their jaws—characters who darted into bathroom stalls inside previously unknown places. "He said *That*? He did *That*? That changes everything."

I was twenty years old and James Baker Hall (from what he'd let on in class) had been trying to write this novel for nearly ten years. Here, he thought he was nearly finished, coming around the last bend in a sprint, but during a crucial final scene, the character had taken an impractical leap off the page and grabbed him by the ears. As I listened to the commotion upstairs I thought then, "I will never make a novelist. I'll write a short story or two—maybe, but I couldn't bear to put in all those years into something that at any moment I might have to start all over again."

While I lived out west, I wrote short stories and published them. I once tried to create a book of interwoven short pieces, but it didn't quite work out as I planned. I wasn't ready for a commitment that, it turned out in my case, would last longer than the average marriage. I couldn't say that particular literary "N" word. I wasn't working on a Novel—I was working on a "n-n-n—long piece."

I came back to Kentucky some ten years later to find myself attending a reading and publication party for Jim's new novel. I was excited to hear what he'd been doing since I'd been gone. At the reading I met his wife Mary Ann Taylor Hall—a tall, elegant, woman, as talented as she was beautiful. Gurney Norman was there, an old friend, and assorted students, some of whom I knew and others whom Jim had influenced through his writing and classes in the years since I'd been gone. His classes were notorious for inflicting artistic honesty and integrity on the student. Those who survived the grueling honesty of Jim's classes adored him for having made them not just better writers, but in some way better persons.

When Jim began to read from his novel, I recognized it as from the same piece I had first heard, now almost fifteen years earlier. Only there was a difference. The other version had been driven and intense, and so was this one, but it was also heart-breakingly beautiful. This was the eloquence that his character must have insisted upon and which Jim summoned from his depths in order to tell that story in *Music for a Broken Piano* (1982). When the reading was over, the party began, but I walked out to my car by myself. I remember sitting there, listening to the talk, talk, talk that scatters onto the sidewalk after the intensity of a good reading. I rolled up the car window. I sat in the silence and then I banged my head against the steering wheel, thinking, "God, I wish I had written that. I wish I could write anything remotely like that."

Then came a quiet little voice that said, perhaps for the entire twenty years that Jim was writing that novel and the character was whispering in his ear, Jim might once have thought, "Damn, I wish I'd thought of that before he did."

This is one of those lessons I learned from Jim. Let the voice come. Let the narrator run loose inside your head and just follow it. Let the voice live wholly inside your art—inhabit it as if it were inside a house and a life you built for it. Live up close to the ceiling where the words are about to rise up and float out the window toward blue sky. Live deeply inside the images. Learn to see not just photographically the images, but all the patterns, the unfurling curtains and fern fronds and clenched fingers, all the texture of bodies and shafts of light that fall not so much like arrows pointing the way, but like curtains that billow, lifting and falling through a scene. And let there be a witness, an innocent. Every scene should have a poignancy made palpable by the presence of the innocent. That might be the young son walking quietly on his tiptoes through the hallway, or the cardinal cocking its eye back at you as he perches on a windowsill.

And whatever else you do, you have to be willing to change in concert with the life you've created.

*Em-hotep*, James Baker Hall (1935-2009)

## **Metaphors & Horses**

—for James Baker Hall, Kentucky Writers' Day 2001

#### by Frank X Walker

If metaphors were horses if alliteration was as wondrous as a touchdown pass or a three point shot we could sell season tickets to open mic sessions

young people would stand in line all night or camp out in the snow for front row seats to hear george ella lyon read "where I come from"

a mint condition gurney norman rookie card would be worth an acre of tobacco and a james still or robert penn warren first edition a mountain of coal

if metaphors were horses
if alliteration was as wondrous
as a touchdown pass
poets would have their own streets
we would auction off
autographed books
at bourbon balls
toy stores would sell
nikky finney
action figures
and frank x
would have a shoe contract

the whole world would stop every spring get all dressed up place bets draft office pools and hold their breath for at least two televised minutes we would all stand on our feet and cheer praising the rhythm celebrating the majestic beauty of pat day in the final stanza aboard *corregidora* nosing out Kentucky bred blackberries blackberries and ahab's wife

If reading
and writers
were really important
we would all gather at the state
capital
to crown one king
and the governor
would come
to hear him
sing

As a former student of Jim Hall's, one of many in the audience, it was with great pride that I accepted an opportunity to write an occasional poem (a rarity for me). I wrote "Metaphors & Horses" especially for Jim and read it in the Rotunda in Frankfort at his installation as Poet Laureate on April 24, 2001. I enjoyed watching him, surrounded by dear friends, waffle between immense pride and slight embarrassment at all the attention he received.

Robert Penn Warren's birthday, also known in the bluegrass as Kentucky Writers Day (thanks to the Kentucky Arts Council), has become a significant event in the literary community and an opportunity to honor our great treasures while they are living and active. It has also become an incredible opportunity for our treasures to in turn serve the commonwealth by traveling to every nook and corner to share their work with eager audiences. I believe it's one of the many things that makes being a Kentucky writer truly special. I imagine that at least for one day, Jim felt like a king.

## The day of Jim's memorial service by Karah Stokes

the sun spun in the sky forever.

I spun around my garden, daubing blue in the spaces between the morning glories onto a piece of wrought iron that spiraled toward the sky

Where the sun wheeled so high I didn't know till evening it was afternoon.

The day of Jim's memorial service all the Oriental lilies in my yard opened their faces, stuck out their dragons' tongues, and burned the air with their perfume.

I opened the trunk of my old Corolla and hefted clamshells from an ancient creek bed out into light they had not seen in eons.

The sun condensed itself into a tomato the size and redness of a penny It broke off in my hand and sweetened my mouth.

I thought he'd be here forever,

showing me what I was thinking by seeing it like the light striking the plate behind the camera, halo of white hair rising above his face like the flame above a third eye.

He had no idea how much he gave.

I can't count it, either, even for myself.
Here I am, trying to say it,
writing my first poem in years
Following the remembered rhythm of his voice,
like a child hopping
from one of her father's footsteps
to the next
through the deep snowdrifts
of the white page.

## **James Baker Hall 1935-2009**

by Gray Zeitz

Jim left the daylilies in full bloom. Jim is now a daylily.

My mother comes when the dogwood blooms as if she were still here, so sharp the memory.

We think of the loved often, to remember what was shared, ask questions, like I'd ask of you and you and you.

Like on walks in the backwood when we come across a clump of daffodils and realize here was someone's home, the house over here.

& I'm listening, you telling me how this life is put together.

How this poem is put together. How to see in this light.

## **Speed Graphic**

-for James Baker Hall

#### by Rebecca Gayle Howell

I snap a picture of your absence A glass bulb exploding

The negative is true black The emulsion, clean

I take your stiff finger, its yellow nail Together, we scrape a tree there, tall oak with a woman's hair

In the background, we draw a blue-eyed boy afraid of his own mother, her gunshot, his penis Afraid of what goes off—

In the foreground, we draw a bald-headed man with his hand out

I take his hand

You who pulled delight to you like it was on a leash—leaning out of your chair: calling *Come*, back Come—

You who laid cold in your bed you are gone

My arms are heavy with the machine of it, this work-horse of a camera you gave to me when I was a girl

The Speed Graphic
The first camera for war and news
A case of chrome and timing
A case for ruthless truth

You showed me how to slide the lens on its track:

the business of focus, you said, is not a secret It is a measured space, found between where we both stand Tonight, my red leather bellows extends

I snap a picture of your absence The negative is true black Clean

I enter the darkroom Turn on the safe light Print

All I have left is a sun in a box, my god—

a bright white frame

## **Horses**

an elegy for James Baker Hall

#### by Frederick Smock

i.

I have read that horses have 20/30 vision. That they see things not everyone sees. The light at the edge of the field. The light in a corner of the stall. They see into the peripheries, deeply so. Into shadows where ghosts and grimalkins live. They see clear to the horizon, where oceans spill off the end of this flat disk of a world, and clouds roll round some corner of the sky, heavyladen with snow, rain.

ii.

Horses—their large dark eyes. It is like looking into a burl of wood.
They know the past, and they know the future.
Thus do they need blinkers when they are saddled and raced, but not to run wild.
They can run wild by themselves just fine.

## **Dividing Ridge Waltz**

(Song for James Baker Hall, 1935-2009)

#### by Rhonda Pettit

(As the title indicates, the song is a waltz, played in ¾ time using arpeggio strumming.)

G
Jim, I can't see you now,
C
How are you here?
D7
Nothing wrong with my eyes,
C
G
Nothing wrong with the light.
G
Jim, I can't see you now,
C
How are you here?

How are you here?
D7
In the reds and the blues
G

That mother the night.

Jim, I can't hear you now, How do you speak? I hear fine for my age. Something's wrong on the stage Jim, I can't hear you now, How do you speak? With the song of the words That poem the page.

Jim, I can't touch you now, How do you reach? Hands with camera and pen Moving beyond the frame. Jim, I can't touch you now, How do you reach? When light kisses the ridge And cedars each day.

#### **BRIDGE**

Thanks to you

D

I see

C

Your seeing showed C

Me a way – ay –ay

(Instrumental verse; repeat bridge with variation:)

Thanks to you

D

We see

C

Your seeing shows

C

Us a way - ay - ay - ay

Jim, you are with us now,

What shall we make?

Something new with our hands?

Something new with our words?

Jim, you are with us now,

What shall we make?

Nothing wrong with a mind

That reaches with love.

Nothing wrong with a mind

That listens with love.

Nothing wrong with a mind

That sees through to love.

## On Making Elbow of Light: A Film on James Baker Hall\*

### by Whitney Baker

When I asked James Baker Hall if I could do a film on his life, his work, his teaching, I imagined a viewer who didn't know life could be transformed through writing and art. At one time, I was that person, locked in to a cycle of confusion, rehashing the same unresolved stories and arguments about life, death, beauty and destruction. Without giving ourselves the right to be surprised by creation and re-creation, we spin our wheels, and our resentments entrench rather than pass away. Jim helped us understand art's role in letting go of old ideas and opening one's self to new ones. Jim agreed to let me make the film. The only issue was, I knew nothing about filmmaking

I thought that if I must, I could charge about \$2,000.00 on my credit cards to get a camera, then borrow time on someone's computer. I knew Jim's former student and assistant Sarah Wylie Ammerman, who was in San Francisco getting her M.F.A., well enough to send her an email and ask her advice on the best camera I could get for that dollar figure. At some point, I asked if she would be able come home and help with the film over the summer. She agreed. Little did I know how crucial she would be to the creation of the film. I had a lot to learn about the joy, frustration and triumph of collaboration. I was a poet and painter; collaboration was not my department.

Jim suggested that I call Griffin VanMeter, who like Sarah Wylie I knew only vaguely, to help find money. I told Griffin that Sarah Wylie had agreed to come home and help put the film together. "I know Sarah Wylie," Griffin said, "she's going to be my wife." Turns out she didn't know, but that's another story. Griffin secured \$10,000 for a killer HD camera and a Mac the size of a file cabinet. So far, so good. Now all we had to do was make a film. "How," I was secretly thinking to myself, "the hell does one do that?"

I figured the piece wouldn't be more than an hour or so, but how to make it that short? James Baker Hall could take ten minutes to recite a poem from memory, thirty minutes to talk about why he won't drink coke out of a can. How to summarize such a man? To add to that the reminiscences of former students, friends, and colleagues, and still more, footage of Jim and his wife Mary Ann Taylor-Hall's amazing house and outlying studios and their daily lives seemed to be too much. I believe it was when the subject of Jim's unseen art film came up that we realized that the film could not be all things to all people. It was then I decided the film would not be "about" the

subject, but "of" it. As my heart had whispered to me all along, the aim was to distill Jim's spirit.

A few seminal images persisted. Once while visiting Jim and Mary Ann, I saw him at his sink shaving, his shirt off. I found the vulnerability of that image undeniable. I asked Sarah Wylie to shoot Jim shaving. Our first try was with an electric razor, but it was not what I wanted. She shot him again, with a conventional razor, and washing his hair in the sink, with his face reflected in the mirror. It is one of the most beautiful pieces of film making I have seen. I had a vague idea; my collaborator realized it. When I saw that, the fun meter spiked. She went on to get one beautiful piece of footage after another. And, as luck would have it, my more amateurish efforts filming worked compatibly. We could see that we had a yin and yang of footage, the artful played against the rough and immediate.

After a film is conceptualized, and footage is gathered, the work begins in editing. We had about twenty 43-minute tapes. I pored over them, listening, re-listening, making notes on a spreadsheet. From there we pulled the selections into a very rough time-line to begin piecing something together. Editing is exhausting, painstaking, thrilling work. With the headphones clamped on, alone for hours on end, one begins by biting big chunks of footage and spitting them onto a new time-line.

We had to trace many roads to their dead ends. I shot hours of footage of willing volunteers reading Jim's work, and hours literally just wandering around. We, mostly me, were flying by the seat of our pants. Sarah Wylie was beyond patient and cooperative. We were sniffing, sniffing. "Where is it," I kept thinking, "where is this film?" At some point, I had something pasted together while Sarah Wylie was back in San Francisco for a few weeks. I screened it for some friends. To summarize their reactions: "Man, that sucks." It was too vague, too impressionistic, too impatient. I always wanted to be done *now*, but fortunately Sarah Wylie and Griffin were willing to wait.

Because we had no script and no storyboard, there was no obvious order. We had to listen to what the footage had to say. I would work, then hand it over to Sarah Wylie. She would then suggest, edit, re-edit, move. I remained the director, that is, I had final say, but finally it became clear that what had started as *my* film about Jim had become *our* film. The scenes were talking to one another. Together, *Elbow of Light* began to take shape.

In addition to our other challenges, we had shot the film in all kinds of light, artificial and natural. I had no idea what all the buttons on the camera meant. The best I could do was lay a sheet of white cardboard on the ground to try and bounce some sun into the shadows on my subject. One crucial feature I fumbled was focus. One night I went to interview Jim and Mary Ann in their house after dark. We had little light. Jim was addressing a particularly sensitive subject, and I was keen on using the zoom. Unfortunately, I didn't know how. When I got home, it turned out the autofocus was on (and off and on), and Jim, Mary Ann and the white couch were orange. But, because fate sometimes smiles on us, it was all perfect. The focus did its job when Jim's comments were most poignant, and the color was, inexplicably, ideal. It couldn't have been planned.

We were learning all the time. The Final Cut Pro software offers all kinds of tools, most of which I had no idea how to use. In many ways, the program is brilliantly intuitive. Whatever seems the easiest is usually the way to go. However, just beyond the horizon of drag-and-drop and scissors is the byzantine mystery of compression, color balance, and sound. Ignorance ruled.

What I had was instinct. I knew when something felt right. I knew my subject. I had help and I was willing to be wrong and wrong again. Paradoxically, hunches, failings and weaknesses became the steps necessary to make my first real film.

Like all of us, James Baker Hall embodied contradictions at times, but his life's arc stood for enduring tragedy and arriving at a much better place, and his life stood for how the spirit of joy and art could transform. I want this film to be a gift to Jim's memory, and more importantly, a small contribution to the library of hope and happiness.

<sup>\*</sup> *Elbow of Light*, a film by Whitney Baker and Sarah Wylie VanMeter, directed by Whitney Baker, produced by Griffin VanMeter, original music by James Friley. 2010. First screenings: The Downtown Arts Center Black Box Theatre, 141 East Main Street, Lexington, Kentucky, April 30, 2010.

## A Conversation with James Baker Hall

(February 5, 2009)

#### by Arwen Donahue

In February of 2009, I met with Jim for our second interview. By then his stamina had decreased dramatically. We recorded a half hour of conversation about his studies in Zen Buddhism and his friendship with W. S. Merwin, and then Jim was worn out. It was our last one-on-one visit.

As with the interview conducted three months earlier (November 18, 2008–see page 53), I have again edited with a light hand.

**ARWEN DONAHUE:** How did you get interested in W. S. Merwin, and how did you meet him?

JAMES BAKER HALL: I heard W. S. Merwin read in Seattle in 1959, and I don't know this for sure, but I think probably he had published two or three books at that time. He won the Yale Younger Poet's prize and very quickly got a reputation for being a young prince of American poetry. In his late twenties, he was well-known among poetry readers, and because other people were reading him and he did get into the conversation with some regularity, I always read W. S. Merwin books and poems when I saw them. But I never got all that much from them. He certainly was not one of my favorite writers. He wasn't somebody that I was paying a whole lot of attention to.

"... I read a W. S. Merwin poem that just took my head off, and then I got another one and another one." In those days a lot of us thought we had to keep up, as we said, stay abreast of what was being done, read the people who were being read, be able to talk to other people

who were keeping up, and a good deal of your credibility in conversation with other artists, with other writers, hinged on you knowing what was going on. If you started talking to somebody who didn't know what was going on, it meant to most of us that what they had to say wasn't well-informed enough.

So I read W. S. Merwin for years, as just another person on the long list,

and in the mid-seventies—1977-8, somewhere along in there—I was at the University of Kentucky teaching fiction writing and poetry writing, and was in Lexington when school was in session, and then I was in Connecticut with my wife and children when school wasn't in session. And my life was, over a five-year period, coming apart. That marriage was coming apart, and along about '78, I got aware of the fact that I couldn't maintain this long-distance marriage, and had to get out of it.

I was down to a mattress and a pillow and a bottle of bourbon and a package of Winston cigarettes and a typewriter. Somewhere along the way, I read a W. S. Merwin poem that just took my head off, and then I got another one and another one. And I realized all of a sudden that this guy was writing poetry that excited me like only a few other poets ever had, and that he was talking directly to me. He was telling me, time and again, where I was and what was going on. Along with the mattress and the bottle of bourbon and the typewriter, I had two or

"[Merwin] was writing poetry that excited me like only a few other poets ever had.... He was telling me, time and again, where I was and what was going on." three W. S. Merwin titles on the floor there. Before I went to sleep each night, I would just reach over at random, open one of those books, and read two or three poems. This was a relationship

with literature the likes of which got me excited when I first encountered T. S. Eliot. This was work that you wanted near at hand and that you looked to for guidance. He was a spirit guide.

I was running the writing program and the reading program [at UK] and I invited him to Lexington to read, and that's how I met him. I think this was probably in '78 or nine. We struck up a conversation that got increasingly intense on the subject of teachers. I was looking for a teacher, and the one most apparent over and over and over again was Chögyam Trungpa, a Tibetan Buddhist teacher who was in Boulder. There were a bunch of Trungpa students in Lexington. There was a Tibetan center—what's now the Shambhala Center.

**AD:** Before we go on, can I ask if you remember what the poem was that first penetrated?

**JBH:** No. No. Let's just say "Lemuel's Blessing." I had heard "Lemuel's Blessing" many times before it took my head off. It could have been "Lemuel's Blessing," "The Station." It could have been any number of poems that are teaching poems.

That was like Rilke. I had this experience with Rilke of reading him for years and years and years and years and thinking he was a kind of fuzzy-headed German philosophical poet that everybody seemed much more interested in than I could get, and then all of a sudden Rilke became available to me, and that's the way it happened with William. He came to read in Lexington several times while I was running that reading program. The first time, he met some of my students over at my place, and he saw some books in my apartment that he asked about. I was reading things that interested him; some of the transcribed teaching sessions of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* among them, and a bunch of books on Zen and such like.

[Merwin] was an old friend of Wendell [Berry]'s, and after he got done with his responsibilities at UK, we went down to visit the Berrys in Port Royal. On the way down there, we had a conversation in which he asked me what my interests were that those books represented, and I said, "I'm looking for a teacher." I told him that the only obvious teacher was Trungpa, and that one of the things that hung me up about going to Trungpa was the story, among the many that accompanied Trungpa, of his terrible abuse of W. S. Merwin.\*

I did not want to submit my mind to the influence of the guy who did this [to Merwin]. So I said, "Well, who are you studying with now?" He said he was studying with Robert Aitken in Maui, and that he'd gone to Maui to study with Aitken Roshi. I asked him if he was a trustworthy teacher, and he said, "Yes, he is." And I said, "Well, could I become his student?" He said, "I'll ask."

So I went to Hawaii to be a student of Aitken Roshi at the Maui Zendo, and William was a member of that sangha. I stayed there for about a month at the training center in which you sat all day long and had dopas. I had a teaching session head to head with the teacher. I started kōan study, and William and I got close. He and Dana were living in a house on Maui; I took care of the dogs when they were on the mainland, and I think I was out there for two months, two separate sessions in the summer of '79.

At the end of it, I had a sabbatical leave that was followed by an NEA grant which gave me two years. When I left Maui and [Merwin] wanted to know where I was going, I didn't know. I had somebody in Seattle that I wanted to visit. He said, "Do you want my apartment in New York?" He had had for years the lease on a sixth floor walkup at the corner of Waverly Place and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. I mean, that's right in the center of the West Village. He kept the lease because he loved the place, but he didn't live there all that much. He had a place in southern France. He had a place in Hawaii. He was all over the place, in New York for only a few weeks a year, so he let somebody else stay in the apartment who would pay the rent and be able to vacate it when he wanted it. He asked me if I wanted that apartment, and I said, "Sure."

I went to Princeton, picked up the keys, and went to New York, and lived in that apartment for the next two years, except for a few weeks when he wanted to be there, when I'd come back to Kentucky. And then Mary Ann [Taylor-Hall] and I took up in 1980, and we shared keys to that apartment with William and whoever he was with for years. It was a glorious apartment. It was upstairs over the Village Vanguard, where a lot of the great jazz sessions in New York were held, and the rent was \$137 a month for three small rooms, but beautifully, beautifully located. And so we shared the rent and shared the keys, and we had an apartment in New York to go to whenever we wanted it, and it was a charm. We got closer and closer, and when he took up with Paula, his current wife, I was the best man at their wedding. It was at the Zen Center in Riverdale.

I studied with two or three different Zen teachers in New York in that two- or three-year period I was there, and we had this connection through poetry and through Zen study, through kōan study, that led into this shared apartment. And there were many times when we needed one another in a special way. After he and Paula got married, Paula and Mary Ann became very good friends. They talk to each other on the phone regularly. So we stay close.

<sup>\*</sup>For an account of this story, see for example Tom Clark, *The Great Naropa Poetry Wars*, Cadmus Editions, 1981.

Sometime during the eighties, Mary Ann inherited some—what was it—stocks, maybe, from her father, and she wanted something real. Jerry [Gerald] Stern and his girlfriend and William and Paula and Mary Ann and I were at this hotel on the Jersey coast, and at breakfast one morning, the subject came up of this inheritance that Mary Ann got and wanting something real. William or Paula said, "The property across the creek from us is for sale. It's six and a half acres." Mary Ann had never been to Maui. I knew what we were talking about. But by noontime we were on the telephone with a lawyer in Honolulu and we bought the

"... we not only have the body of poetry written in English as a common teacher as poets, but we have common teachers in Buddhism."

six and a half acres, sight unseen, with a house on it.

This didn't last long. Three years. Something like that. It got way too complex. We shared a creek bed with the Merwins. He had I

don't know how many acres at that time. Now he's got many more, and they're all planted in endangered South Pacific palm trees. He's got one of the world's great arboretums, and it's a stunning, stunning place; his arboretum, his house. And we were on the next ridge over.

So there had been any number of ways in which our lives have become very entwined, and we know Paula's children, especially the writer son, John [Burnham] Schwartz, and we know a lot of their friends. People that I've never met are in the conversation because of stories that Paula tells Mary Ann. And his work has been a very important influence on me and my work.

**AD:** Has that influence evolved over time?

JBH: Well, it's a question I find very difficult to assess. I mean, some people would say, "Yeah. You don't use any punctuation and he doesn't use any punctuation." It would be that superficial. But it's not superficial at all, and it's not just that I've learned a lot from his poetry. It's that we both have common teachers. We both study—I mean, he could be a Dharma heir, meaning he could [have been] a Zen master a long time ago if he wanted to be. He doesn't want to do that, but he continues to work with selected teachers. He's an absolute genius in koan study.

**AD:** Can you give an example of what you mean by that?

**JBH:** Well, no because you have to know what koan study is in order to, and that's a long story. Koans are little conundrums. They cannot be responded to rationally. Like in the lineage that I've studied most in, the first koan they give you is called *Mu*, and it goes like: "The student came to the teacher and said, 'Does a dog have Buddha nature?' And the teacher said, 'Mu." So they send you away to sit on that, and then you go back and the teacher asks you questions like, "What is mu? Show me mu." And you give these answers and the teacher sends you away, rings the bell, you leave, until you get it right, until the teacher thinks you know what you're talking about. Some people stay in Zen study for years and years without passing Mu, without giving a teacher a series of answers that are satisfactory.

**AD:** Was that the format of your studies with Aitken?

**JBH:** Yeah. It took me a month to pass Mu, and that was quick. If you have a Zen mind or something close to it to begin with—which means a non-conceptual mind—you get these things much more easily. If you conceptualize, they're just impassable. There are different collections of koans—the one that we were working with is a book called *The Mu Mon Kwan* and then on the other side of The Mu Mon Kwan is the Blue Cliff Record and other collections of koans. And depending on what lineage you're in or what teacher you've got, you work with x number of kōans, like 164 or forty-eight or five hundred or whatever.

So we not only have the body of poetry written in English as a common teacher as poets, but we have common teachers in Buddhism. And I mean, you wouldn't know that W. S. Merwin was a Buddhist from his poetry unless you knew what (laughs) Buddhism was. I mean, Gary Snyder is known as a Buddhist poet because he makes it apparent; uses all of that special Buddhist terminology and talks about Buddhism. Allen Ginsberg is known as a Buddhist poet. He's a Tibetan Buddhist poet. Ginsberg was a student of Trungpa's.

Have you ever talked with William about why he doesn't do that?

**JBH:** Well, yeah. Sure. (Laughs) It represents a very profound lack of understanding of Zen to talk about Zen, if that's comprehensible. It's not something you talk about.



W. S. Merwin in Hawaii, late 1980s. Photograph by James Baker Hall

## For the Year

—for James Baker Hall and Mary Ann Taylor-Hall **by W. S. Merwin** 

If I did not know I could not tell by watching the blue sky

with not a cloud moving across it in the still morning above the flying songs of the thrushes

that in these unseen hours of clear daylight one more year even now is leaving us one more year one more decade wherever it is that they go once they have been here

and we waited up for them I stood in a friend's house high on a hill looking out over the city to the sea ten years ago and my ears rang with the midnight

fireworks rising from the lit streets into that time with its stars my hair was still dark I did not know you and in the morning both the puppies barked and the tiles had come

for the new roof we are living under it is already a year now since we sat here with friends by candlelight talking of childhoods risen at last from hiding until we saw that the candles had burned past the moment we had been waiting for and already it had slipped through our words and hands and was gone and the year was new

without our having seen how it happened bringing with it far from our sight this whole day wherever it is going now as we watch it together here in the morning

## A Flask of This

### by Mary Ann Taylor-Hall

The old lopsided hula hoop of time swings round swings round the slowly shimmying sun. Who are we, my love, taking this sliding ride, careening through our uneven days and nights. Here's fall again, our wedding month. The slanted light comes back to speak of what we will be missing later on the long light longing just ahead of time for what is not yet gone, for itself, in fact, drifting through early haze, touching the spires of firestalk, the dragonfly sunning its wings on a rock, the breeze, the gentle, living air. We need a flask of this to see us through, to pass to one another as we go, to help us through the iron days to come, to make us drunk.

Oh drunken globe of earth on your wobbly course, nothing is lost forever, is it? We'll come round to this again. This day will come again, and we'll be in it.

## The Spirit Stays

#### by James Baker Hall

up the stairs behind a door the house the whole of it stays quiet the spirit stays in the basement under the orderly boxes of your father's leavings or maybe your father was disorderly

the spirit stays in the pathstones leading to the garage and in the grass grown up between them and in the newspapers filling the Kroger's sacks both paper and plastic waiting to be recycled the spirit stays in the dogs sleeping in the sunlight on the other side of the letter box and in the blue plastic Herald-Leader tube across the road the spirit stays until it goes it goes until it comes back and stays until it goes again oh where was I all the while here here and again here until here is there and elsewhere now we're getting somewhere now we're gone already

all the while
the newborne sleeps
until she's a year old
ready to utter her first word
what will it be
what was it for you
you don't remember you say
your parents remember
ask them to tell you
they're dead you say
all the more likely

they'll remember I say
that moment when the spirit
left its hiding place
and took up its next
body the first word
the spirit stayed
and went thus
few are the first words
many are the newborne

## Inaugural Event of Voices from the Hills: a Celebration of Appalachian Writers, in Honor of Danny Miller (1949-2008)

# Round-Table Discussion: The Future of Appalachian Literature

## Greaves Concert Hall Northern Kentucky University 26 September 2009

The Round-Table Discussion transcribed below was the opening event of *Voices from the Hills*, a daylong celebration of Appalachian writers in honor of Danny Miller, a beloved author, editor, mentor, teacher, and friend to countless writers and students throughout the Appalachian region. Danny taught at Northern Kentucky University from 1981 until his death on November 9, 2008, in his tenth year as chair of the recently renamed Department of English. Danny's acute, loving work as co-editor of this journal from 1988 is recognized in the tribute from co-editor and successor Gary Walton that begins the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary issue, published to coincide with our day of celebration on September 26, 2009. The Round-Table Discussion in Greaves Concert Hall, from 10:00-11:15 in the morning, was followed by a Memorial Luncheon in the University Center Ballroom at which the keynote speakers were Gurney Norman and Frank X Walker in dialogue. The Public Reading back in Greaves Concert Hall beginning at 1:30 featured readings by Gurney Norman, Crystal Wilkinson, and Wendell Berry. The afternoon concluded with a book signing and reception, with music by Sherry Stanforth and her Appalachian band *Sunset Dawn*.

The organizers at NKU are extremely grateful for the generosity of the writers and musicians who made this exhilarating event in memory of Danny possible. We are grateful that his brothers Tim and Jim Miller were able to be with us from North Carolina. We are also grateful to InkTank of Cincinnati for their warm-up event on the evening of September 25 and to the Kentucky Philological Association, the University Press of Kentucky, the Mercantile Library of Cincinnati, and Karen McLennon for

sponsoring the four prizes in the Danny Miller Student Writing Contests that were awarded at the Memorial Luncheon. Proceeds from *Voices from the Hills*, augmented by funds from the offices of the President and the Provost at NKU and scores of individual donations, have enabled us to create an endowed Danny Miller Memorial Scholarship for Advanced Graduate Study in the M. A. program in English (a program whose creation was one of Danny's last achievements as department chair).

-Robert K. Wallace, Regents Professor, Department of English, Northern Kentucky University

## Panelists:

Richard Hague (RH), Chris Holbrook (CH), Jeff Mann (JM), Frank X Walker (FXW), Marianne Worthington (MW).

Moderator: Laura Sutton (LS)

#### Event Organizer: Robert Wallace (RW)

RW: Welcome to *Voices from the Hills*. Thank you all for coming on this drizzly morning to celebrate the life of Danny Miller and the writers he loved. I am Bob Wallace, one of Danny's colleagues here in the English Department for 28 years. Almost exactly one year ago, Danny had the pleasure of introducing Wendell Berry in this very hall for one of those readings that you never forget. Less than two months after that, this hall was again filled to capacity but this time for the memorial service for Danny, who died suddenly of a stroke at age 59, just about to complete his tenth year as chair of the English Department here. Everyone who was here remembers the extraordinary combination of love and loss that filled this room. I saw someone at a conference six months later. He said, "If church was like that, I'd be a believer" [laughter]. This is the first of four events that will celebrate different aspects of Danny's life as a reader, teacher, writer, editor, and friend. I am very grateful to Laura Sutton, who will be moderating our round-table discussion of the future of Appalachian literature. She is an editor at the University Press of Kentucky, where she has brought out an impressive range of books on Appalachian literature and culture. Laura will introduce our five panelists. As you will see, they are a veritable Who's Who of writers in the field. I am very grateful to each of them for being here with us today. After the round-table discussion, there will be some time for questions from the audience. We will end this session at 11:15 to allow time to convene for the luncheon at 11:45, which had to be moved to another building because so many people registered. Laura . . . . [He hands the microphone, and session, to Laura.]

**LS:** Good morning, I'm Laura Sutton. It's so wonderful to see all of you here this morning on a day of true celebration. I want to quickly introduce our panelists and then just kind of let them loose. We're going to have some fun this morning.

To my immediate right is Jeff Mann. Jeff, from his bio, is at least a triple threat. He has written three award-winning chapbooks and two full-length books of poetry; a collection of personal essays, *Edge: Travels of an Appalachian Leather Bear*; and the novella, *Devoured*.

I think many of us probably best know him for his collection of poetry/

memoir, *Loving Mountains*, *Loving Men*, and he's also the author of the Lambda Literary Award-winning *A History of Barbed Wire*. Jeff comes to us from Virginia Tech, where he teaches creative writing.

To Jeff's right is Marianne Worthington. Marianne is a poet and educator. She, of course, is author of the chapbook *Larger Bodies than Mine*, which won the 2007 Appalachian Book-of-the-Year Award. She has edited two volumes in the Motes Books MOTIF anthology series. She is poetry editor for *Now and Then*, and she teaches communication and journalism at the University of the Cumberlands (some of us still like to call that Cumberland College).

Next, is Chris Holbrook. Chris, of course, is a native of Knott County, Kentucky. He sort of burst on the scene a little more than a decade ago, maybe 12 or so years ago, with *Hell and Ohio*, which won the Chaffin Award. More recently, he's come out with a second collection of short stories, titled *Upheaval*. He is a graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop, and he now teaches at Morehead State University.

Next we have Richard Hague. Richard, I think you go by "Dick," correct? [Yes.] So we can call you Dick this morning? He is a member of the Southern Appalachian Writers Workshop; he is editor-emeritus of *Pine Mountain Sand and Grave*l, which is an anthology of contemporary Appalachian writing; and he is a board member of Cincinnati's InkTank, which hopefully some of you all experienced at the event last evening. It's a non-profit literacy and literature organization just over the river in Cincinnati. Dick teaches in Cincinnati and Boston. He is the author of *Ripening*, for which he was named Co-Poet of Ohio in '85; *Alive in a Hard Country*, which was the 2004 Poetry Book-of-the-Year winner from the Appalachian Writers Association; and his latest book is *Public Hearings*.

And last but not least, to your far left, is Frank X Walker. Does he need an introduction in this crowd? Of course I have Frank's full-length bio memorized, but I was thinking when I went to introduce him, he kind of took over central Kentucky, you know; he's a native of Danville, he made his mark in Lexington, then there were the Louisville years, so it's only fitting that he's sort of bringing the party to northern Kentucky. I know you all are happy to have him here. He's currently Writer-in-Residence in the Department of English. He's the author of numerous books—*Black Box; Affrilachia*; of course he did two works of poetry about the Lewis and Clark slave, York. The first was *Buffalo Dance*, for which he won the Lannan Prize, and more recently, *When Winter Come*. And I have it on good authority that he's got two more books inspired by history in the works.

So, these are our distinguished panelists. Welcome everyone. I'd just kind of like to kick it off by—you know, I think there are certain assumptions we all have about Appalachian literature at this point in time. Words like "tradition" and "nostalgia" come up. So I guess I want to be a little contrarian and ask the panel or anyone who cares to answer: Is it me, or is Appalachian literature becoming a little more contemporary in feel? Have we crossed that line where more and more Appalachian books are set in the present?

- JM: Yes [laughter].
- RH: Thanks, Jeffrey.
- LS: Okay.
- **JM:** Well, I'm trying to think of some specific examples and I can't, but I have a really clear sense of that.
- **LS:** Your work, for instance?

**JM:** Well, I mean, I think there's less of that nostalgia and romanticizing of the past and more a depiction of contemporary lives. That's, I think, a part of what you're saying. Any particular folks that you can think of [to other panelists]? It's all over the place.

**RH:** It really is, I think, so, yeah, it's varied.

**FXW:** I would definitely agree. I think, particularly when you think about the contemporary poets right now, they write about what's happening in their lives right now. I'm in touch with a lot of younger poets, many of whom are in this room, who are still trying to define their place in the world, and we wrestle with a redefining of Appalachia, you know, trying to insert this idea of an Affrilachia, but I've heard words like "Cubalachian" now. We published an essay in *Pluck!* by an Arab-Appalachian (we could not make "Arab-Appalachian" work as one word), but I think, for me, just recognizing that those new voices are still being discovered and what's the breadth of the region is really worth noting.

RH: I've really always thought of myself as a border Appalachian. I grew up on the Ohio River right across from West Virginia and when I talked about this once, Jim Wayne Miller sent me Daniel Boorstin's chapter called "The Fertile Verge." And I think, Appalachian literature is reflecting that, what's called an edge effect in ecology, where: here's an ecosystem, here that's forest, here's grassland, and the edge between them is the richest diversity. And I think we're seeing that, that there's a lot of diversity in Appalachian literature because the region itself is amorphous and it's changing, it's shifting, not only geographically and culturally but politically and in other ways, so I think it's a tremendously rich time when you have cultural shifts like that. You know, the Old English epic, *Beowulf*, arose when there was a cultural shift between indigenous people and the people that moved in and all that. The same thing seems to be going on in Appalachian literature.

CH: Yeah, I think that's always been the case. Ron Eller writes about the dynamic changes that have occurred in Appalachia always and, going back to the turn of the last century, with the coal industry's coming on then. That's still going on; it's a very, very dynamic place; there's a lot of conflict economically, culturally; it's extreme. And what we have—you know, those of us who are teachers—we see all the time, every year, young people who want to write and who are learning to write and want to dedicate their lives to it. And I think that's part of the wealth that we're seeing now, that Frank was talking about. There's diversity, but there's also just a really rich number of students wanting to write and wanting to write about what's going on now.

MW: I think we've learned to put pressure on each other and to motivate each other into telling our own stories because, you know, for so long, outsiders told Appalachians' stories until we figured out we were perfectly capable of telling our own stories, so I think we put pressure on each other and motivate each other and inspire each other to tell our own history. The American poet, B. H. Fairchild, who writes about the panhandle of Oklahoma where he grew up, says that the reason that he writes poetry and about that place is because he's the only person who's lived it and it's his story and he has to tell it, and I think we do the same thing.

**JM:** There's a poem I recommend by Maggie Anderson, who's a poet up at Kent State, in her collected *New and Selected Poems: Windfall [Windfall: New and Selected Poems*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000], which is called "Marginal." It's about that in-between space. I know one of the reasons that

I've been able to write about Appalachia is because I have felt—and Maggie has said the same thing—part of it and yet not part of it: you're enough a part of it to be able to find it fascinating but you're sufficiently detached from it that you can look at it with some objectivity and see things that perhaps you would not have seen if you were smack dab right in the middle of it, fully integrated in it, with a full sense of belonging.

MW: One thing that, to play off what Jeff just said about Maggie letting him write about Appalachia, I, for me, Danny Miller did that for me, and his book Wingless Flight was one of the first texts that I ever read where women and women characters were studied closely, and that led me to all kinds of places where I began to think about women's places in stories as well as in culture. And, I just wanted to say that so we could be sure to connect Danny to what we're saying here today. He was a great influence on me.

**CH:** That's an invaluable contribution that Danny made with that, and a part of what goes on in Appalachian literature is you have people like Danny make these opportunities available and look at something that needs to be looked at and give us an opportunity to bring it out. Without people like Danny Miller, it's much harder for all of us to work and connect.

MW: Amen.

**LS:** Yes, thank you. And of course I know that Danny played a big role in Frank's hiring here at NKU.

**FXW:** Well, absolutely. I'm sitting here *because of* Danny Miller. I'm at the end of my three-year contract, but his enthusiasm—I think we talked about it three years in advance, trying to figure out how to make it happen, even before there was money for it. But the thing about Danny is his enthusiasm is infectious. I mean, people still remember laughing with Danny. There's a wonderful book on the table out front—if you flip through it, in almost every photo, Danny has his head cocked back, and he's laughing. But that *was* Danny. And even in a tense situation, he always knew how to take the tension down and respond to what people needed. I think his value system really permeated the department. And the reason this place was filled for his service was that love, that very genuineness, that's a part of who he was in the world.

JM: And I'd like to also say I'm here because of Danny Miller, for two reasons. One is Steve Mooney; some of you may know him, the Appalachian scholar. I wish I knew half as much as he did about any number of things. He lent me, years ago, an essay that Danny never published—and I harassed Danny every time I saw him to publish the damned thing, and he never did. It's called "Homosexuality in Appalachian Literature." And Steve Mooney gave me a Xerox of that essay. That's how I met Danny before I met him. And that was a great boon to me and I've used that essay for years. I've given it to students. And then, years after that, I was putting together Loving Mountains, Loving Men. And you go through the scary, outside review crap, and they were smart enough to make him the outside reviewer [laughter].

So I owe *them* that and I owe *him* the letter that he wrote, which was glowing. I always said that I owed him a lobster dinner, and I never got a chance to follow up with that. Yeah, so the book was published because of that letter, and I pretty much got tenure because of that book, so, yeah, I owe him a great deal. So it's especially nice to be invited to this.

MW: Yes.

LS: Quite a legacy. Just kind of shifting gears slightly, I'm always interested—

perhaps because of a couple of projects I'm working on now—I really think there needs to be a new anthology of Appalachian literature and I'm trying to work with an author on writing the history of Appalachian literature. So I'm sort of thinking, you know, is Appalachian literature part of Southern literature? How does it fall out in the canon of American literature? And I'm just wondering if anyone would care to comment on where, circa 2009, where did Appalachian Lit fall? We've now had a couple of Oprah Book Club books, and if that isn't a marker of success [she shrugs]?

**.JM:** She leaves.

**LS:** She shakes her pen at me [referring to Marianne]!

**MW:** No, I just found this little thing that I thought was a perfect little answer to that question. You may have seen it already—it's from the latest issue of *Oxford American*, which is devoted to Southern literature, and this is what the editor says about Southern literature: every time you hear the word "Southern," just substitute "Appalachian." I think it works really well. And what's the editor's name at *Oxford American*?

LS: Mark Smirnoff.

**MW:** Mark Smirnoff. This is a real brief statement:

The locale of your birth and upbringing is a fact, not a scarlet letter that reveals to people just what kind of soul you carry. And while regionalism informs and influences and pesters the human condition, it doesn't contain or touch everything about us.

Then he goes on to say how native Southern writers, like Flannery O'Connor and Faulkner, used that little postage stamp of native soil as a springboard. And he says:

None of these people, I think, would deny at least some regional influence on their work and personality, nor would they be paranoid or weirdly defensive about being called "Southern" or "Russian" [he references Chekhov] or "Eastern." Maybe this is where things get sticky for some people.

And I think maybe what we do in Appalachian literature is not just use the place as a postage stamp but as almost a character. So . . . .

**LS:** In the way, you know, that New York City is often a character.

**MW:** Yes. And I'm not smart enough to put Appalachian literature in the canon of Southern literature but that's just my whole response to that question.

**CH:** Jim Wayne Miller had a great comment on this. I'm probably paraphrasing it incorrectly, but he said that Appalachian literature is a twig on the branch that is Southern literature on the branch that is American literature. . . . Do you have that?

**LS:** The toadstool next to the rotting log that is Southern literature [laughter].

**MW:** Is that what he said—"the toadstool next to the rotting log"?

LS: Yes.

**CH:** Well, I didn't know he said *that*! [more laughter].

JM: I would say there are some Appalachians who would not want to be included in Southern Literature. One of my friends is Phyllis Moore, who is sort of the unofficial West Virginia literary historian. She gave a talk once at Hindman Settlement School. She referred to West Virginians as "those Yankees south

of the Mason-Dixon line." She's from Clarksburg, which is northern West Virginia, and I'm from Summers County, West Virginia, which is as far south, almost, in West Virginia as you can get. So I marched up to her in mock high dudgeon afterwards and said, "Madame, you may consider yourself a Yankee, but..." So she calls me Rebel Boy and I call her Yankee Woman and it's all perfectly friendly. She really identifies herself as a northerner and I've always felt exceedingly southern, so—interesting, "rotting log,"—that's painful.

LS: So, who's the Faulkner of Appalachian literature?

**JM:** Got to have a little Gothic in there somewhere.

MW: I don't know.

**LS:** Could Ron Rash maybe be our future Faulkner?

**JM:** He's mighty fine.

**LS:** He's a little Gothic.

CH: Well, you know, we have James Still.

**LS:** All right. I'll take that answer.

**CH:** He's not Faulkner—he's James Still and unique to himself, and I think Ron has that, the same as that, so . . . .

LS: Yeah, he had his Yoknapatawpha.

CH: Yeah, absolutely. And Ron has that; Silas [House] has that; Gurney [Norman] has that. We're, I don't think that—I don't know—I've not thought about the idea of Faulkner, but I don't know if Appalachian writers necessarily fit with a Faulkner style. Cormac McCarthy maybe did when he was writing his books set in the '70's.

MW: Yeah, the early Knoxville novels, sure.

**CH:** That's the closest I can come to a comparison with Faulkner, a direct comparison, anyway.

LS: Yeah, I think we've broken loose here. I think this exchange is going to result in many, many papers, so you all get to work out there [looking to the audience]. Any other thoughts on the canon? I mean, any comparisons with, you know, western literature, which I think now has a real environmental flair, and I see that happening more and more with Appalachian literature and culture. Any connections that we can make there?

MW: Well, I think, as the topography and geography and landscape changes, you get, particularly in eastern Kentucky and West Virginia with mountaintop removal mining, I think we can't help but see those things in our literature. How could we *not* find those things in our literature? Maybe you've read Ann Pancake's novel, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, which is based right below—it's set right below a mountaintop removal site. A family lives right below it. I think that's an excellent example of environmental writing in fiction.

CH: All the major literature, to me, anyway—the major literature that's come from the Appalachian canon that we think about going back to Harriette Arnow and James Still and Gurney Norman in the '60's, [and] Harry Caudill, too—they all had that social and environmental theme running through them. And even somebody like John Fox, Jr., who we look at with mixed feelings, there was an environmental concern in his books or at least an observation of it, and that's still going on. I think that's just inescapable in Appalachian literature. It's just so much a part of the region— it's so important. It's that conflict that, you know, we were talking about within the region.

**RH:** I think one of the essays that synthesizes some of these ideas is Wendell Berry's "Writer and Region," and he starts with Wallace Stegner, if I recall correctly,

- **FXW:** I believe that, even before the environmental themes that are pretty common now, that there was a genuine reverence for the land that really dominated Appalachian lit and Affrilachian lit and Southern lit. But I think there seems to be a shift away from the romantic notion of the mountains and really dealing with the grittier, sometimes ugly truths that exist there, too. I think that's important.
- **RH:** I think that "gritty" is part of how *Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel* came about. As Jim Webb was, you know, he's a punster, and so "gritty"—sand and gravel—that was the whole idea, that it was going to be contemporary Appalachian literature and it was going to try to move away from some of these romantic and stereotyped notions. That's still alive, I hope.
- JM: I think environmental issues really force us to be more contemporary writers because writing quite often is about commemorating what's being eroded and what's being lost, and it's hard to be nostalgic about the beautiful landscapes of Appalachia when it's being torn all to hell. And since writers love conflict, well, by god, there's a conflict to write about. I wanted to say one quick thing about the Southern lit connection, courtesy of Irene McKinney. She's the Poet-Laureate of West Virginia. I interviewed her years ago for a book Felicia Mitchell edited, called Her Words, about Appalachian women poets. Irene was talking about Breece Pancake's poetry, ah, short stories; she said that just as with Southern literature there's a real obsession with the past, the whole bit about, you know, Faulkner, the past isn't past, and all that thing. She said that Appalachian writers, one of the things that makes Appalachian writers unique is so many of us have not just a sense of the depth of the past, the personal past, the communal past, but even the geologic past. She talks about the "Trilobites" story of Pancake's and a poem by Louise McNeill about the geologic history of the New River. In some Appalachian writers, you are so connected to the land that you think about the geologic past of those mountains.
- **LS:** Any other thoughts on the environment? What I'm taking from this is that Appalachian writers have once again proven to be ahead of their time. We've *always* been interested in these issues; perhaps it's a little more fashionable in the current decade, but it sounds like maybe some of our forebears merit reconsideration.
- **MW:** Well, look what Wilma Dykeman did with *The French Broad*, which was published in the fifties. You know, the popular story is that her publisher wanted her to take out the chapter about environmental concerns that she had for the French Broad River before they would publish the book, and she refused. And so, yeah, I think it goes back a long way.
- LS: Yeah, yeah, proud, proud heritage.
- **FXW:** I think also in Appalachian writers there are more writers identified with also being activists. I think about the way Silas [House] is in a music group that regularly performs at mountaintop removal gatherings. When you think about Gurney's activism—I think a lot of writers in the region are as popular and well known for their activism—even Wendell Berry, think about his activism. And I think that really, you don't see that as much in the Southern literature.

- **CH:** I think there's a common strain with Appalachian writers that we all, in our writing, feel an obligation to the region and for the region that we're writing about. We're not *using* the region; we're trying to incorporate something important into our writing and reveal that and show that. And I think that's a common thing—it's a very common thing.
- **LS:** That, I guess, brings us a little bit to the notion of identity. You know, how do we identify ourselves as Appalachian writers? And how do you combine those various identities?
- RH: I'm not so sure this is something you sort of consciously do so much as it's the result of the things that arise as you write. Your writing is part of your identity—for a writer, it's a major part of your identity, and if these things are inescapable as you sit down to write, then I think that's what qualifies you as an Appalachian writer. If you are constantly drawn to the land, constantly drawn to the destruction of the landscape that's so common in the region all over, if you're drawn to a kind of nostalgia because you remember, or your grandparents remembered, or your great-grandparents remembered. Whatever arises as you're writing, if it happens to be Appalachian in subject matter or theme, that's your identity, I think, as a writer.
- **CH:** And I would add, I don't think you have to be a native-born Appalachian to do that. You know, you can be from California or wherever and if the region affects you and you write well about it, then you're an Appalachian writer.
- JM: Rita Riddle, who died a few years ago—she was at Radford—she said something in an interview that I found really, really helpful because it's part of what I write about, [which] is how difficult it's been to balance gay identity and Appalachian identity. People sort of want you to be one or the other. And she said, "It's not 'or,' it's 'and,' 'and,' 'and.'" As much as the outside world wants to pigeonhole you and make things simple and make you choose "either /or," it's "and, and, and" and "I'm this and I'm this and I'm this." If you think that's mutually exclusive, you have a small mind, that sort of thing. I think that's a really helpful way to look at identity. It has been for me.
- LS: And talk about tension! We've said several times this morning that, you know, the tension of Appalachian life propels so much of its literature. If you're—on the one hand—part of this traditional culture, and—on the other hand—you're representing a minority or perhaps you've moved into the region, that seems to me an inherent tension.
- RH: Yes, it is, and speaking for the Southern Appalachian Writers Cooperative, I think anybody who has come to a meeting of the Southern Appalachian Writers Co-op in the last twenty, twenty-five years (since the sort of revival in 1980), it is an incredibly welcoming organization. You know, if you are a writer, if you have some passion about something, there's common ground there for anybody to come into Southern Appalachian Writers Co-op. And so we've had a vast array of folks, who all, in a sense, become adoptive Appalachians if they aren't, and whose awareness is raised and whose consciousness is raised and whose activism becomes a part of what they do. There's a tolerance for "and, and, and" in the best sense, and I think that's very remarkable. And I think it's probably because Appalachia has always been digesting and synthesizing folks.
- **MW:** Do you think that's because outside of the region, there is not that tolerance—outside of Appalachian writers there is not that tolerance?
- **RH:** I must, if I said that, but I haven't thought about that. I have to think about that—now I have to think about that.

**MW:** Well, while you were talking I was just thinking about—I have a friend who has written a book of poems and I queried the editor at a national magazine to try to write a review of that book of poems. And he wrote me back and he said, "Well, we may review that book but we certainly would never let *you* review it because she's an Appalachian writer and you're an Appalachian writer and, you know, you can't be fair or . . . ."

**LS:** You must be related, too [laughter].

FXW: I think, getting back to the tension, I think DuBois had a notion that African-Americans in America dealt with an issue of double consciousness, trying to find some balance with that war between being black and being American, as if there was a conflict naturally. I think that—there are several Affrilachians in the room, I see Crystal in the back, Keith down in front—and we talk about a kind of a triple consciousness. Crystal was often challenged at public events with her identity; you know, people would challenge her because they didn't think she was Appalachian enough. You know, she . . . .

LS: Black and country.

**FXW:** Black and country. So I think sometimes that tension doesn't come internally, it comes from outside forces. We have this ideal about who you ought to be or what existed and even in the idea of what is Appalachian-Affrilachian. Gurney has kind of infected me with this notion that there are no geographical boundaries to Appalachia when you consider where the out-migrants live, you know, when you consider that a lot of those people in the region moved to Cleveland and New York City and D.C. to work and live and maintain a relationship with a home place and come, travel back and forth. The region does not really limit it to that government definition of what Appalachia is, but there are these people, these forces in the world who said, "That is Appalachian, that's not," because of that marker, that demarcation between one county and the next. I prefer Gurney's notion, obviously.

**CH:** And I think that even like 10 or 15 years ago, to be called an Appalachian writer, you would feel marginalized or limited.

FXW: Yes.

**CH:** But that's changed. I think that has changed significantly. I think the term "Appalachian writer," it's an expansion in meaning now, you know, with the Affrilachian writers, with all the diversity that's being shown, and the increased base of readers and authors.

**MW:** I'd even be in favor of recapturing the term "hillbilly" and just be called a hillbilly writer, you know . . . .

LS: Reclaim it.

**MW:** As a power term, "hillbilly" is a power term.

JM: I would say that—I go to AWP [Associated Writing Programs], the kind of academic, national creative writing conference, occasionally, and I feel absolutely invisible there. I was telling my friend in the audience that I always wear baseball caps, especially there, just because so many of them have black berets and black turtlenecks and smoke clove cigarettes. I'm exaggerating a little bit. They also look over your shoulder to see if there's someone more important to talk to. I really have felt alienated there and more alienated, and just kind of like a cantankerous old bastard over the years, but I have always—despite my initial trepidation growing up in a little town in West Virginia in the seventies where I was at home and not, very much not at home, you understand—the Appalachian literature community, since I started going to Hindman [Settle-

ment School] in the mid-nineties, has been entirely welcoming. That tolerance that you mentioned was a very pleasant surprise, so I say somewhere in some book that while Appalachia is not always very tolerant of queers, that the Appalachian literary community has been entirely. I love to be in these contexts, I feel absolutely at home, and I don't feel that way at AWP at all, I think because a lot of mainstream writing is not only defiantly heterosexual but defiantly suburban and urban. And I know that in my own department, I can feel from my MFA students, they're "juberous," to use the Appalachian word for "dubious," about regional writing. They don't really, they're not all that interested in what I'm doing because they sense that if they are, if they take on the identity of a regional writer, that they will to some extent be dismissed, and they're right, to some extent. But of course that's no damned reason not to do it, but still . . . .

LS: It's interesting that you mention AWP—that's the Associated Writing Programs. They sponsor several book competitions—definitely a creative nonfiction award and, I think, a poetry award, and so they probably do fiction, as well. And I'm thinking through in my mind, I can't think of a single Appalachian book that's ever won any of those prizes. You know, maybe somebody could do the . . . .

**MW:** Uhm, I...

**LS:** You can think of one?

MW: Yes. LS: All right.

**MW:** Karen, Karen McElmurray's memoir, *Borrowed*, er, *Surrendered Child*, was an AWP winner for nonfiction.

LS: Oh, that's right, Karen. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yes, because I was thinking that at least two of the publishers, Pittsburgh and Georgia, are sort of, you know, we claim them within the broader Appalachia. But, yeah, Karen is a notable exception that maybe proves the rule.

**RH:** Well, just for the record, though—I was a finalist in the AWP's creative non-fiction with work that eventually became *Milltown Natural*. So that was an almost—they at least read it somewhere along the line.

**MW:** Could I read just this real short little thing about what Danny says about this? This is from *American Vein*—I had the best time getting ready for this panel because I got to go back and read everything Danny had ever written.

LS: Yes, that's right.

**MW:** This is from *American Vein: Critical Readings in Appalachian Literature*, which was edited by Danny and Sharon Hatfield and Gurney Norman:

Despite growing enthusiasm for Appalachian literature among readers who know it, there is no denying that this unique part of American literature remains largely unrecognized by the rest of the country. Many individual writers from the mountains have found success and acclaim beyond the region but awareness of the region itself as a thriving center of literary creativity is not widespread.

And so, one of the reasons they put the book together was the hope that people outside the region would know us and recognize us.

**LS:** American Vein was kind of a brilliant title, when you think about what they were trying to say. We hadn't planned for this question, but do any of you care to share publishing experiences? Obviously, you've all found a way to kind of subvert any sort of bias, and perhaps it's through being published locally?

- **JM:** Well, I found out that Ohio University Press has an Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia Series, and, hell, "a queer in Appalachia"? So I went right after them. I made that happen but those niches are not so forthcoming in other areas and that was kind of a one-shot deal.
- **LS:** Yeah, I think Ohio is really ahead of its time in carving out that series, and I think that's going to bear fruit for a long time to come.
- **MW:** I guess what I know about publishing you could write on my little fingernail, so—I mean, my chapbook is a Georgetown, Kentucky, publisher. They only do chapbooks. And the anthologies are Motes Books, which is owned independently by Kate Larken in Louisville, Kentucky.
- **LS:** And she's becoming a real activist publisher, it seems to me.
- **MW:** Yes, yes. She had a textbook business—and still does—for many years before she began to publish literature. And I've lost the trail of the point I was going to make, so It'll pass, I forget.
- **LS:** Little finger . . . .
- MW: I'm sorry.
- **CH:** I'm going off in a slightly different direction but I just want to remark that I think in terms of literature, we've become far more activist in the last 20 years. And I think back to the nineties when that awful play came out—*Kentucky Cycle*.
- **LS:** Yes, *Kentucky Cycle*, Pulitzer Prize-winner.
- **CH:** Yeah, and by god, we shut it down. I mean, I didn't personally—but Gurney Norman and a lot of people who were just active about that play and incensed and wrote about it and, you know, said our piece for us. And I think that's—you know, we're not letting ourselves be defined by these other forces.
- LS: So Schenkkan inspired some great Appalachian literature, it sounds like, unwittingly.
- **CH:** Yeah, absolutely. I still use Schenkkan as an example of what not to do as an Appalachian writer, so . . . .
- LS: One topic I did want to get into—this is really changing gears again. It's sort of a sensitive topic—with outsiders looking at the region, I think of the recent "Prime Time Live" look at Appalachia, for instance: the drug culture. I'm curious—I know at least one of you is tiptoeing into writing about that. I'm just curious—what is your responsibility as chroniclers of contemporary Appalachian society, how do you handle that in your writing?
- CH: I think you have to look at the good and the bad and the forces that are negative in the region as well as the forces that are good. And if you've been watching the news at all lately, we've got this thing down in Clay County where a government worker has died under mysterious circumstances. And, you know, the national focus is on Daniel Boone National Forest in eastern Kentucky and talks about marijuana patches and meth labs, which is all part of the reality of not just eastern Kentucky, but rural regions throughout the country. I think we have to look at it—we have to examine that as writers.
- **LS:** It certainly is, as you say, it's real, in the newspaper every day, but I guess there is some sensitivity, you know, if you're representing your region to outsiders. I guess the key is putting it in a context—you show the good and the bad. And the hope is if you shed light on maybe some unpleasant things, over time solutions will present themselves.
- MW: Well, I think that's one of the things that has made our writing so much bet-

ter in the last few years because we are open and tolerant; we would accept almost any kind of writing. There's a lot of *bad* Appalachian writing out there, you know, and real over-romanticized and, you know, mossy fence posts and mountain dew [laughter], and I don't think that makes for good literature *anywhere*. So, I think we have a responsibility to look at the truth and to try to put that into our writing. Otherwise, it's just going to be dull reading.

- JM: Well, plus, you're going to write about what inspires you. And if you sit there thinking about what will people think about this, hell, I would never have written anything. I don't know anything at all about the drug culture—I've already said, don't ask me that question, but I'm now talking about it [laughter]. I live in Pulaski, Virginia, and my grad students, one of them lives in that area and wrote this piece about all the drug use and my students were highly amused that I was asking questions about the drug culture because I'm in the same damned town. They call it "Methlaski" instead of Pulaski, but it's amazing how you, I, feel completely insulated from all of that, and therefore I don't write about it because I don't know anything about it. And I don't know whether that's a lack of social responsibility or the fact that I just write about what grabs me and that doesn't really grab me, even though it's a concern, obviously, since it's one of the side effects of poverty. One of my students called meth the elixir of the poor.
- **LS:** Well, I do think when you're writing about these darker issues—and for some reason, Robert Morgan's *Balm of Gilead* is popping into my head—when you're talking about sort of the dark side, you are talking about poverty at its root; invariably, you're talking about poverty.
- RH: Well, there is a member of the Southern Appalachian Writers Co-op in Cincinnati, Mike Henson, who has a regular column in the homeless newspaper called "Hammered," and it is an unstinting look at drug culture and its connection to poverty and homelessness and all these social ills. And he is as straightforward as you could be. By profession, he is a drug and alcohol counselor. He is an Appalachian writer, but he is taking a very close look at it and this is an ongoing column in *StreetVibes*—every week, every two weeks, every new edition he's got a new column. He's really doing a lot of work for us, in a sense, because he's there taking a really close look at it.
- **CH:** I think "straightforward" is a good watchword for all of us who write about these things and do it honestly.
- FXW: Now, I think that draws attention to the importance of journals—like the one at Appalachian State University—you know, Berea has a fine journal—that particular issue of *StreetVibes* that you refer to is something that's important for us to be reading because it helps us stay current. I know that one of the things that my writing group was involved in—during Spring Break, we took something we called The Affrilachian Poet Bus Tour, and we actually spent nine days on the road, touring the region. And part of the rationale was there were members of the group who had never really been outside their own communities and it's hard to be authentic, to write legitimately, about something you've never seen. And part of the other reason was to inspire new works, and every day we were challenged with a new writing prompt. And some of the writings that came from that nine days on the road were some of the best things I'd heard these young writers put out and I think it was that face-to-face—you know, we were in Knoxville, in Ferrum, Virginia, across Virginia, through the mountains—and it was wonderful to see these young urban kids wide-eyed

- about, you know, *real* mountain dew, not the drink. But those journals, those opportunities to be current, to share their information—if we're not there *in* that space, if we're reading about it, it *feels* current, it feels real.
- MW: Although I would say that, that urban is just as important as rural in Appalachian literature, and maybe something that's been missing from our own canon is the urban experience. I mean, I grew up in Knoxville and most native Knoxvillians would not call themselves Appalachians. You know, they, somehow they think it bisects them, you know . . . [laughter].
- **LS:** I think there's a challenge there for writers in the audience. We need more on the Appalachian urban experience, perhaps.
- CH: Huntington, West Virginia, you know, this is a place that's, it's kind of on the drug corridor, and they've experienced tremendous conflict and changes the past few years. And that's the urban Appalachian environment, I think, a perfect example of something that could be written about. I don't know who's doing it but....
- **FXW:** As far as mission, then, one of the projects Danny was working on before he passed away was this physical space for the Urban Appalachian Center, housed here at NKU, which we were very proud of. My fear is that that's one of the things that will be lost with his passing because he was—there are a few people in this room who were a part of that conversation to build that package. There is a whole document that exists and he figured out what it needed. Of course, like everything else, the part he hadn't figured out was the funding. But that shows you how present he still is.
- LS: I'm curious, maybe as a final question, and I know we want to open it up to the audience—what's inspiring to you all as writers today, you know, September 2009? What's exciting to you—what do you find yourself wanting to write about?
- JM: Well, I'm highly pissed about the state of same-sex marriage in this country and, as a hard-core Southerner who has used the "Y" word most of my life in an unpleasant way, thank you, until I settled down with a guy from Massachusetts, I know, right [rolls eyes], I'm thoroughly humiliated as a southerner that all of those New England states have done what they've done about same-sex marriage and my beloved South has [pause] shown its ass again and again and embarrassed me considerably, so a lot of what I write about is because I'm pissed off about the state of, I feel (I think part of this is growing up in a small town, part of it is growing up in Appalachia, but I don't really think Appalachia is particularly any more homophobic than any other part of the nation), I feel like, at this point in my life, I'm sort of on siege mentality all of the time, which is a bad thing and exhausting, and I feel especially after eight years of Bush, I have all of these warrior tattoos. A lot of what I write is about that, that sense of what I consider to be injustice, and a lot of it's about anger, and I have to write it just to get it off my chest.
- MW: Well, for all of our talk about moving forward, I'm actually looking to the past to do some writing. I spent June in a library studying ballads and ballad collectors and ballad musicians. And I'm trying to write some poems about that, but what I sort of discovered along the way—this is not a new discovery, people have discovered it way before I did—the ballad collectors were real picky about who they would get ballads from, so they excluded a lot of singers. They didn't pay any attention to African American families, for instance, and so there was this prejudice that was, at the turn of the last century, that

- CH: I've always written about the conflict of past and present, traditional values and contemporary values, and whether traditional values still work in a changing society. And I'm still going to be writing about that—I've barely scratched the surface. Everything that's been talked about here falls within that—and in the change and dynamism that's going on. Just look around.
- RH: My latest book, *Public Hearings*—these poems span 20 years. My books of poems are always things that take a long time to come together. But anyway, this is a book of poems of political comment, of satire, and of protest. You know, I feel some of Jeff's anger and the issues are pretty clear for me. There's a section about school—I've been teaching for 40 years and I have seen, oh, therapy dragons [laughter]. There's a section about in-country, you know, rural views. There's a section about just the city politics on the streets. Yeah, it's not Appalachian by any of those other definitions, but it's what's bugging me. And I don't know what that means. Maybe it is these years that we've gone through and these wars that we're still fighting and this craziness—we know as much as we need about education to fix it and we still don't fix it, all of that.
- **FXW:** And I think, if I can sum all of my work up right now, it would be kind of a fixation with discovering or recording untold stories or absent voices, particularly historical voices. I've just completed a manuscript on Isaac Murphy, the black jockey in Kentucky, who a lot of people have forgotten, and African Americans' connection to horse racing in Kentucky. Another collection is about Medgar Evers, actually it's more about the death of Medgar Evers, because the major voices in the collection are his assassins, his assassin's wife, and his widow. So I guess I kind of balance that with what's happening today with me; I'm a not-so-new grandfather; that's new territory for me. But I'm more fixed on, I'm trying to gather information about arts and culture in the region. I am struggling keeping alive a publication called *Pluck!* That is the journal of Affrilachian arts and culture that has developed a pretty good readership and we've been able to discover some wonderful new voices—poet voices, fiction voices, scholars, and I think it's an important journal for the region. But I think all those are connected—still trying to recapture, retell, reintroduce.
- **LS:** Thank you, Frank, for mentioning *Pluck!* We've learned about *Sand and Gravel*, the Southern Appalachian Writers Co-op, Hindman; we've talked about Maggie Anderson; Ann Pancake, Danny, Jim Wayne Miller have gotten several nods, Wendell Berry. Any other new, younger Appalachian writers that you care to cite or mention, just kind of as a wrap-up?
- **JM:** I want to put in a plug for Katie Fallon. She has published in *Now & Then* and in a bunch of very nice journals. She's a creative nonfiction writer and she's an environmental writer. In particular, she writes about birds.
- **LS:** Oh—spell her last name.
- **JM:** F-a-l-l-o-n. She's freelancing now in Morgantown, West Virginia. She has a book manuscript that's going around about the Cerulean Warbler and the ways in which mountaintop removal has completely screwed up its nesting

grounds. She has essays about owls and vultures and hawks—beautiful writing, very fine. She's now a creative nonfiction editor for an online magazine called *Connotation Press*, out of Morgantown. She's really good.

**MW:** Laura asked us to come armed with names of up-and-coming writers and before I mention a couple, I just want to say that some of us sitting at this very table have been in the trenches, writing, for a long time and maybe, you know, we can all say we're up-and-coming even though I am old . . . .

LS: Absolutely.

MW: I mentioned Karen McElmurray — I think she's the writer to watch as a novelist and a nonfiction writer. She has just got a gift for making beautiful stories. I also wanted to mention Amy Greene, who has a new book called *Bloodroot*; it's a novel. She grew up in Russellville, Tennessee, and the novel's set sort of in that place. I've just gotten through the first few pages of it; it's not even out yet; I got an advance copy. It's beautiful writing, so Amy Greene, g-r-e-e-n-e. And Jason Howard, I think, is going to be a really important writer. He is the co-editor of *Something's Rising: Appalachians Fighting Mountaintop Removal*, and he's working on a memoir and he's an editor. I think he's one to watch, too.

**CH:** And Mark Powell, I think.

MW: Yeah, Mark's on my list, too.

**CH:** Oh, he's good. Mark Powell is actually this year's Chaffin Award winner at Morehead State. He's just a tremendous novelist. But I still think of Silas as that young, new writer coming along, Silas House.

**RH:** Yeah, Ann Pancake was on my list for a prose writer and, for a poet, Maurice Manning. My criteria for these: if I've studied with them or read with them or hung with them or something. Maurice actually taught my son creative writing at IU [Indiana University], and so it was a really good occasion—he gave a reading at Frankfort, at Richard Taylor's book store in Frankfort, and my son and I went to see Maurice.

LS: He's a star.

**RH:** And later we worked at Hindman together. So Maurice Manning's poems; his latest book is *Bucolics*; they're very powerful, muscular, strange, surprising poems.

**FXW:** Agreed, and not just because Maurice is from Danville, also. But two poets: Bianca Spriggs, whose first book comes out next year from Wind Publications, and a wonderful poet (I believe Marianne has a copy of his book), Randall Horton, from northern, actually Birmingham, Alabama.

**MW:** From Birmingham.

LS: Say the name again.

**FXW:** Randall Horton, Dr. Randall Horton now, as of the spring, but—Marianne what's the title? *Lingua Franca of* . . .?

MW: The Lingua Franca of Ninth Street.

**FXW:** You've got to get this book—it is amazing.

MW: It's Main Street Rag, Main Street Rag Publishing in Charlotte, North Carolina. He has an amazing story. He grew up in Birmingham and he got into trouble and went to prison, and after he was released from prison, he got his Ph.D. and he's teaching in Albany, I believe, in an English program, and he's just a tremendous writer. Very talented.

**LS:** Thank you—that was great. That was a question just for me, the editor and the avid reader of Appalachian lit.

**RW:** I have a mike here and we have time for a couple of questions, but let's give a hand to our whole panel before we do that [much applause]. Who has a question? I'll bring the mike.

Audience #1: I have a comment for Jeff. It interests me very much, Jeff, that you said you were a part and not a part of Appalachia. And before the meeting began, I talked to this lovely lady here about the difference in Danny Miller and I, because we were at the English Department at Berea College at the same time, just after Jim Wayne [Miller] and Loyal [Jones] and Billy Ed [Wheeler] and all of those people. I'm the one who stayed home and I'm not gay, but those of us [who] stay home are also a part and not a part, if we are writers, if we are [inaudible] of literature, because we have the gift to see ourselves as we are. And so I think that's what writers do, whether they come in from out, or stay in, or they're like Arnow [Harriette Arnow], who left and looked at it backhatters Its interesting that in Cynthiana last weekend that same concept came up; George Ella Lyon said that we, that writers stand apart in a place. And so I think that you were different and apart because you were a writer first.

**JM:** That's, that's entirely possible. I'm not sure of the chicken/egg there.

Audience #1: I'm not either.

JM: Yeah.

**Audience #1:** But that interests me extremely, those of us that are apart. Silas is a part of Lily, but he's not a part of Lily. Does that make sense?

JM: Yeah, I don't know. I mean, I know most writers feel that. You have to have a sense of detachment in order to write about it in an intelligent way. On the other hand, a lot of us, perhaps, come to writing because it's one of the ways that we make sense of that sense of displacement—yeah, it's all tangled up. But no, that's a good point.

**Audience #1:** That's why we write, though, because . . . .

**JM:** Yeah, yeah, absolutely, absolutely, that's helpful, actually, yeah.

**RW:** Is there another question?

**Audience #2:** Do any of you have a comment about Chris Offutt's future—or contribution to the Appalachian body of literature?

**CH:** No [laughter].

**MW:** Well, I can't predict anything about the future, but I always loved Chris Offutt's first two collections of short stories. I think they were powerful and muscular and gritty and . . . .

**LS:** And the first memoir, *Same River Twice*.

**MW:** Yeah, the first memoir I enjoyed. I don't know what happened that he would write such a nasty memoir about Morehead, Kentucky—why he felt led to do that. I think that put a lot of people off; it certainly put me off. But if he'd be writing some more stories like are in *Kentucky Straight* or *Out in the Woods*, I'd be reading them. Anybody else?

**LS:** You can talk to Chris [Holbrook] privately.

MW: Yeah.

**RW:** Any other questions?

**Audience #3:** You guys were speaking about insider, insider versus outsider interpretation and identity in the area. Do you ever think that an outsider's interpretation or writings on the area would ever be viewed as being as credible as those of someone who is inside the area? And has anyone from outside the area ever done that?

**FXW:** I don't know. I think it's entirely possible, but I think it really is more reflective

of the amount of research they would have to do to make sure it's credible. I think you can't ever write authentically about a place you've never seen or been in or talked to. But people who live there aren't necessarily authorities, either, just because they live there.

**MW:** I think our cultural and literary history was in fact written by outsiders for a long time. And we kind of don't tolerate letting anybody else tell our story. I agree with Frank—maybe it's possible that someone could write authentically about the region, but we'd probably get mad about it, like we did with *The Kentucky Cycle*, you know.

**JM:** Or at least be dubious, or juberous.

**RW:** I think we have time for one other question, if anyone has one.

Audience #4: I won't waste time on the history of where this came from but I have several friends, families who are friends of mine, who live in Harlan, Kentucky, some of them with numerous children in their families, and some of them who still have children—they're 24, 25, you know, young adults now, who have managed to really slip through the cracks of education and are 24- and 25-year-olds who are completely illiterate, who are literally unable to read and write, therefore can't hold a job, get a G.E.D., anything. And I guess my question is, you know, like in the seventies and sixties, I think there was a real focus on the issue of illiteracy and Appalachian children, or education in Appalachia, and I don't have my homework well enough to know if that is changing, if that has improved a lot, but I guess my question is do you, as Appalachian writers, feel that there's still a concern for the illiteracy of Appalachian children and, if you do, are there organizations (co-ops, individuals) that promote literacy in children who are born and raised in Appalachia?

CH: I'll give one example: Hindman Settlement School in Knott County. I don't know how many years ago it is, but they started a dyslexia school, which was an entirely new thing in that part of the country, and has a history now of just helping a great, great many children who are dyslexic. But, yeah, it's an ongoing concern, and not just in Appalachia, I think the whole country should be concerned about literacy. I think we're far behind where we should be.

JM: I know something about the topic just because my partner of 12 years works for an organization in Charleston called Edvantia and they have to do with instructional technology, computer technology, to teach and assess students. And he works in Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, I think some in Ohio, and I know that he has told me very conflicting stories about some of the rural counties he has gone to, say, in the coalfields of West Virginia. At the same time that he finds really incompetent teaching and very poorly taught students who are somewhat illiterate, he also runs across amazingly sharp, super-smart students and teachers. So I know that it's a concern, at the same time that there's some really good teaching going on in those counties outside the region everybody assumes, well, you know, the educational system is [very poor]. I had a very good high school in West Virginia in the late seventies. I had a bunch of good teachers. So it's very spotty, I think.

**MW:** I think I can only speak from my own experience, but I always have one or two functionally illiterate students in my college classes and 99% of the time, they are *not* from Appalachia.

**RH:** I can only address urban issues, you know, as an inner city high school teacher for all of these years. We have a problem in America and it's not just in Appalachia. It's widespread—it's systemic—there's great inertia in the American

- education system. And even though you may reason your way to some solution to the problem, to overcome the inertia and the bureaucracy that are in the system itself is almost impossible. It's astonishing.
- **FXW:** And I would just say that I think that there are a lot of similarities between inner city challenges and rural challenges, particularly when you factor in how much poverty has impacted notions of . . . I remember asking kids in classes, "How many of you have more than 25 CDs in your house?" Every hand goes up. "Twenty-five books?" [He shrugs, saying nothing].
- RH: And compounding the problem in rural America is the distance students have to travel. Down in southeastern Ohio where we've had a piece of property for a long time, regularly kids, to get to the high school, have a two-hour drive. The bus comes around, because it's a consolidated county school, one place in the county—two hours to get there, which means that they have to get up at 5:00 o'clock in the morning and two hours to get home, which means they don't get home until 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon. How do you overcome that? I mean those are issues that are rural issues. You know, there are urban issues, then that's a rural issue. My god, the amount of time those kids spend on a bus. Wow.
- **RW:** Well, I guess that's the end of a wonderful round-table. I want to thank everyone for giving us such a stimulating discussion. If Danny was here today, he would have been in heaven, listening to these speakers. If there *is* a heaven, Danny is with us today—that's for sure.\*
- \* A DVD of this Round-Table Discussion can be ordered from the Northern Kentucky University, Office of Information Technology, Media Production and Distribution, Landrum 333, Nunn Drive, Highland Heights, KY 41099. Ann Harding was very helpful in producing the transcript published here.

## **April, Vernon Marsh**

For Wendell Berry by Travis Du Priest

These tall stalks of dry grass refuse to yield, but stalwart,

in expected rigidity, salute the wind, a corps of brown cockades, prostrate on a prayer rug by the Fox.

Snow banks the frozen river, mounds stately oaks, red ochre clusters, unwilling to release. Distant hills encircle this vale of stillness, in defense of coming spring.

Who knows how nature resuscitates herself? Or, how life itself does not begin or end, but moves like water beneath the ice, a hidden mystery never to sway, or stop, or bend.

## On the Dayton Floodwall, May 4, 2010 by Robert K. Wallace

Hard to believe it was only a year ago that I walked this wall with my wife Hours after hearing Wendell Berry give the Commencement address In which he spoke of the destruction caused by the very forces To which our universities are subservient, financial forces Whose amoral pressures have deformed the banking, Mortgage, automotive, and energy industries, culminating In the collapse of the BP Gulf oil rig only last week, Spewing raw crude into a broken economy in need Of a larger fix than one busted pipe.

This night the same sunset light we saw last year
Is flooding the turn in the wall above the sheltering trees
Under which we'd seen the father stop the baseball game
To choke his son for some unseen offense,
Breaking the idyllic beauty of the scene
With heartbreaking violence. What makes
This May light so lovely, the shore
On which it plays so God-forsaken?

Tonight the muddy Ohio runs far too hard For river traffic, recent rains pushing high waters In a swollen fabric of roiling ease Oblivious of the shoreline development denuded Of trees by developers eager to destroy A millennium of growth to make their mark, No visible sign of progress for two years now—Ever since they uprooted every tree in two days, A lone rabbit suddenly exposed, nowhere to go.

Tonight, retracing the wall, the sun now behind the hill, I descend into the city park a former mayor Had saved from developers, its riverside walk now dry, The river receding safely below the flag-pole stand. "That's the nation and that's the state," The man says of two of the flags to the child; "I don't know the other one." So I say, "That's Bellevue, the town we're in. I told the city Last year how tattered all three flags were, But they're worse now than then."

"You can get a flag that's flown over the White House," He tells me. "You just ask your Congressman. Our church did." The church was Catholic, Across the river in the Clifton area of Cincinnati,

One the Diocese had planned to close, but "Both my parents went there, and all four grandparents too, And now my grandson is going too, because We all got together and raised enough money to save The parish," the six-year-old boy all the while Kicking a soccer ball through the gaps in the bike rack, And then back at the low brick wall cupping the flags, Not once overshooting into the fast-moving river, Where all would be lost for who knows how far, Floating to become another tar-ball in the Gulf.

# On the Dayton Floodwall, May 28, 2010 by Robert K. Wallace

Tonight I wrote till the sun went down, Dusk on the floodwall, no worry about the sun.

Lovely association with the past, three-decker steamboat, Lights a-glitter, sailing down river.

After passing middle-aged white guy,
A bag and a bunch of clothes on his bench,
A stirring glimpse of the future:
A mother herding her daughters,
Aged five, four, three, and two,
Along the path, the fifth, new born,
In the stroller she was pushing,
Instructing each and all lovingly.

Short and dark-skinned, like her daughters, She looked to me Hispanic, so I rolled Out my Spanish from my time in Spain Thirty-four years ago, grateful That she answered, naming each daughter And saying her own as Laura, Reminding me of the Laura from Barcelona, About her age, I met in Jerusalem Late last June.

Walking farther than usual,
Enjoying a light breeze,
I passed Laura and her daughters
On the way back, stopping to chat,
Too, with the guy on the bench, he
Being an old running buddy of my friend Frank,
Who, this man does not yet know,
Can no longer live at home, having
Moved last week to an extended care facility.

As we spoke, Laura and her five Passed us now in this direction, Straggling ones now in line, Her staccato maternal patter as reassuring As the fireworks that just came upriver From the Reds' game, a new home run Perhaps contributing to another home victory.

Heading off the floodwall to the city park, And up to Schneider's Sweet Shop, Now open to ten p.m. in the summer, I saw a couple of SUV customers loading up Before I ordered something myself, Which, as I ate at a table, gave me A good view of a heavy-set middle-aged man And a heavy-set late teenish girl, They joined, in making multiple orders, By two tall, thin teeners in black baggy pants, Low over gaudy sockless tennis shoes, Black shirts equally long and baggy, Their voices intentionally inarticulate or not, All I could make out being from one, "Lost 400 skateboarding today."

As the four walked out the door, It being closing time, I was able to ask the teenage counter girls What kind of guys were those, What category you would put them in, To which the youngest, the alert, perky one, Catching my drift, said, "Gangster. Not impressive. Not to me."

## As a Grown Woman

#### by John Cantey Knight

She recollects no romance in winter's hard weather. The harsh accumulation of frost over long weeks extends just beyond the fire's roaring, but doesn't count in daylight when farm chores force men out and leave women warm by wood stoves. It's at night that the chill holds to hewn walls, and the fire can't heat the recesses of small rooms. Movement is confined to the hearth till flame-gnawed split logs are banked to smother in the dark. Smoky oil lamps are lit. Tired, it's time to sleep, but first, spit baths are taken from bowls to wash hands and face, armpits and privates. Bodies are draped in long flannel. Coverings of cotton quilts smother rope beds and cornhusk mattresses. My wife can't take the hard cold. When winter winds howl, she remembers gaps in the raised pine floor and cracks in the mud-chinked log walls. She recalls awakening to find the washbasin's frozen water.

# **Gravity Water** by John Cantey Knight

Now Jacob's well was there.

— John 4:6

When I was young and naïve, and believed the woman a man married should be pure, gravity water was new to me. Her pa handed me a mug, full from the tap. Three miles of creek rock road away from the settlement, we stood that morning learning each other's ways. Paradise wet my lips, and like the woman at the well, the drink was sweeter than any swallowed before or since. It lingered, blessing mouth, throat, and soul. I thought it was well water. "No," he said. "Come follow." Black tubing, half-buried, led to a block reservoir, and above, a quarter way up the ridge to the source. "When there were Indians, this spring was their favored place. No water tastes finer." I asked, "You pump it down?" Wondering what fool his daughter had wed, he labored, "Hit's gravity water." Walking the mountain back, I caught breath by rocks fitted into place. Later, I figured it out. We'd rested by a still's base. "A thang that good oughtn't be wasted." Yup, water runs downhill. Reckon I can add two and two together?

## As You Daydream

#### by John Cantey Knight

This vast rounded rock, granite smoothed by weather, encompasses acres to end abruptly in sheared cliff face. The view of the valley can't be measured by feet, but in miles as a crow flies, or purple shadows growing by hours. Moss beards stone on peripheries of half-light where grasping laurels hold to the dirt. Birds sing in the morning's first glow to make wonder at the world and the end of night. Darkness had been different, still simmering stone of early evening beneath the soles of feet. A stray thought occurs as you urinate, away from the campfire's circumference, that the residual heat would feel just as warm to a snake's belly. There are sounds that confound propriety as a can of beans is digested. In the quiet, decibels of crickets become memories as the mind wanders down where yesterday a springhead washed the face of sweat in coolness to linger like the time before dawn caught in daydream.

## Woman with Seascape

## by Marguerite Bouvard

She pauses among the rocks where lava strides into the Pacific with its slates and rusts,

so deep hued, the coral glows like candles at high mass. She knows that lingering by the ocean

on a cloudy evening is to rejoice when a wind opens the thick bolts, letting

a gleam of yellow script pierce her heart, is to be ready for astonishment, feeling her whole body

thrum. She knows that after the shouts of reds, purples and orange rise the quiet

drawn out strains of our passage when the grays flow through her, changing their lights

as velvet or watered silk does, with gradations for every note on the scale of feeling.

## A Silver Bracelet

#### by Marguerite Bouvard

Gleams inside a box, protected from the film of years, a bracelet with a locket shaped like a book no bigger than my thumbnail. In it my sister's cheeks are flaming, her eyes are laughing (this was before her smile was extinguished). She is telling me stories far into the night, lilacs are foaming in our garden and the lake at the end of our street sighs through my window.

Someday someone will find the bracelet, run her fingers over the flowered tracery and see photos without a name. She will hold it in her palm for a moment before discarding it, not realizing I am still inside with my lost sister, and the lake thundering.

# The Stilt-Walker of Greenup County (a chapter)

## by Matthew Haughton

My plow has spoken with dirt-mellow words . . . . — Jesse Stuart

Somewhere on the road he learned to walk with those long legs, among the Trapezists of Powell Valley, the Fire Eaters of Laurel Ridge.

Out between every hill he learned to sing, scrawling songs longhand on the dry backs of leaves.

Words like kingdoms spoke to him from plows,

so he kept on singing. The price of a penny, the weight of worth

from a hollow's leap, the shape of the earth.

## **Ditty Birds**

## by Matthew Haughton

Four sisters lived up the road, we called them Ditty Birds. Four girls, always in white, we loved one. She'd run under the branches, unafraid to show us her tongue or the briar cuts on her knees; how she dreamt of being kissed, mocked on the backs of our hands. She'd run under the branches, while our ideas of love came from hopscotch and wheelies. Four girls, always in white. We loved one, a tomboy.

## **Came the Horses**

#### by Charles Daughaday

Gliding down the road so soothingly, humming along, As the rolling land flashes by and the road ahead Ribbons on into a pointed distance, the viewer and its object, the tinted glass in between.

Then, suddenly, a hill falls over into a deep, long glen Where fifteen or so horses of all makes and colors Are galloping, cavorting and skimming over the green, A couple kicking their heels as the huge lead roan, Nostrils flaring, head held high, and mane flying, Striding, oh striding! More beautiful and graceful Than life itself.

A sudden rigor of needle points invades the torso, Accompanied by a burning watering of the eyes. Fighting tears away, the head turns, gazing wistfully At the disappearing scene, movement gone, lines In motion dissolving, part of the heart torn out, Bleeding an all too brief memory, sitting, shaking. Spent as after lengthy love-making and earth-shaking Orgasm.

Whence came such a riot and gamut of emotion? What was the speed, beauty, form in movement and Power of those creature to this pale existence?

## **Butterflies**

#### by Charles Daughaday

At seventeen, a first date, such a serious boy, searching for some sign of manhood, father dead suddenly at thirty-nine; in a borrowed car, parked a block from the movies on the court square, town lights dark at 9:30, light rain on the windshield, the car's ambience emanating from the girl sitting next to him. Some small talk, his nervous, but she, more experienced,

empathized with him, leaned over and ever so gently, placed her lips on his; there was a rush and heat, and an ineffable rapid vibration of tongue as she whispered "This is a butterfly kiss," and he melted into his shoes and his soul soared as it fluttered into the night.

П

They sat on a bench on a day splashed with October color and a wind rustling through the trees. From her nearby apartment through a huge open window music flowed, "I am playing this for you, for us," she said in her most unusual and musical voice. The young man was not

familiar with it and knitted his brows, as she explained, it was "new" music from China, meant to break with the traditional. It meshed with the nature's symphony and the strings of her voice to create an eerie chill in the young man. Then she said, "I have named it my 'Butterfly' music," and in him the chills of elation took wing and flew away with the music.

Ш

A Sunday walk in Nature's cathedral, her sounds, not men's, fall and crisp. He began to notice that the bright-colored butterflies were accompanying his walk. There were tens, then hundreds, and then even more, all going southwest, such color, such wafting, such dancing; it made him dizzy with delight and he felt he too had left the earth and was flitting hither and yon, a feather on the breeze. Such beauty, their track seemed both the abandonment of any order and yet a journey toward the infinite. He wished he could flit, flutter, and fly away with them.

## **Uncle Arnold's Faith**

## by Glenda Barrett

With twinkling blue eyes and a mischievous grin, Arnold was a real charmer. As his health waned, he'd act a bit more unsteady on his feet if a woman was nearby, making them feel the need to give him a helping hand. His eyes lit up as they inquired about his health. He was still loyal to his wife of sixty years even though she was in the nursing home because of dementia. He'd drive his bright, red pickup eighty miles per hour down the four-lane on his way to visit her every day. He'd brag to me about wrecking thirteen cars in his life. It didn't matter that he was in his eighties, he made not one but three gardens each year. His doctor said one day to him, Arnold, if you don't slow down, you're going to fall over dead one of these days in that garden. Alfred laughed and said, That will suit me just fine, I'd just as soon die there as anywhere I know.

## **Aunt Vera** by Glenda Barrett

On Thanksgiving day, after driving from Atlanta with a bad knee, Vera hobbled through the door carrying a dish of fresh turnip greens from her garden. As we sat down to the meal, no one seemed to enjoy it more than Vera. She laughed and talked and passed dishes laden with food. One time someone mentioned something about losing weight. Vera, comfortable with her robust size replied, Every single time in my life I went on a diet and lost weight I got sick, so I just decided to eat what I want. As Vera neared eighty, I heard bits and pieces from Momma about her. The doctor says, Vera's got congestive heart trouble, and diabetes. The next time Vera visited, I noticed she'd lost about fifty pounds. My doctor's put me on a diet, she said. I applauded her progress. Months later, I received a call from Momma one morning, Glenda, I've got to tell you something, Vera passed away peacefully this morning. She was holding a cup of black coffee.

## **Cyrillic Letters**

## by Katerina Stoykova-Klemer

Stacked in a row a little longer than That of your Latin aunts and uncles You huddle up to keep warm And your parallel lines abound like arms Stretched towards the common sun

ЮКЬХФТАСОЗЖУЯЕВБРЪЧЛДИЙПШЩЦНМГ

## **Your Fate Whispered in Your Ear**

## by Katerina Stoykova-Klemer

While you were playing dead On your yoga mat

While you were grasping the foot Of your unbending leg Your fate came And went With the water under the bridge

Don't get up

# **Retirees in the Gym**

#### by Katerina Stoykova-Klemer

Every morning
After the first round of medication
They arrive
With eyes full of purpose
And socks pulled high to the knee braces

They totter from the low back machine To the chest press To the leg press To the spine twist They silently abduct the hips

They lift the vinyl-coated dumbbells With their eyes closed They want to feel the muscles contract Like slugs Inside their gray arms Among the veins and the bumps

They want to picture the tendons Still attached to the hollowing bones That will last them longer

In consideration of the rest of us
They conscientiously wipe the equipment
From any old people sweat
That might have collapsed
From their bald heads
Or hunchbacks
While they hobbled on the treadmill
Squeezing the rail
With both hands

# **Praying Skills Differ**

#### by Katerina Stoykova-Klemer

From begging skills (One is born with these)

Praying skills build Like muscle Throughout misfortunes

Each fiber a rope Or a straw

# The 'W.O.O'\* Is Closing, Friends! Yep! Carpe Diem! Seize the Day!

#### by Mike Murphy

1971 THE FARM IN

\*WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

TIME'S A-WASTING!

OIL IS PEAKING!
CLIMATE IS
WILDLY EXTREME!
SOIL, TREES, FISH & OTHER
RESOURCES ARE
RAPIDLY DIMINISHING!
RESOURCE WARS ARE
MULTIPLYING!

DO WE NEED MORE
REASONS TO
RE-THINK THE
SQUANDERING WAYS
OF EMPIRE?
TO MAKE HASTE IN
BUILDING SMALL,
LOCAL SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITIES?

MANY GOOD
OBSERVERS
TELL US
NOW IS THE
TIME TO
DOWNSIZE—
GO LOCAL—
THE WINDOW OF
OPPORTUNITY IS
CLOSING—

CONSIDER MORGAN'S 1942 "SMALL COMMUNITY"

Summertown, TN Now teaching Us Mollison's Permaculture SCHUMACHER'S 1973 "SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL" Swann's 1980 SCHUMACHER SOCIETY KIRKPATRICK SALE'S 1980 "Human Scale" Kunstler's 1993 CRITIQUE OF SUBURBAN SPRAWL "GEOGRAPHY OF NOWHERE" THE POST-CARBON Institute's 2003 call FOR TRANSITIONING TO A MORE RESILIENT, EQUITABLE & SUSTAINABLE WORLD DIAMOND'S 2005 "COLLAPSE: HOW SOCIETIES CHOOSE TO FAIL

OR SUCCEED"
KORTEN'S 2006 "THE
GREAT TURNING: FROM
EMPIRE TO EARTH
COMMUNITY"
SHUMAN'S 2006
"SMALL-MART"
2007 TRANSITION TOWNS

Network

INEIWORK

Pat Murphy's 2008

"Plan C:
Curtailment,
Community &
Cooperation"
2009 Berry-JacksonKirschenmann's
50-year Local
Agro-ecosystem
Bill Kotke's 2010
"Garden Planet:
The Present Phase
Change of the Human
Species"

WE NEED MANY No-Till FARM-BASED COMMUNITIES — More Vegetarians CO-CREATIVE GARDENERS w/ Nature spirits WRIGHT & KELLY-STYLE REVERSE-ENGINEERING W/ STEVEN GREER'S E.T.-WITNESS TESTIMONY CALEARTH'S SUPERADOBE OEHLER'S 'EARTH-SHELTERED GREENHOUSES' HAIT'S PASSIVE ANNUAL HEAT STORAGE . . . .

YOU GET THE PICTURE . . . . . CARPE DIEM!

### **Decoration Day**

by James B. Goode

In short shadows, of the graveyard in the hollow, we avoid stepping on the graves, picking our way down the hill toward the sound of a solitary woodpecker tapping a hollow tree tombstones lean, digging their feet stubbornly into the black loam as if to say, "I'm not going anywhere until judgment day." Daddy stops in the shuddering Johnson grass, touching a lichen covered lamb lying curled atop a granite stone, his thinning, silver hair cast down among the age spots On his wrinkled forehead; he sets his palm upon the hoe, hip thrown out-of-joint, sweat dripping onto his gray, uniform work shirt . . . . Here lies his little brother. the musty language of our past, who fell into boiling water at a hog killing Seventy years ago . . . . he tenderly rakes his grave, careful to pick up rocks and clods . . . . and tells the story again about these bones, the ones we hold on to deep within our bones . . . .

# **Eight-Point Buck Runs a Touchdown**

by James B. Goode

He smells the air In longs and shorts, His ancient eyes reflect The mirror of his fear; His nostrils flared Breathing wide In the smoke plumes, He runs toward me Angling in a random math His ears Bring me through his brain Some threatening sound; I am so far away yet so near-He keeps gray cortex For us— He has so much of us, too much of us, has us too much— He runs a panic path Between my car And the oncoming truck, Cutting through the opening Like a running back Down on one knee and sliding, Sliding and skidding, Across the glassy road— I rise from my seat Fists gripping the steering wheel, Forming the cheer in my throat And waiting Waiting For him to cross The white scoring line Along the edge Of road and woods.

# Jack in the Pulpit

#### by Ron Watson

I stumbled across him by accident. I dislike All preaching, and it was Saturday, anyway. Maybe he was some kind of Latter Day Saint.

He wore a green suit and stood a solitary stem, A plume for his vestment, his face as passive As a Quaker's grave, and likewise his sermon.

Curiosity drew me in among the toad stools, The pews of lady bugs and roly-poly prodigals, Down onto the forest floor under a cathedral

Of pines, where I sat on my fist and leaned On my thumb, giving to him my fair attention, Though his congregation was prone to chatter,

Mourning doves his only choir. Fox squirrels Heckled him from the balcony of their limbs. Hens cackled, and the Mocking Birds mocked,

But Jack held firm and did not scold, protest, Or pontificate. So at length I could not tell A faith that he upheld, mystic or mainstream,

Though I swear he had Martin Luther's eyes.

# A Special Hell for English Majors

#### by Ron Watson

Here hope enters all who abandon ye.

—Dante

Entrence is misspelled in stone at the gate Alongside garbled translations from Dante. Time died when you did, but you are still late

After centuries circling for a parking place. Shakespeare's works appear in drops of rain That streak in hieroglyphics down the gate.

Your punishment—reading *Finnegans Wake*, Twice: first fueled by endless Irish latte; Again, while biding time and yet lagging late.

For Joyce juries you must earn oral grades, Turn verbal tricks like footwork into ballet. Fail, and you stay; pass, and you clear a gate.

You would have studied art, given the stakes: *The choice was yours and such is fate, they say; Time now probe the plot, and don't hesitate.* 

You try to talk as your tongue turns to clay, The grand critique at-large, but in its place Stone teeth clatter away. You eye the gate, Begging to change majors. *Too late*, they say.

# Nocturnal Visitors (A Widow's Lament)

#### by Phillip Howerton

The yellow Labrador died in her sleep of old age last week. She passed in her favorite place, a hole she had dug in the soft dirt under the manure spreader parked in the shed. Now the wild comes closer each night. First, it was a possum, rattling the cats' pan on the back step, licking away whatever had accumulated there. Then a skunk, fearless and dainty; and tonight, as I stand in my darkened house watching by porch light, three adolescent raccoons arrive. Finding nothing in the food dish, they sniff my tracks leading from the wash house and peep through the crack under my storm door. Growing bored, these young toughs shove and punch one another; one may hold the flame of a Zippo to another's butt, and the three tumble together wrestling with quickened chatter. Then, they pause suddenly alert and immediately refit their masks of coolness. They throw a destructive glance at my mailbox and try the latches of all the outbuildings. I don't recognize any of them, although I have probably met their parents in passing. I hope that some night when they smell death under my door, they find the manners not to ring the doorbell before they run into the woods laughing.

# The Fencerow by Phillip Howerton

The history of his farm is chronicled in this fencerow where remnants of ancient white oak posts—posts he split when he was young and too poor to afford any otherhang gray and shrunken, held by rusted steeples to brittle two-barbed wire. Others, added a decade later and split by a young neighbor who had a family and needed work, have also rotted from the ground. Steel posts mark his mid-life, when he could afford them and was thinking ahead to the day he could no longer walk the line and drive posts. Five strands of heavy-gauge barbed wire were also stretched then and even now they have the polish of galvanization upon them; then came death along the fencerow, and the sumac returned. and multi-flora rose, and the cedars, some of which are now thicker than his arms when he died.

# Why We Look the Way We Do

#### by Maren O. Mitchell

1.

Illogically, it wasn't the threat of cancer, but the fear of change in how I saw my face. I lay down, wide awake in spite of 20 shots, to be cut layer by layer till cancer free. I heard grating snips of gristle as the mapped-out circle was incised, twisted around and re-attached to cover the red, wet well in my nose all to the music of Mozart. My face blew up for days, stitch holes elevated, capillaries burst. I bought stock in Q-tips, whined for 2 months. Family and friends pooh-poohed me. My husband held my irrational hand.

2.

The blind are not blinded by appearance.
They see with sound, shape, motion, texture, scent.
They don't read raised eyebrows
compressed lips
laughing eyes
jutting chin
flare of nostrils
flash of snarl.
They don't admire frame of hair
color of eyes
sweep of brows
tilt of nose
curve of lips.

3.

1957, our sixth grade teacher introduced us to Stanley before he arrived: *He was burned when he was young. He's older than you. See him as just another classmate.* No problem. In more ways than height, we looked up to him. Traveling with the speed of a spark, Stanley had flowered from a torched child into the knowledge of self I still seek.

American soccer prophet, he played ball with his feet, wrote with arms ending in neat pink puckers. He spoke a close version of our language. His full-hearted laughter activated his ascot throat. He saw us through slits.

We were not frightened. We liked him.

4.

As we drove her up, down and around to visit us, chased by dementia, my mother obsessively looked for herself in the car vanity mirror. She was losing self too fast. No security in seeing the Blue Ridge Mountains she loved. She last saw me as one of her sisters, all of our names beginning with an "m." In the end she re-found me in the face of Angela, a caregiver. Named her me. Comforted us both.

5.

2004, Jane, two children, two grandchildren, shot in the face by her husband.

Lost one eye, nose, cheeks, mouth, jaw.

Children ran from her, yelling: *Monster!*Had 30 operations: ribs into cheekbones, skin from thighs, leg into jaw.

Four years later a dead donor gave her a face.

In two months her hands could not tell her new face from her old.

Now she can walk outside and not be noticed.

She can drink coffee, eat hamburgers. Doesn't know whether to cover trachea, mouth or nose when she sneezes. She still loves her husband.

6.

Hostage to appearance, we forget the nose is for intake of oxygen, nitrogen, exhale of nitrogen, carbon dioxide, the bonus lure of strawberries, location of loves.

We forget ears need to lean forward for directions to destinations, to hear songs of the heart, the coming of storms.

We forget the mouth should smile, press kisses, form sounds to inform, express, translate.

We forget eyebrows, lashes, shield sight. Eyes see steps to take, colors that color our souls, read the eyes of loves.

#### **Ease**

#### by Maren O. Mitchell

The long cat's summer-shaded yawn forces his head back comfortably: warm, slow, comfortable. The yawn shifts skin on muscle on bone comfortably to the dissonance of my workday morning chewing, my gaseous stomach. Ignoring the commands of the radio beat, his head tilts back, splits, tongue luxuriating. Into one chosen raising of spoon to waiting mouth I try to incorporate the rhythm of the yawnthe rhythm that does not write, does not need to write, this poem, that history, the mortal separation.

# California Dreaming

#### by Turner Cassity

Capitalism seems to have a need Each generation for that sacrifice We always call Poor Little Rich Girl.

Abusive husbands and litigious aunts, Quack diet doctors, mis-invested trusts, Harsh flashbulbs of the paparazzi.

We feel conspicuous consumption safe If Barbara or Gloria or who Is suffering for our excesses.

Has socialism an equivalent? Rich Little Poor Girl? No, since lotteries, As Marx might warn, are to the masses

What seeded claims once were to Gold Rushees, And, socialism being first a race To head off fools from folly, outlawed.

That combination's irresistible, Envy and chance, as Calvin knew. It's why "Election" offers it both ways.

# Last Things

#### by Turner Cassity

Some say the world will end in fire; some say in ice. Have they not heard of entropy? The best advice May be, inure yourself to tepid. Heat exchange Sees to it Armageddon has a narrow range. If you would have extremes in your Apocalypse Encounter it within: a time bad conscience whips To frenzy or self satisfaction laxly crowns. And although Judgment Day has had its ups and downs Outside revival tents, it has returned in force As terrorism, ozone holes, and melting cores In power plants, a retribution so widespread As not to segregate the living from the dead Or match the sinner with the sin. In soulless wards In which indifference as a consensus lords. The complicated tortures on the Sistine wall Will level out to ordinary medical; An age's ever vaguer sense of sin dispel The King James Version's phraseology of Hell, Although its "thief come in the night" will surely stay; Its nagging hint "The hour we know not, not the day."

# Chasing the Ice that Floated on the Stream (cinquains)

by Jane Stuart

Waiting until morning covers earth with brightness a light transparent wind that blows cold breath

Early green icy frost sticks to grass and slickens October's blooming violets like pearls

Sleepy night lullabies crooned by the happy wind, sung by a rising moon and star filled sky

Warming winds cross over zippy mountains, wide lakes, meadows, fields, and cold creeks needing sunlight

# In Early Greece (a tanka sequence)

#### by Jane Stuart

#### Athens

Red roses blooming in frosty beds of starlight under summer's moon! Under skies we filled with stars, under summer's starlight moon

#### Corinth

Dusty bricks and stone, mighty fortress rising up on a sun-scorched plain invisible moats surround castles reaching the blue sky

#### Sounion

Beach volleyball nets cover shores where sunlight gleams across fishing boats; Poseidon will find the ball we left on a moonlit shore

#### Delphi

Morning mist rises slowly out of earth's fissures, funneling the air.
Omens are for a new day and a starlight, star-filled night

# Naming by Carrie Green

#### -Guangdong Province, China, 1858

The Sun-king visited the Moon-queen the night of your birth. He flew to the Palace of Great Cold and the moon's surface shimmered, a bright mirror through branches. I squatted in the grove and pushed, a sundering beneath their joining.

Small red fish with eyes shut tight; I opened your squirming arms and lifted you to stars.

The Moon-queen offered you cinnamon to hide life's bitter taste, and the Sun-king gave you warmth to ease your skin into cold new air. That night the gods' twined light spilled upon you, my Gim Gong, my Double Brilliance.

# Gim Gong's Mark

#### by Carrie Green

All Chinese babies are born with a Mongolian spot—a temporary birthmark in the shape of a cabbage—at the small of their backs.

-Lisa See, On Gold Mountain

It bloomed in the bone and blood of our family's dead and marked him with a hand he could not see.

I touched his new skin, the blue-gray stain like spilled dust, then felt the hollow of my own spine.

Sometimes, in love,
we suck ourselves into skin,
kiss bruises into flesh.
His small flower paled
like plum blossoms against a white sky.
I longed
to purple his back
again and again
with my mouth.

# **Letter to Gim Gong**

#### by Carrie Green

I recall the scent of oranges, the sunlight through green leaves. You let me follow you on fat, dimpled legs. I tugged your long queue, picked oranges off the ground and placed them in your basket.

The day you left you tickled my chin with orange blossom. I held the flowers so tight I crushed them, and when I opened my tiny palms I cried at petals torn from branches.

I have not seen you since.
Do you remember my bright, black eyes?
You called me Moon Cake
for my full, round checks.
I dreamed you faded,
your skin drained spirit-white,
your eyes colorless as water.

I hoped my husband would find you in the Flowery Flag Nation.
He sends gold coins but no word of you.
Now the news of your return reaches as far as Chung Tong May.
The villagers call you the Man Without a Queue, but I do not believe them.

I hope my mother-in-law will let me leave these fields of rice for groves rich with fruit.
I will feed you sweet pastries and chicken cooked in wine.
If foreign devils have stolen your queue, I will cover your bare neck with my palm.

# **Traveling into the Silence**

by Frank. D. Moore

I lug my lung cross country 1500 miles by car: out of the rarefied air of Santa Fe, city of millionaires, of St. Francis,

too, across the Texas Panhandle & Oklahoma, Knights' Inns of Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and back to Ohio where no one is home:

ghosts have decamped from houses in Cincinnati and Hamilton; friends sipping martinis or Perrier look at each other and shrug

as my voice circles on their answering machines; Aunt Clara has picked up her walker and walked to Kentucky;

under Kentucky sod somewhere lies my father, and here already in early October (month of her birth) thin ice

crawls over one corner of the slick gray marble of my mother's marker, touches the "A" in Anne

with a crystal spear.

### **The Last Aunt**

#### by Frank. D. Moore

You, last of five sisters and my last aunt, dead, dead as my mother the day you and I clung to each other in a pool of hot sun by her bed, daisies wilting, and wept.

Soon after my birth, as the story goes, returning from Richmond, my mother too ill, you cradled me the hundred miles of steep shaded roads, hairpin curves, past plain yards burdened with white lilacs. Now, white dogwoods nearby, other nephews carry you to your plot of Kentucky soil beside your only son, hear the absolute sound of clods on coffin; only words can I give, emptiness of arms and hands.

#### **Dark Matter**

#### by Dennis Saleh

Mostly everything is composed of nothing I read, and then look up around me at what I believe I believe in things objects pictures colors arrangements and sigh for it all, for myself, for the fact that very probably and in all likelihood even I am not here entirely altogether but am mostly missing if not already gone, and what did I think I was anyway a thinking something a blink a breeze Why I suppose I would drop to my knees if I had them but instead just stare at the air which stares back at me emptily

# **Endless Lips**

#### by Dennis Saleh

Only January and so warm
Something about the weather
or terrain Hostile smile of climes
The overbearing white is too warm
Familiarity breathes contempt
Jungley feeling Too avid greens
Ugly smugly packed blues
compose oddly thick skies
Can't trust pink to tell the truth
It's all sighs Exhaling breaths
Like endless lips before perspiring

### hypothesis by Ryan Reed

when jesus christ slept, did he dream? or did his bran hum quietly

in holy pulses, rhythmically, the tempo of of redemption?

did his eyes flicker in the deep stage?

i'll bet the apostles sat crouched around the campfire, jaw-dropped, wishing they could see through god's kaleidoscope.

i'll bet when he woke up, he never remembered.

# The Redneck Nerd (a chip off the old block)

#### by Walter Lane

The hillbilly poet's grandson played football.
The poet said after school detentions, honor roll status was o.k. to blame on an old granddad, but football was only o.k. because of the drug test required of players like his "little" nerd.

When in the convenience store, the hillbilly poet made a comment about his little redneck nerd, a red faced critic stood up lip quivering.

As quickly as his hand went up to a teacher's algebra question, the redneck nerd stepped between the critic preparing to lay hands on the poet.

Quietly, he said, "He's mine. I understand."

The hillbilly poet had learned the advantage of raising a football player.

### **Silent Memories**

#### by Bobbi Dawn Rightmyer

A great storm rages all elements of nature seem to be at war, clashing . . . the storm has broken and it will soon be dawn; faint rays of light will appear on the horizon dispelling the darkness, a moment of light, only to be plunged into darkness again, into the sanctuary of the past the moment of truth, that could be salvation, is gone forever and even the landscape has changed.

Quiet afternoons are timeless,
moments when the past intermingles
with the present,
thoughts move about unseen;
the quiet nights are longer,
deep within the dark as
opposing forces collide.
Times when death rushes by silently, unnoticed;
but there are times we invite those memories deliberately.
For one who has sought these memories
it can be a fatal encounter.

# After the Biopsy; or, What's the Verdict? by Harry Brown

Like the lawn and shagbark near the garden, maples in the front look greener than he has ever known; and when a breeze visits branches slowly wave, conducting this fine June morning a passing adagio. Once for minutes in a stronger wind the maples sway as if under water, leaves lightly flutter in a movement he has never before heard.

This quiet symphony is new.

# Bliss by Todd Davis

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

-William Butler Yeats

My great grandfather, Fleming Jefferson Davis, grew fruit trees in central Kentucky, on the road half-way between Grab and Donansburg, two orchards to be exact, with Lincoln pears, Elberta peaches, and all manner of apples, including Red Junes, Maiden Blush, Sapsucker, and Northern Spy. With so many blossoms to tend, none of which could bear fruit unless pollinated, he also kept bees.

Passion ought to be fragrant, don't you think, trussed up like a young girl trying to catch her date's attention at the first school dance? But in this section of Kentucky virtually every Davis was born, raised, and died a Separate Baptist, which meant that passion and pleasure and dancing were suspect.

Can you imagine spring in those orchards: white and pink blossoms thrown to the ends of branches like confetti, the faint syrupy smell of possibility, and the sound of bees everywhere? I've often wondered if this was the way my Puritan ancestors winked at God, immersing themselves in the radical abundance of nature, cultivating it under the auspices of agriculture so no one would dare damn this profusion of sensual delights.

If you've never been stung, or if you've been stung but got over the fear of the swelling pinprick to recognize its necessity in keeping the world spinning, then you know the movement of bees should hold no dread, that their dance may be the most beautiful to witness, if you're willing to take the time to lay under the trees, head turned to the sky and to the profusion of blossoms that appear to hold the heavens in their rightful place.

There's a fluidity to bee flight, a languid rhythm to their comings and goings. Nothing overly choreographed: part ballet, part waltz. No tango or salsa here, despite their costuming and their tiny bee hips swaying back and forth in provocation.

Yet there's no denying that this dance—despite its loveliness, its bodily gratification—bears a purpose. A certain kind of love drives these creatures in their persistence, enabling their single-minded vision. Who can glimpse the pollen these bees store on their legs—so sticky and heavy at times that flight becomes difficult—without confess-

ing an odd passion stirring the blood? Who can hear the hum of what Yeats called a "bee-loud glade" and not remember the thirst of one's own yearning for this solace, a constant craving to taste the sugar of this world's offering, to drink until full, then to move on to another flower, only to thirst again?

I wonder if my great grandfather considered such matters. I know my grandfather and father did on their walks at the Pierce farm, listened to them philosophizing about the woods, about the absurdity of plentitude and lack, and so it's my birthright to ask: Where did this dancing lead? What was the conclusion of this bee-laden love-making, this world-making, which took place in a remote orchard nearly a century ago?

Some of those rhythms culminated in the waxen comb which Fleming would slice with a butcher knife: whetted edge dripping with honey the color of a wheat field, the bees having fled from the clouds he poured out of his kettle-shaped smoker. Yes, beedancing brought the hive's harvest, but it also went into the making of a white peach my father now can't remember the name for, a fruited ecstasy he's scoured farm stands, garden catalogs, and produce aisles in search of the past sixty years with no luck.

He says that particular kind of peach was large and came on in July when the heat was beginning to weigh on everyone. He's told me that slicing into one of those midsummer globes, watching the paring knife undo the velvet of its skin and the first drop of juice sliding down onto thumb's tip was pure pleasure, a sanctioned hedonism that could not be overturned despite the church's best efforts. It was summer's hellish heat undone by a bliss that tasted like honey tinged with apples and pears, a sweetness that was like staring at the sun through the leaves while kissing a girl from the next farm over who kissed you back even harder.

# **Noctor** by Vickie Cimprich

#### 1. Lees Junior College

There was initial enthusiasm over, and concern about, my 1976 arrival in Jackson, pop. 3000. For example, I was single. Lexington was 81 miles northeast and "the line," the Breathitt/Perry County line 30 miles south, was the closest place you could buy liquor. During my employment interview, the college president asked me if I had any marriage plans. "Why, Dr. Fusslinger, is this a proposal?" said the Scarlett O'Hara sitting in my chair. No. My Title III funding supervisor asked me how long my hair was. My division chair and I said a little about Thomas Merton.

But after a couple visits to the chairman's home, a brusque acknowledgment from my church's pastor at Sunday mass, I was lonely. Not particularly for a suitor. My first walk around town, I met Athens Carrell near the post office who bent my ear with some good stories. But I had no bunch, no crowd, certainly no intimates. I lived in a college housing basement that was thinly disguised as an apartment. A possum moved into a crawl space and peed regularly on my ceiling.

I was as in tune with the world as a Carthusian, but at that time wasn't clear if they had a women's branch (they don't, but the Camaldolese do). The solitude I did practice accounts for my '72 green Corolla barreling into the church parking lot one Sunday, just as the bank president Howard Thomas and the rest of the congregation was barreling out. Daylight savings time had changed out from under me. I turned off the ignition and sat, until my wits refooted in the wake of the bygone. Going home alone was too black bleak. Then I remembered Sally Paton's invitation for the afternoon—to go out to her place where they were going to dig potatoes.

The Patons' place was at Noctor, several miles out Highway 30 from Jackson, Kentucky. Sally Paton and Bernard, mother and son, were my students in English 101, the first class I taught at Lees in the fall of 1976. Sally and I, pretty much the same age, liked each other. She accepted my gawky fascination with "Appalachia" and shared the old timey and new events of her daily life with me. She also kept up with her classwork. I know in those days my teaching was disjointed and must have seemed bizarre to the 17 and 18 year olds from the county schools. Sally and Bernard had sharp minds and were sensitive. Bernard didn't seem the sort to throw his lot in with the psychedelics transacted locally, or over at his weekend National Guard service in Winchester. His artwork, described below, suggested otherwise. Bernard

seemed like a sad, serious young person. Why he never brought any writing or indeed himself to class, I'm not for sure.

On the last day of class or during exam week, Sally gave me a drawing by Bernard. Tangled wisps of parallel curved lines filigreed through a face. Road signs—DETOUR and STOP—interrupted the traceries in the cerebellum. None of the 101 writing I'd read all semester approached the insight or psychology of the message encrypted here. Today, 33 years later, I wish I could begin again with him. "Tell me about drawing this. When did you do this? Do you have any more? Can I give you an Incomplete for the course and we'll make some words for this?" Maybe the fine lines would be strong enough to go on.

On the way out to the Patons' I passed the Burns' place. It was across the swinging bridge their grandfather had built. What a swinging bridge does is walk back at you. This one made Noctor Branch look like a magnificent gorge to me. Wire and wood, patchwork Gothic. The next December's Audubon bird count, I was out there with a good birder about a decade my junior. The local chapter director's research on the return of bird species to strip mined sites was being funded by Falcon Coal. I took a picture of an abandoned tank dripping oil down on a moonscape. It was pure deliverance to come back down out of there to the swinging bridge and stand down in the branch. I took a picture of the Burns' dog, head stuck through the wires, looking down at me.

#### 2. Digging potatoes

So I drove up around the bend and turned in the Patons' gravel drive. Everybody was glad to see me. All left off whatever they'd been up to to welcome me, Sally, Fuller and the two girls. Fuller was an architect in his seventies, with an office across Jefferson Street from the college. I sometimes wondered why Sally had such an old husband, but he would have been a lot younger when they married. Besides, Sally never bothered me with speculations about my private life. Fuller showed me around his place including the root cellar where some of last year's potatoes still were. The potatoes were not the smooth scrubbed spuds I'd buy in net bags at the store. These had dirt and grit and slices off some ends and it didn't matter. They provided the imagery I'd use in a poem thirty years later.

Fuller harnessed the quarter horse and got it hitched to the plow. Each of the girls delved a row down the length of the patch. Seeing the girls do well, I asked to try. I grabbed the ends of the plow, heard Fuller start up the horse, walked three steps and fell over. We all laughed at me. But I was inside disappointed. After all, I was strong. I changed my own car oil. Apparently the ability to turn a band wrench wasn't useful for steering a quarter horse. And from Noctor would come more to learn besides.

In the middle of the oral history unit, Sally came up to me and asked if she could do her interview with a Navajo Indian who was staying out at her place. "Sure," I said, "I'd like to meet him."

#### 3. Winston Sellars

Winston was a skinny Indian. Broad forehead, dark eyes, a teacher's voice but certainly no credentials—except the kind sharp people got from a tour of duty in Vietnam. He was given to expressions like "more fun [or whatever] than you can shake a stick at," and "It beats pokin' a stick in your eye." Another time we'd had coffee or

lunch at the Lonesome Pine. Afterwards as we walked down College Avenue, I told him how I missed my dad, who'd died three years earlier. He told me that my father is always with me.

From Pat's taped interview, I learned that he'd been raised by a Mormon couple whose notions were pretty restrictive. He had sympathy for his birthmother.

In my case, my mother didn't want me, couldn't keep enough food in the house to keep me alive, so when she gave me away that's basically what it was. When I left mother I was 18 months old and when I went to see her again I was 15 . . . . Then it was like two strangers meeting on the street and one says I'm your mother. We tried, but Indians are not known for their show of emotion. We're not put together that way.

But I could see that to live like the Indians do on a reservation is not a life.... Because the people down there have no other contact with the 20th century than maybe planes flying over their heads or a ride into town on a pickup. On a reservation... when you reach five or six years of age, the bus comes around and the government says, along with the BIA, you have to go to school. Sometimes the bus driver comes down, picks the kid up and puts him on the bus.

Winston was an artist and spoke of his teacher and friends in Colorado. Some way there he had taken up with Fuller's brother, an aging hippy, and accepted his invitation to come to Kentucky. I asked about his work. "You want to see some pictures? I'll make you some pictures." Within a couple days I owned two Winston Sellers, green and black felt tip ink on gift box white cardboard, a pretty good cobra and a good soaring eagle.

He was like Sally, generous with strangers. There came a poem.

At times before it snows My heart is as cold as the wind A heart that Bounces, sings and dances If snowflakes chance To fall or as it tumbles From my feet . . . Beneath this heart of pounding heat If snowflakes Chance to fall Creatures pass and Leave a path On a soft quiet pad Eyes that shine sparkle and wink If snowflakes chance To fall.

—Winston Sellars

I walked in those days with a stiffened back. Although I invited him over for some eggplant Parmesan and more talk, I made me a rule of no male/female stuff between

the school marm and the injun. Somehow the day a single red rose lay on my office desk, I'll be darned if I could connect it to anybody. Thought maybe somebody was playing a joke on me.

One day on the high sidewalk in front of Gamble & Strong's Grocery, Jarrod Burns from out Noctor and I passed and spoke. Seems Winston and Fuller's brother had a falling out and Winston was no longer living with him. In fact, Winston was living in an old school bus. "I heard he was living with you," says Jarrod. I not only conveyed No Way to him, but the next time I saw Winston....

Christmas holidays I was in Covington with my mother. Winston phoned from the Holiday Inn on December 23. I had a date with the guy I did want to be seeing that evening. What was I to do with Winston? After supper I went down to the Inn and met Winston in the lounge. I unloaded on him for showing up, and for the shacking up rumor. This was mean spirited. The next day I picked him up at the public library and took him to my Mom's, where he bypassed our couch for a night on the dining room rug. The day of Christmas Eve, I schemed: "Winston, wouldn't you really rather be celebrating Christmas with your friends in Colorado?" Yeah, they'd be really glad to see him, but he didn't have the money. I left him at the house and went to the bank, where my passbook took a dent I could afford. A goodbye kiss on the cheek at the Departures curb at the airport left me feeling relieved and guilty. He assured me his teacher would be really glad.

In springtime down at Lees they let me have Helen Tyler's roomy second floor apartment, after she left for a job in Lexington. One day I was washing and waxing my kitchen floor when Winston arrived. He'd brought me a color photo book of Aspen and a pendant of one laminated leaf of a fall aspen tree. When he said goodbye, he left a Glenwood Springs address. That fall my car trunk was broken into while I camped off Tunnel Ridge Road in the Red River Gorge. I lost an oral history program tape recorder, a Jerusalem Bible, and the journal that had Winston's address.

Each fall now I wear the leaf whenever I get dressed up. Other times, well, your Navajo is always with you.

#### 4. The Burnses

Jarrod Burns had that kind of sneering intellectuality some burned out druggies have. His blue eyes were glazed. He took a week or so of my class, my second year at Lees. His personal experience paper was on the time he and a friend set out from high school to be evangelists. They wound up broke in Florida. It was hilarious. It was a mistake giving it back to him to revise and edit. Never saw it, or him in class, again.

No teacher did. But he was turning up, in the dark, near Billy Felton's house, just across the field from the Burns' place. Billy taught Media at Lees. If you were in Billy's classes, you got to work at the campus radio station and maybe DJ your own show. Billy had the coolest new thing to offer and Jarrod had to look out his back yard day in day out at Billy's place. Billy got Dobermans to keep Jarrod away and the Dobermans died on poisoned meat. After some small explosives went off in his yard, Billy lawed him.

An inconclusive court date left everybody except the plaintiff in stitches. Some time after the progressive dinner, Jarrod asked me to meet him, and I said I would. In the college library of course. He told me he'd come to say goodbye. He was leaving Jackson and all the Devil's works at Lees. He gave me a brown paper package that he said was home-ground corn meal. To be on the safe side I dumped it in my garden out back.

#### 5. The Progressive Dinner

December of my second year, the social development team at the college organized a progressive dinner. We'd start with hors d'oeuvres at the Feltons'. However, the first click of high heels made a retrograde percussion on the swinging bridge. Certainly hospitality and food were the best. But there seemed to be hardly anywhere to look while eating crudités out on the front porch except back across the bridge, where Jarrod Burns and his buddies were bunched up on the roadside looking back at us.

I left Lees after two years. This was as much my moods as any lack of real work to be done and any alternative ambition. I moved to a quiet place in the country fourteen miles away from Beattyville in Lee County. Some twenty years later I read in the Cincinnati newspaper that Lees Junior College was being censured by the American Association of University Professors. Within a year or two it was taken over by the University of Kentucky's community college system. It had long since become too much for the benevolent denomination to handle.

Noctor was only one of the places where I learned about benevolence, violence, distance and connection. I'd seen more kinds of times in Breathitt County than you can shake a stick at.

#### White Flash

#### by Raymond Abbott

When I encounter what scholars, writers, and such have to say about Appalachia, I am reminded that I need to write something about that region, too, for many years ago I lived in Breathitt County in Eastern Kentucky. I was there for about a year in the late Sixties as part of something called the Teacher Corps. Teacher Corps was a federal program begun by President Lyndon Johnson that was designed to put young college grads, who had not planned to teach, in grade schools in poor areas. It was thought that this might enhance the quality of low-performing schools, as well as to beef up the teaching profession in several ways, including putting more men in such positions, the belief being that young children from low-income families might not have seen enough men in positions of responsibility. Or something to that effect.

My reluctance, if I can describe it as such, to write about this world may have had something to do with the fact I didn't particularly like living in Eastern Kentucky, nor did I like teaching children. The lack of enthusiasm for teaching may have been the stronger of the two factors. Of course, until I got there and began my teaching duties—something brand new for me—I didn't know I would feel the way I did.

I came to be in the Teacher Corps after a stint in VISTA, another War on Poverty program initiated by Lyndon Johnson. VISTA was Volunteers in Service to America, and my placement was on a Sioux Indian reservation in South Dakota. I remained in South Dakota a part of a second year after my one year service. I then worked for the tribe on a large housing program called Transitional Housing.

I came to the conclusion soon after I was hired that the program was doomed to fail, but I was wrong. While the housing effort was riddled with excesses and inefficiencies, and woefully over budget, it did get completed, although not on time. I was fairly naive in those years and didn't understand how things worked with federal projects. If you ran out of money, you merely asked for more. It was almost expected to happen that way, and it certainly was not uncommon. I functioned under the illusion that you were granted a certain amount of money, called a budget, and if you misjudged or misspent, well, that was it. You suffered, or at least the program did. You might even go out of business. Not so, of course. Nevertheless, I left the program before it was half completed, disillusioned with the mess I was witnessing. But also, I was tired of the reservation life. The isolation of rural living got to me, with the massive social problems, especially the drinking and later, drugs, and the violence, including a shocking number of auto wrecks. It was the same as I was to find waiting for me in Appalachia, although it took me some time to realize it.

I was about twenty-five years old, and as I noted already, it was the Sixties. For the young who might read this and couldn't possibly remember the Sixties, it was also a time of war, war in Southeast Asia, and a military draft. I had a draft deferment for my Indian work, but it disappeared suddenly when I quit the job in Indian housing. I was thereafter eligible to be drafted and sent to Vietnam, not a prospect I especially relished. But the military draft, the Selective Service, was another bureaucracy, slow like other bureaucracies, and so my draft status did not get changed immediately. Thus I applied to the Teacher Corps, perhaps in part for want of anything else to do. Also, I thought maybe I could convince my draft board in Massachusetts, where I am from, to grant me another deferment, this time to teach school in Appalachia. I wasn't successful in that effort, but I will come to that part in a moment.

I was accepted by the Teacher Corps and sent to Lexington, Kentucky for training. The program included the earning of a master's degree in elementary education at the University of Kentucky. Part of my time would be teaching in a disadvantaged area, and weekends were spent taking education classes at the Lexington campus. I knew I would be headed for a rural assignment, although others went to work in inner-city Louisville. I felt certain I was picked for the rural assignment because of my work among the Indians on the South Dakota reservation, which was about as rural as it gets.

In Breathitt County, the immediate challenge became finding affordable housing. Housing was tight in those years and not cheap. We were paid a small monthly stipend which would have to make do. Another Teacher Corps intern, Tony Peake, and I began our search for housing in Jackson. I am not sure which of us first connected up with Shade Combs. It might have been Tony. Anyway, Mr. Combs was an elderly man easily past eighty, vision-impaired and using a cane. He soon became our landlord, renting us a basement apartment in the house in which he lived.

The apartment had not been rented in many years. It was in town, just around the corner from Lee Junior College, and convenient all in all. I didn't have much to do with the college, such as it was, although I used its library a time or two. What I do recall, however, was that some of the prettiest girls I had ever seen seemed to go there, as if being beautiful were a requirement for admission.

Just down the street from the college was a small hamburger joint called the White Flash. As I remember, hamburgers were about fourteen cents apiece, and a cup of coffee a nickel, with a can of evaporated milk on the counter for creamer. Whenever I went in there (which was often), I noticed out front a knot of men whittling and spitting. They looked as though they had been chosen from central casting. At this point I might add that the accent was as strong a backwoods southern one as any I have ever heard. Which must have made my New England speech sound equally foreign to them.

Once I asked the man behind the counter at the White Flash how it came to be called that. His reply, while picking up a decorative western-style pistol that sat next to the cash register was, "If you don't pay, all you're gonna see is a white flash!" I don't remember if he smiled when he said that, but it was said so smoothly it made one think he had given the same reply many times before.

Having lived on an Indian reservation where housing was at best substandard, I thought I was ready for anything I might find in Eastern Kentucky. I was hardy. But adjusting to Mr. Combs' property was more than a little challenging.

The two bedrooms were sufficient, as was the kitchen and another small space, but the rat problem was downright alarming. Although I never saw a rat in the house,

there was a large pipe opening near the street and I noticed several large rats enter that pipe, and I figured the pipe led to the house. But however they got inside, the result was a constant scurrying sound inside the walls and ceiling, and additionally, the sound of frequent altercations among them, which was most disturbing when one tried to sleep. And they were particularly active at night, which did not readily lead to a good night's sleep.

Tony, my new roommate, slept in what we called the front bedroom near the kitchen; I was in the rear space. One night as Tony lay in bed, he was certain a rat had broken through the thin ceiling panel over his bed and was hanging above ready to drop on top of him. He had awakened suddenly to see this horror above him, and in an effort to challenge the intruder that he thought was hanging there he called out loudly and made a forceful gesture toward the rat, hoping to frighten it away. Well, the rat turned out to be the shadow of a light fixture above his bed.

"It could have been a rat," Tony liked to say later, recounting this story to friends when we described our living arrangements.

The heating accommodation was bizarre, as well. There were open-flame gas jets on the floors, and we both feared that the ventilation might not be sufficient and we might thus be asphyxiated. And if that didn't happen, there was always the chance the flame would go out as we slept and the gas continue to escape and build up and eventually turn the place into a bomb. But we had to have heat. It was very cold in Jackson that winter.

What with the noise of the rats scurrying about all night and the questionable heating system, you didn't find yourself sleeping especially well. At least I didn't. I have never slept well in my life, but in Jackson it became damn near impossible for me to get a good night's rest. Often I felt weary when I got up in the morning, hardly energized sufficiently for a day of teaching.

Tony and I were both assigned to the Marie Roberts Elementary School in Lost Creek, Kentucky, about ten miles away along the mountain parkway. Only Tony had a car, so I rode with him most days. Tony was from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, but after his time in the mountains he taught in Jefferson County (Louisville) for most of his career until he retired. Tony was good-looking, tall and dark-haired, a friendly young man with an easy smile. He was a bit younger than me, and a graduate of Bellarmine College in Louisville. Like me, he was Roman Catholic, but unlike me, he was quite religious. I believe at one earlier point in his life he'd considered going to seminary, but that plan had faltered before I met him. These days he talked of getting married in the very near future.

Today, I live near Tony in the Highlands of Louisville. I see him fairly often. While he had a long and successful career as a teacher, he has not been blessed with good health since his retirement. I can't now recall if Tony spent the entire Teacher Corps term of two years in the mountains. I think he did not, and took an assignment in an urban setting his second year.

I had a girlfriend at this time named Amy. I met her in the Teacher Corps. She was a year or so older than me. Amy was talented, very musical among her other skills, and she spoke French with a level of fluency I admired. She was also good at art, which is very helpful in the elementary school setting. Amy was part of a team teaching program at the Lyndon Baines Johnson School in Jackson. The LBJ School was brand new and was designed to be innovative. The rooms were in large carpeted expanses without many interior walls. I believe President Johnson himself came to dedicate that school, but that was before I got there.

I had heard that the concept of an innovative school such as LBJ had come from Marie Roberts Turner, the superintendent of the Breathitt County Schools, and the namesake of my particular building. She was by this time the widow of the county judge. More powerful people—the Turners (Democrats, of course)—you would not expect to encounter in that part of the world. All the same, Marie Roberts Turner in her own right had progressive ideas. She believed among other things that the mountain children needed to get acquainted with people and ideas beyond the mountains. Exposure to the outside world made her see the Teacher Corps as an instrument to help counter the isolation of the region.

So persons such as myself and Amy and Tony and many others, nearly all from outside of Kentucky, represented for several years a small invasion of outsiders, some with new and creative ideas, and maybe even foreign-sounding speech as well. My Massachusetts accent was quickly identified as out of the region. I was often mistaken for being English. Even now, after thirty years in Louisville, I am sometimes asked if I might be from another country.

Periodically Marie Roberts Turner herself came to visit the school which bore her name. But she never came unannounced, so everything and everyone was made ready well beforehand. It reminds me of something that often happens in Ireland, where I have spent extended periods of time. If an American relative is scheduled to visit an Irish family, the host family thoroughly scrubs down the homestead in preparation, scrubs it to a shine. Same too if the stations of the cross are displayed in an Irish home. They are carefully scrubbed and polished.

So when Marie Roberts Turner came a-calling, the preparation was Herculean in scope. Nothing was to be out of place, no disorder permitted. It seemed to me that nobody said much to Mrs. Turner beyond a "Hello" unless she spoke to you first, and perhaps asked you a question. She never asked me any questions. She was in a word a terrifying figure, although she certainly did not look the part, nor so far as I know, act the part, either. She was short in stature and stout, a matronly-looking middle-aged woman. She dressed conservatively, not expensively, and was quietly friendly. She went from class to class, never staying long in one place.

I was in Golden Mullins' fourth grade class. I was theoretically a co-teacher, part of a team, but in reality we interns were not much more than aides, although the regular teachers almost without exception allowed us to do as much as we wished to take on. It meant less for them to do, which was how they viewed it, no doubt.

As I saw it, the lowdown on the grades went something like this: First grade okay, but children still having trouble controlling bodily functions; Second grade better because children more in control and thus a little more teachable; Third and Fourth grades, maybe the best years of all from the point of view of the teachers. Fifth grade more difficult discipline-wise. Grade levels beyond the Fifth, well, forget it! Impossible to control much of the time.

My roommate Tony had a Fifth grade class assignment, and he suffered considerably. Discipline problems abounded, and as I said, it got no better in the upper grades, although I knew only one person at Marie Roberts from Teacher Corps who had been assigned to an upper-level grade.

Golden Mullins (her real name) was very welcoming of me in the class, which consisted of about thirty children, with several boys in the back who were somewhat older. What they learned would have to have been by osmosis, because they barely participated in classroom activities. One boy slept through much of the day. He was not disruptive, and neither were the others in the back rows. But the day Marie Roberts

Turner came everybody sat up straight in their seats looking alert, even the boys in the back, and nobody said "Boo" unless asked. The punishment for acting out when Mrs. Turner was in residence would have been too severe for any child to contemplate. Same went for the staff as well.

When the traveling music teacher came around, the behavior was just about as good as when Marie Roberts Turner was in house, but for a different reason. When she swept in, which was about once a month, she placed on Mrs. Mullins' desk a large paddle, one with holes in it, and every child in the room knew full well that she would use it if need be. By Fourth grade the kids probably didn't need to see the paddle, because they knew by then just who they were dealing with. I never saw any child provoke her and consequently be hauled out of the room for a paddling. The reason for the holes in the paddle is a puzzle, but perhaps it was to make the experience all the more memorable.

The music teacher was a short, stout woman in her fifties with graying wiry-looking hair, and glasses that hung from a cord upon her bosom. She spoke in a quiet, restrained voice that was never raised, yet she commanded all our attention perfectly.

The first thing she would do was take out a wooden holder that held five pieces of chalk to mark out the staff lines on the blackboard. She would then draw in the musical notes, the object being to teach children how to read music. I don't recall much actual singing in the classroom, but she did have with her a pitchpipe, so I suppose we did sing a few tunes. As I say, it was awfully quiet during the time she was there, which was about an hour.

I recall being told by Gary, another Teacher Corps intern in another Third grade class that the music teacher was in his room one day when a child had an epileptic seizure, and the teacher had the entire class pray over the boy, obviously believing that prayer would rid the child of the demon spirit that had come to possess him. And pray over him they did, Gary added with a laugh.

Golden Mullins was not a severe disciplinarian, but she managed to keep control pretty well. She spoke very slowly and carefully, and the children never pushed her too hard. She had been doing this job for many years, and was happy, or seemed so, to have me in the classroom, and often allowed me to take the children off task with things I might want to talk to them about. Because of my experience with the Indians, I spoke of them often and the way they lived on the reservation. I tried to keep it positive, and I certainly didn't emphasize the grimness of the place, or note the similarities I by now saw to life in Appalachia. I didn't talk about the poverty and the poor housing and the alcohol and drug abuse on the reservation. Though unlike Appalachia, there were no huge coal trucks traveling on narrow roads belching out black smoke. That was one difference.

I was never asked to teach the class on my own, although I remember once or twice while I was there Golden being out sick or away, and I was expected to cover for her, and I did. Fortunately for me, she didn't often miss school.

That spring brought the assassination of Martin Luther King, and we talked about the subject for a time. Who he was, what he was trying to do, and so on. I don't think the children had much sense of who King was, aside from what I told them and what they might have seen on TV or heard at home. I even had them write about King, to get a feeling for their sense of what had happened. I saved those compositions and still have them somewhere. Most of the pieces were respectful and expressed regret for what had happened. I guess I could say all of the essays were in that vein, although one or two of the boys might have used the term "nigger," but it occurred to me it was not used in a malicious way, just a part of the vocabulary of some.

I am not sure Golden approved of this exercise I led, but she never said a word. We got on quite well the entire time I worked with her. She was a nice lady.

Some of the boys in the class were tough, and at times we had discipline problems. I recall in particular one small boy surnamed Noble, a common name there. One day he was especially rough and fresh with me on the playground. Somehow, an incident started—I may have had to break up a fight between him and another boy. We exchanged some angry words and he came back with something surly that was hard to ignore. As I turned away, the crisis over, I said under my breath, more to myself than anyone else, "Little bastard!"

Well, the little tough guy heard it and the next day his uncle, or was it his grandfather, at any rate, an elderly blind man with a cane (not my landlord) was in the Principal's office. I was summoned and had to explain myself to this relative, which I did, as best I could. I didn't deny what I had said, but I played it all down and the matter was settled between us, more or less. Other teachers later told me the man was prone to complaining in this way, but he was also capable of violence if he did not hear what he wanted to hear. He could come right across a desk, I was told, with that stick he carried and attack the offending person. In this case, it would be me.

That didn't happen, even though I was guilty as charged, but I got by, though my language was clearly inappropriate, and Mr. Noble, if that was his name, accepted my explanation, weak though it was. I moved on with my teaching career such as it was, but I think I decided that very day that teaching was not for me. Not for a lifetime. I would finish the school year, yes, but no more after that. I think the experience with the blind man and his cane pushed me hard in that direction, a direction I was heading for anyway.

I sometimes wonder how that Noble boy made out in life. I recall one day on the playground after a long weekend he was suddenly surrounded by a group of boys, and I, smelling trouble, went over to investigate. But it seemed he was proudly telling the other boys a story about his older brother. He smiled as he told it, as if grateful for all the attention, including mine too, I suppose. Now this was, of course, gun country. He was recounting how his brother got shot between the eyes that very weekend, killed dead by some *blackguard*. Aside from the shock of the gist of the story he was telling, I found it remarkable that such a term, *blackguard*, might still be used in this day and age. I had never heard that word spoken anywhere else, and here it was still being said in Breathitt County, Kentucky. And I heard it more than once. In my growing-up years in Massachusetts, an old expression would pop up every so often, too, reflecting the link to colonial times, I guessed.

I didn't smile now, though, but I soberly took in what the boy was saying about his brother being killed. He seemed proud to tell it, and I sensed the other boys were envious, that they would have liked to have been able to come to school and report their older brother being shot dead between the eyes. I never heard another thing about the death, who did the shooting, what the circumstances were, or if justice was ever served. Was the perpetrator caught and jailed? Was it a revenge killing of some sort, an eye for an eye? I was reminded—not that I needed to be—of just how violent a place it was I lived in. My comparison with the violent Indian world came to mind again, especially when alcohol or drugs were mentioned, as they often were as factors in the resulting violence. Even the retribution, the payback, was reservation-style, and that was usually outside the law.

And if you could believe what some said, the violence involved race sometimes. I recall a couple of times hearing of a black person being hauled from a dam or a lake

under suspicious circumstances around Jackson someplace. I know we were often advised not to venture out into the countryside, not to go to strange hollows ("hollers," they called them) without an invitation, the implication being that doing so could result in getting yourself shot. I took that advice. I never did go up any hollow, not a one, but then I don't believe I was invited to such a place, either. Had I been invited, who knows, I probably would have gone, but I found that schoolteachers did not get such invitations often. Our role was pretty clearly defined, which was all right by me.

As I have been implying, I never felt I did justice to the teaching assignment I had been given in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky. Maybe it was because I seemed always to be wrestling with feelings of regret at having left the Indian world prematurely, or, if not that, wrestling with thoughts of my draft board back in Massachusetts.

For some reason my draft board continued to be slow in reclassifying me as 1A (draftable) and I had a birthday coming along in April of that year when I would turn twenty-six, seemingly an unimportant number, but not in those years. It was a very important number to me because draft boards did not (could not) draft a man who reached that age unless the pool of draftees was so low that they needed older men. That seldom happened. The under-26s were plentiful. There was one exception, however; if the draft board considered a person delinquent, then a delinquent person could be drafted up to the age of thirty-five. Well, wouldn't you know, my draft board when they saw I was too old at twenty-six decided to classify me as delinquent. They even sent me a letter to this effect saying I was a delinquent registrant because of my attitude. This didn't fly—not for long—but I was required to hire an attorney in Massachusetts to question such a punitive decision. Soon thereafter, the draft board sent me another letter saying I was not in fact delinquent. There the matter ended.

I did win, I suppose, but looking back on the events from a distance of decades later, I wonder if maybe I should have gone. I can see now that it was the very poor, often minorities, who got drafted and sent to Vietnam. Truth is, if you were smart enough to graduate from college, it wasn't likely that you would become a foot soldier in the jungles of Vietnam, unless of course you wanted that role. And some did. Some wanted the battlefield experience. Not me. I was opposed to the war, Johnson's War, as it was called. But I never demonstrated against it as many did, saying, "Hey, hey, LBJ, How many kids did you kill today?" And I never disparaged the character or looks of the man—his prominent ears, for example—as others did. Similarly, in the Bush years I didn't make fun of that man either, his intellect (or lack thereof) or his humanity (or lack of it) and so much more.

And as far as President Johnson, things have gotten rather personal for me. Lately I have grown old enough to qualify for Medicare, a program he initiated back in the '60s. He is solely responsible for its existence. I have come to realize what a godsend Medicare is since this past summer I had to have my appendix removed and Medicare stepped up and paid the bill of \$13,000 the hospital quickly sent to me. And when one is being brutally honest about LBJ, you want to recognize all he did for race relations and the increased dignity black persons rightfully have because of the accommodation laws. He has done more than any president since Abraham Lincoln for African-Americans, to my way of thinking. That is a great legacy to have. So when I think of LBJ, I try to remember him positively, remember the federal programs, including the War on Poverty which encompassed the Teacher Corps and VISTA, in which I participated.

And so I left the mountains after only one year and moved to Louisville, where I took my first social work job. And with some interruptions—some time away—I have

been a social worker ever since. Yet, in all this time I have never returned to Eastern Kentucky. I have said I was going to, one day—still, I haven't. Others I know have and have told how different Jackson is, how much larger, for one thing, and how in other ways the town has changed. But I have not gone back, not yet, nor, for that matter, have I returned recently to the Indian country, although I have written a great deal more about Indian life than any other subject I have tackled.

As I said when I began this piece, for good or for bad, this may represent all I will ever have to say about my stay in Breathitt County, Kentucky, still called by some, "Bloody Breathitt." But not by me.

# The Cedar Chest

## by Frank D. Moore

Uncle Slim made it for Grandmother. The sorrel wood reminded him of horses, its wavy blonde streaks the hair of a woman he once knew on the road.

He carried the chest to Grandmother and placed it near the fire. The only decorations, two small horseshoes cut from the same wood and centered on the front. We all sat round in silence, except Aunt Zella, who kept saying, "Pon my word and honor." Long before he raised the lid, we could smell the woods.

Summer afternoons, when Grandmother would walk up to the Caudills, I would go through the chest—quilts, black dresses with a lace collar, a *New Testament*, a few silver dollars in a drawstring pouch, dollar bills in a brown window-envelope—until I arrived at Aunt Thelma's love letters to Uncle Rudolph in the army, bundles tied in colored string, each letter thick in its own envelope. Stretched out on the cool linoleum floor, an ear turned to the sounds of the front gate, I followed their courtship, lingering over their first lovemaking in a St. Louis hotel room. "I still smell the wood scent of your aftershave, still feel your back in the palms of my hands."

After Grandmother died, I took over the chest and filled it with my letters—from "pen pals" (my name and address having miraculously appeared in a magazine called *Wee Wisdom*), each packet delivered to my door by Conley Mainous on a horse. Some days I was the only one in Traveller's Rest to receive mail. From across the Atlantic, Antony tutored me in soccer. Jane Baker from Iowa sent me a photo of herself behind a tree, naked, she said, though only one leg and shoulder were visible. I carried her in my billfold till the luminous skin and curly head of hair, like a halo, chipped and fell away. Alice of Elizabethtown wrote on fragrant paper, name and address printed at the top, only a few huge words to a page, words resembling rolling rings with wings and tails. She proclaimed her undying love for me; I wrote back swearing mine for her. Then, because I mentioned something about another girl, Alice suddenly fired back: "I thought you loved only me. I may have to kill myself." She was playing a game, but I took her seriously.

At sixteen, I left Traveller's Rest for good—left by the narrow footpath around the cliff-top, dew from the weed falling on my new shoes, fog lifting from the creek—left behind the cedar chest with its six years of words to me. "No point in keeping these," said my mother, who, after reading every letter, made a fire in the garden.

After my mother moved away, the house stood empty except for the occasional family member seeking brief sanctuary or driving by on the way to somewhere else. The cedar chest became a catchall: old scarves and gloves, photograph albums, death

certificates, even a World War II bayonet with stained blade. Now and then, men rode their horses down the nearby hills and broke into the house, played poker and drank moonshine at the dining room table.

When Cousin Jo Anne drove down from Ohio to see the leaves turn color, she found the cedar chest in the woods: upright, lid open, warped from rain, planks beginning to separate, mud on the sides, inside a few leaves and a pine cone. Jo Anne picked up the chest and carried it to her truck, then delivered it to Aunt Clara in Ohio in the Henry A. Long Tower for senior citizens. Gnarled, twisted with arthritis, one leg ulcerated and useless, Aunt Clara sat on a straight-back chair, bending over the chest, cleaning, rubbing, rubbing till the aroma of cedar, nearly depleted during its abandonment in the woods, began to return. As she worked, she remembered Uncle Slim: fights in the kitchen, his quick withdrawals to his workshop, words she hurled after him: "Sleep with any damn tramp you want. I don't care."

After Aunt Clara tried to kill herself and had to move to the nursing home, I dealt with her things. In the cedar chest, among canceled checks and Uncle Slim's awards for country fiddling (and biggest surprise of all: Aunt Clara's filing-for-divorce papers which never went through), I found several packets of letters and cards from me to her, and at the bottom, a brown envelop with my name on it, containing \$1,000 she'd saved from her pension.

Now, the chest is in my house, in it a quilt made by Grandmother, pattern of horses in fading colors. When the first chill comes, I cover my bed with cedar.

# In the Moment

# by James B. Goode

Mamaw's brain has turned into a DVD of her life. She lies in her bed in the nursing home and randomly pushes the invisible buttons. The shiny wheel spins and locates a particular time, a particular place, with particular people. It is filled with people who were there.

"Go on up to the house and eat before you go home," she says as she raises her head from the cloud-like pillow, craning her neck to watch us disappear into the cavernous hallway.

A few weeks ago, Dr. Cornett told us to do exercises with Mamaw to stimulate her and exercise her brain.

Her brain is getting plenty of exercise, I thought. The wheels are spinning and the gears are grinding constantly. But I am always open to suggestion. So, I bring a picture of her three sons standing under the Walnut tree at the home place. I show her the picture in the silver frame.

"Who are these people?" I ask.

She holds the frame tightly in her blue-veined, waxy hands. Her eyes tighten as she stares at the image.

"They know who they are!" She blurts out suddenly.

This takes me aback. There is no argument here. They do know who they are. Maybe she recalled. Maybe she didn't. Maybe who they are has slipped away and is lost somewhere on a shiny disk and the laser light can't locate it. Maybe she will happen upon it and divulge it at some unexpected moment—that's Ivan on the left, then Eddie in the middle . . . Danny is the baby, he's next to the tree, she'll say.

The nurse tells us to rub lotion on Mamaw's skin.

"Her skin will dry out. Old people get these pressure sores from lying around," she explains. "Take this Jergen's and massage her arms and hands, her face, her legs and feet . . . . "

I come in one morning. "Good morning sweet Mamaw, how's my Mamaw today?" I ask.

She looks at me as if I am some rank stranger. It is a hollow look, as if she only knows that I am male, but doesn't know my name or how I fit in this family.

"Do you want me o rub lotion on your hands today?" I ask.

A smile slowly moves across her thin lips—some memory appears on the screen—maybe a montage of memories. The image fades to black . . . another image . . . a dissolve to another, then disappears. In her eyes are clouds flying under the sun.

"Others have been there before," she says, her eyes suddenly warm and focusing on my face.

I am her lover... come calling... I caress her hand as if we are sitting on the front porch courting in the swing. The silver disc keeps spinning and spinning.

"Others have been there before," she repeats. I do not want to hear this. Some things you do not want to hear from your eighty-year-old Mamaw.

Mamaw is trying to die. She weighs sixty-five pounds. She looks like leather stretched over sticks and rocks. When she starts to slip away, the people in white rush into the room with their gurney and whisk her away to the hospital. They hook her up to IVs of glucose and other mysterious liquids. The pink begins to chase away the ashen gray. She emerges from the fog—electricity restored after the storm.

"Honey, Honey, Honey . . . ain't you got fat since I seen you last?" She says to me. At first, my feelings are hurt, but I have learned to be in Mamaw's reality. Wherever Mamaw is, that's where I am.

The nurse's aides tell me stories about when Mamaw first came to the nursing home. Their favorite story is about her trying to court Mr. Turner who had a room across the way and down the hall. They walked up and down the corridors day-after-day holding hands and whispering in the shadows. They caught heads turned and exchanged two-arm hugs and even kisses. Once they were even caught in bed together. This came as no surprise to me. Mawmaw likes men. She always has. Every time one comes in the room, she lights up like a Christmas tree. Her eyes never leave them. They follow the men as they move about her room. She flirts with her eyes and mouth. She ignores any women who are in the room. They might as well be fence posts.

They tell about her going down to see Mr. Turner one Sunday morning. When she came to the doorway, his wife, Ellen, was sitting in a chair next to his bed. She eyed Mamaw, forming a sneer by raising the left side of her upper lip. Mamaw froze in place. Mrs. Turner looked at Elijah and said, "Well, who is this Mr. Turner?"

He opened the drawer of the nightstand, removed his black plastic-rimmed glasses and cocked them on his crooked nose.

"I've never seen her before in my life!" he exclaimed.

This morning the phone rings. It's the nursing supervisor at the nursing home. They want me to come right away. I know what has happened. I tell them I will be there as soon as I can get dressed. Outside, the trees are beginning to turn. The wind scatters the dancing leaves across the yard. One tiny bird flicks and flutters in the swirl. I take my time getting dressed. I will go into the nursing home and do as I have done for the last twelve years. I will be in Mamaw's moment.

# The Cuban Community in Louisville

## by Bob Douglas

### **New Immigrants to Kentucky**

Increased foreign immigration is having a major impact on many cities, towns, and rural areas in the United States. Between 1990 and 2000, immigrants and their children comprised slightly over 50% of the nation's population increase. If children born in this decade to pre-1990 immigrants are also added, it amounts to a 70% increase. In particular, it is the Hispanic population which has contributed much to this growth, increasing from 22 million in 1990 to 35.2 in 2000.<sup>2</sup> This new Hispanic immigration, however, has not been evenly distributed across the country. In particular, the South is a region where this increase is most noticeable. Seven of the top ten states recording the greatest percentage growth in their foreign-born Hispanic population between 1990-2000 were North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas, followed by Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia and Kentucky. As an example, during this decade the foreignborn Hispanic population in Kentucky increased by 496 percent.<sup>3</sup> This research will specifically focus on one Hispanic cohort and one Kentucky city, namely the Cuban population who have moved to Louisville. The goal of this study is to describe three types of Cuban immigrants, their immigration process, and some of their consequent occupational and residential spaces in the city.

## **New Immigrants to Louisville**

Since Louisville is the largest city in Kentucky, it might be expected that it would have experienced a substantial increase in new immigrants. This has indeed been the case. Prior to 1990, Louisville was not a major destination for foreign-born immigrants. This changed between 1990 and 1998. During this time period the Immigration and Naturalization Service reported that the net foreign-born immigration to the Louisville Metropolitan Area was 7,073, an increase of about 60 percent.<sup>4</sup> In a study of fourteen similar size cities, only Nashville, Tennessee and Greensboro, North Carolina had a greater increase during this time period.<sup>5</sup> Between 2000-2004, Louisville's foreign-born population grew even larger, a 93 percent increase, compared to 10 percent nationally.<sup>6</sup> In addition to its growth, the composition of Louisville's immigrants has been changing. In 1990 the countries of Germany, United Kingdom, Vietnam, Canada, Korea, and India contributed to the greatest number of the area's foreign-born population. The new immigrants between 1990-1998, apart from Vietnam, show a change

in the magnitude of those countries' foreign-born arrivals. During this time period, the immigrants from Germany declined from 1,535 to 129, the United Kingdom from 985-200, Canada from 754-306, Korea from 714 to 180, and India from 649-385. On the other hand, arrivals from countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina first appeared and Cuba's contribution to Louisville's ethnic mix made its first appearance.<sup>7</sup>

### **Cuban Immigrants to Louisville**

Although the Cuban-born population comprises only a small part of the new immigration to Louisville, their numbers have been growing from 278 in 2002 to 450 in 2008, with a high of 575 in 2004. (See Table I.) It is now estimated that there are over 6000 Cubans living in the metro area.

TABLE I
CUBANS IN LOUISVILLE

Year	Number
2002	278
2003	231
2004	575
2005	463
2006	515
2007	506
2008	450

SOURCE: Kentucky Office for Refugees, Catholic Charities, 1177 E. Broadway, Louisville, KY 40204

### Types of Cuban Immigrants to Louisville

For many Cubans, immigration to Louisville began in the Holguin Province of eastern Cuba. Holguin is the second most populated area in the country, with about 300 people per square mile. The capital city of Holguin, as of 2000, had approximately 245,000 people. The province is strongly tied to the production of sugar cane, with much of that industry's processing equipment manufactured there. The port of Moa also has a large cobalt plant and is a leading exporter of nickel. Within the last 10 years or so tourism and eco-tourism projects have been started. The province has 50 beaches with hotels and more planned. Yet, even with this development, there is much poverty; thus, a goal of many people is to improve their lives by immigrating to the United States.

There are three ways by which this can be accomplished. First, there are those who immigrate as refugees. International law defines a refugee as someone who leaves his/her country because of the real or potential threat of persecution based on his/her ethnic group, political views, or religious beliefs. From 1975 through 2008, the United States resettled roughly 2,779,000 refugees. These immigrants have come from such wartorn countries as Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Approximately 15 percent of Louisville's new immigrants are refugees. Approximately 80 languages are spoken in the city's schools, and in the Americana Apartments, an initial home for many immigrants—families come from 42 countries. However, refugee status comprises the fewest number of Cuban immigrants to Louisville.

Second, there are those immigrants who come via the Cuban Entrant Lottery Program. Between 1986 and 1996 the United States Congress took measures to increase foreign immigration. Because the number of persons in Cuba qualifying for immigration visa status did not normally reach the agreed 20,000 maximum, the United States adopted a lottery system through which persons who did not qualify as refugees could seek entry into the United States. This lottery system is unique to Cuba. Winning the lottery, was another way to leave Cuba. Certain American cities, like Miami, served as so-called "gateway cities" for these Cuban immigrants. Many lottery winners stayed in Miami, but others chose to be resettled in other places. Louisville actively promoted itself as a resettlement city in this lottery program. The city touted the availability of jobs, affordable housing, good schools, and reliable and cheap public transportation. Many winners of the Lottery Program were attracted to Louisville by this positive publicity. There were, however, other reasons for choosing Louisville, as we shall see.

Finally, many Cubans also come to Louisville as "parolees," based on the "wet foot/dry foot" policy. Those people who leave Cuba by boat but are caught at sea must be repatriated. But those who arrive on United States soil with a "dry foot" are automatically admitted. Many are now coming to Louisville from Texas via Mexico. In 2007, United States Customs and Border Protection processed more than 11,000 Cubans in the United States from Texas. It is suspected that most of the Cubans first came to Mexico by boat and then were smuggled into Texas. <sup>10</sup>

In summary, for the three types of Cuban immigrants to Louisville, most are "secondary migrants," i.e., those who are either refugees, lottery winners, or "parolees"; in other words, those who have moved to Louisville after first being in another city, such as Miami, or in another state, such as Texas. Upon their arrival in Louisville, they are eligible to receive services from various resettlement agencies. In Kentucky, these include Catholic Charities and Kentucky Refugee Ministries. These services provide help in finding employment and schools or programs for learning English as a Second Language (ESL). Nevertheless, these same services are available in any resettlement city; so ,why have many Cubans chosen Louisville as their second United States home?

#### Louisville as Destination

Of all the secondary migrants coming to Kentucky between 2002 and 2007, 88 percent have relocated to Louisville. Why has this been the case? First, Louisville has had a good job market. Like many other cities, it is experiencing an aging population, many of whom are retiring. This, coupled with falling birth rates among the predominantly white population, has meant that the work force has shrunk. Major companies in the city, such as United Parcel Service and General Electric, have shown a need for more employees in their work force. The new immigrants have helped to fulfill this need. 12

Second, the city's political leadership has worked aggressively to attract new immigrants. The Mayor's Office for International Affairs was established in 1999 with the goal of supporting and promoting a vibrant international community. It has honored local agencies that have helped with this goal. The city's Free Public Library was honored in 2004 for immigrant outreach programs. In 2005, Louisville's Family Health Centers were recognized for addressing the social and cultural needs of the international community. And finally, Jefferson County, Louisville's principal metro county, offers free ESL classes through its public schools adult education program. <sup>13</sup> "It's not that the city has a 'let's go and find immigrants approach,'" says Randy Capps a senior research associate for the Urban Institute, "but it hopes that by being a welcoming place, more immigrants will want to settle here." <sup>14</sup>

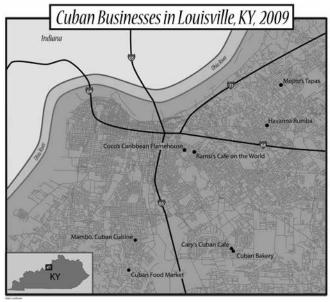
In addition, a conclusion of historical settlement geography is that migrants do not make locational destination decisions in a vacuum. Usually, some form of communication has been established between someone, usually a family member, relative, or friend who has already moved to a place with someone else who is considering a move. In the old Swedish settlement areas in Minnesota, the so-called, "America Letters," were the means by which earlier immigrants informed others back in Sweden of the opportunities and attractions of following them to Minnesota. Today, the means of communication among immigrants and prospective immigrants has changed from letters to cell phones, but the results are the same. For example, the Nuer refugee community in Mankato, Minnesota have largely transplanted their small African village of origin in the Sudan to their new home via multiple phone calls to other Nuer refugees in the United States. Over time, these former Nuer villagers have come together once more to form a new American community.<sup>15</sup>

It would appear that this informational process has also been at work among the Cubans in Louisville. The Havana Rumba restaurant, owned by Marcos Lorenzo and Fernando Martinez, opened in 2004. <sup>16</sup> It offers delicious, traditional Cuban fare, such as lechon asado, a marinated slow-roasted pork served with congri, a blend of black beans and rice sautéed together with yucca. The place has been so successful that the two owners have opened another restaurant. At one time, though, just finding a job in Louisville, let alone opening a business, did not seem likely. Martinez' mother had first immigrated to San Diego, California, and her son followed later. Not comfortable in California, a friend told him he should try Louisville. He immigrated to the city in 2000. His brother-in-law and future business partner, Marcos Lorenzo, joined him in 2004. <sup>17</sup> The rest as they say is history. Once in Louisville, they have encouraged friends and relatives to come here as well, helping them in the hunt for housing and jobs. In turn, these new arrivals later tell others in Miami and elsewhere; thus, over time a so-called chain of Cuban migrants to the city has been established.

#### **Cultural Preservation**

Sergio Vitier, who with his family lives in Louisville, stated, "Cubans like to preserve their culture. If you live in Miami, you speak Spanish, even if you were born in Miami." In Louisville, there are visible signs of this cultural preservation. As the map shows, as of 2009, there were eight Cuban businesses in the city with six being restaurants, such as Havana Rumba. (See attached map.) There is also a Cuban Bakery and a Cuban Food Market. They have no community center or collective organization in the city as do some other ethnic groups, so many of these business establishments become social establishments as well. A dance hall and St. Rita's Catholic Church (where the mass is conducted in Spanish) also serve as major social/cultural centers. It is also important for Cuban families to preserve their culture through the maintenance and use of the Spanish language. Parents feel this is especially important for their children. For example, schools like Highland and Hawthorne offer bi-lingual classes in English and Spanish which is appealing to many parents. In the content of the state of the spanish which is appealing to many parents.

As the map shows, businesses that cater to the Cuban population are dispersed within the city. This scattered distribution mirrors the residential distribution of Cubans in the metro area as well. That is, unlike many ethnic groups in American cities who tend to live in distinct areas or neighborhoods, the Cuban population in Louisville is spatially dispersed. It has been a long-standing finding of research in historical settlement geography that immigrants form ethnic enclaves within cities. New immigrants, such as the Somalis and Sudanese continue to exhibit this spatial form.<sup>20</sup> Again, this is not the



Map by Bob Douglas

case with the Cubans. Unlike the Somalis, most of the Cubans coming to Louisville are not refugees. Because of a civil war that was particularly devastating in the 1990s, thousands of Somalis had to flee their country. One tribe in particular, the Bantu, experienced widespread killing and torture before fleeing to refugee camps in Kenya. Beginning in 2003. the United States agreed to resettle about 13,500 Bantus in selected United States cities.

In 2003 and 2004, the first wave of Bantus began coming to Louisville through this resettlement program.<sup>21</sup> The tendency of these refugees to be resettled in specific cities often results in a clustering of them in particular areas or neighborhoods of subsidized housing in those cities. Most Cubans in Louisville, as we have learned, came to the city not as refugees but in some other way, which may account for their more dispersed residences. It seems that once established in a job and earning good wages, Cubans tend to move to more well-established neighborhoods scattered throughout the city.<sup>22</sup>

#### Conclusion

Louisville, Kentucky, like many American cities, has recently experienced an increase in foreign-born immigrants. This has partially occurred because of the active promotion of Louisville as a desirable city for immigrants to find a place they can call home. One such immigrant group is the Cubans. In coming to Louisville, they have demonstrated similar immigration processes as well as different aspects of residential choice. Settlement geography has shown that most immigrants follow in the footsteps, so to speak, of earlier migrants, i.e. moving as a chain from the same places of origin to the same places of destination. This tendency has been followed by many Cubans following other Cubans to Louisville. Their dominant form of initial entry into the United States has been unique, however. The Entrant Lottery Program has allowed many Cubans to enter the United States legally and has afforded them assistance in finding jobs and housing through agencies such as Catholic Charities. Also, it appears that unlike other ethnic groups who tend to live in neighborhood enclaves in resettlement cities, the residences of the Cuban population in Louisville appear to be dispersed throughout the city. What the Cuban community, as well as all of the immigrant groups have in common, however, is that they have filled many jobs in the labor market as well as established their own businesses and in so doing have contributed to a remarkably diverse city. It will be of interest to see what, if any, changes in the United States government's policy toward Cuba and economic circumstances will impact future immigration to Louisville.

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# Prophet and Seer: Citizenship in the Poetry of Wendell Berry

by James B. Goode

Internationally known Kentucky writer, farmer, environmentalist, and conservationist Wendell Berry has lived in sight of the Kentucky River near where it flows into the Ohio River for over forty years, in a landscape where generations of his family have farmed since the early 1800s. His home has been at Lane's Landing near Port Royal, Kentucky where has parents were born.

Berry's fiction to date consists of eight novels and the twenty-three short stories collected in *That Distant Land* (2004), which, when read as a whole, form a chronicle of the fictional small Kentucky town of Port William. His non-fiction (mainly collections of essays) consists of 32 works published between 1970 and 2008; his poetic works include 23 books published between 1964 and 2007, many of which engage citizenship as an everlasting truth for mankind in its journey through life and is the subject closest to his heart. (See attached bibliography).

Critics have said that much of Wendell Berry's poetry is concerned with human relationships to nature, to all of humanity, and ultimately, to God and the powers of creation. What is central to all this is the farmer, the land, marriage, and the family. The love inherent in his message guides us to be better citizens. If we love each other, the land, our communities, and democracy, the very essence of citizenship will emerge. Berry is keenly aware of the citizenship involved in owning his farm. In the poem "History," appearing in his collection *Clearing* (1977), Berry says, "All the lives this place / has had, I have. I eat / my history day by day" (1-3).

In the opening poem in the collection *The Country of Marriage* (1973), Berry asserts "That it is life I know the country by / Mine is a life I know the country by" (8). It is obvious to Berry that we hold the country's history in our hands and must respond as the world changes. It is our obligation to read the text of the world and to react appropriately. Berry says, "Our place is changing as we stand, / . . . In us the land enacts its history" (12, 14). We must recognize that the land supports us, that "When we stood it was / beneath us, and was the strength by which we held to it" (15-16).

Jim Minnick's interview with Berry, appearing in the December 2004 issue of *Appalachian Voices* further demonstrates Berry notion of civic responsibility regarding the land:

Minick: I was re-reading "A Native Hill," and this one sentence struck me. You're talk-

ing about coming back, and you write, "Here, now that I'm both native and citizen, there's no immunity to what is wrong." The "citizen" part jumped out at me on this reading. What is the connection between "native" and "citizen"?

Berry: That essay "A Native Hill" is an early one, written a long time ago, partly in the exhilaration of rediscovering my own part of the world, of seeing it with the change of vision that came with the feeling that I was going to live here, that I was here for life. It was an exhilaration sobered by the understanding that we had made historical blunders here that would have to be corrected. To live here responsibly meant that you had to accept responsibility for those blunders and errors and find, if you could, suitable remedies and corrections. So the word "citizen" occurs in that sentence because of its implication of responsibility. You can be a native without consciously assuming responsibility. A citizen consciously assumes responsibilities that belong to the place, responding to the problems of the place. (Minnick pars 5-6)

In his collection of poems *The Country of Marriage* (1973), Berry introduces a character he calls the "Mad Farmer." In the poem "The Mad Farmer Manifesto: The First Amendment," this character stands against the grain and defends the Jeffersonian ideal that the most civic and democratic lifestyle is that of the self-sustaining rural agrarian. His mad farmer says that in this we become

free men in the great communion of the free. The Vision keeps lighting in my mind, a window on the horizon in the dark. (5-8)

This excerpt is exemplary of Berry's Whitmanesque love for freedom and democracy so aptly expressed in the "Preface to the 1855 Edition of the *Leaves of Grass*."

The poem "A Vision," appearing in the collection *Clearing* (2007), further bears this deistic notion introduced in Crevecoeur's 1782 *Letters from an American Farmer* and ultimately influencing agrarian visionaries like Jefferson:

Families will be singing in the fields. In their voices they will hear a music risen out of the ground. They will take nothing from the ground they will not return, whatever the grief at parting. Memory, native to this valley, will spread over it like a grove, and memory will grow into legend, legend into song, song into sacrament. The abundance of this place, the songs of its people and its birds, will be health and wisdom and indwelling light. This is no paradisal dream.

Its hardship is its possibility. (19-31)

His love for land and the fruit it will bear for generations to come is manifest in another poem in this collection titled "Planting Trees." As he plants a bucket of twenty trees he says:

I return to the ground its original music. It will rise out of the horizon of the grass, and over the heads of the weeds, and it will rise over the horizons of men's heads. As I age in the world it will rise and spread, and be for this place horizon and orison, the voice of its winds. (12-19)

Caring for the land, replanting trees, and thereby creating a horizon for generations to come is paramount in Berry's notion of citizenship. It is an unselfish act. He says:

I have made myself a dream to dream of its rising, that has gentled my nights.

Let me desire and wish well the life these trees may live when I no longer rise in the mornings to be pleased by the green of them shining, and their shadows on the ground, and the sound of the wind in them. (20-27)

In another poem "The Recognition," appearing in *The Country of Marriage*, Berry emphasizes the importance of what we owe the future and particularly what debt we owe the land.

But our memory of ourselves, hard earned is one of the land's seeds . . . what we owe the future is not a new start, for we can only begin with what has happened. We owe the future the past, the long knowledge that is the potency of time to come.

That makes of a man's grave a rich furrow. (37-46)

Berry proposes that we all have the potential to leave behind a rich legacy. We have only to realize that the seeds of citizenship we plant will long survive us.

Berry's love of God and God's creation is essential to his vision of citizenship. We have only to take the lessons given us by nature to learn to co-exist in harmony. Unselfishness is at the core of this notion. In his collection *Window Poems* (2007), Berry amplifies the urgent need for brotherhood bathed in the light of utilizing what God has provided naturally, not exploiting it in destructive ways. He says in poem 19:

Let men who cannot be brothers to themselves, be brothers to mulleins and daisies that have learned to live on the earth.

Let them understand the pride of sycamores and thrushes that receive the light gladly, and do not think to illuminate themselves. (13-20)

In poem 20, he says:

If we, who have killed our brothers and hated ourselves,

are made in the image of God, then surely the bloodroot, wild phlox, trillium and mayapple are more truly made in God's image, for they have desired to be no more than they are, and they have spared each other. Their future is undiminished by their past. (11-21)

Berry further believes that traditional values, such as marital fidelity and strong community ties, are essential for the survival of humankind. In his collection *Clearing*, Berry traces the ownership of the farm he and his wife Tonya purchased in Henry County, Kentucky in 1965. Marriage is inextricably tied to man, to woman, and to earth. In the poem "Where," he says:

And here we found and made our wedding substances, our life rising and setting on this ground, a daily light, wearing us down, kneading us into itself, raising us up. What we eat is resurrection of what we have eaten. The flesh we had is changed Beyond any words we knew Into this unity we are: woman, man, and earth, each other's metaphor. I say this while the age achieves its ruin, rain falling hard in the night into the swollen river, a rage of lies in the air. (94-111)

In Berry's view, the disintegration of communities can be traced to the rise of agribusiness: large-scale farming under the control of giant corporations. Besides relying on chemical pesticides and fertilizers, promoting soil erosion, and causing depletion of ancient aquifers, agribusiness has driven countless small farms out of existence and destroyed local communities in the process. In a *New Perspectives Quarterly* interview, Berry commented that such large-scale agriculture is morally as well as environmentally unacceptable:

We must support what supports local life, which means community, family, household life—the moral capital our larger institutions have to come to rest upon. If the larger institutions undermine the local life, they destroy that moral capital just exactly as the industrial economy has destroyed the natural capital of localities—soil fertility and so on. Essential wisdom accumulates in the community much as fertility builds in the soil. (Poetry Foundation par 2)

Mr. Berry is no agrarian ideologue and does not propose that everyone must farm

or leave the city for the country. Rather, he argues that "everybody has agrarian responsibilities"—meaning that wherever one lives, one is obliged to do so according to an ethic that places paramount importance on the cultivation of love and care for one's particular place, its people and its traditions—and to resist all things that separate one from that responsibility, which is not chosen, yet required of all (Dreher par 11). Berry laments in poem 13 of *Window Poems*:

Sometimes he thinks the earth might be better without humans. He's ashamed of that. It worries him, him being a human, and needing to think well of the others in order to think well of himself. (1-7)

In poem 25 of *Window Poems*, despair about the disregard of citizenship by mankind found manifest in his behavior overwhelms Berry:

The bloodroot is white in the woods, and men renew their abuse of the world and each other. Abroad we burn and maim in the name of principles we no longer recognize in acts. At home our flayed land flows endlessly to burial in the sea. When mortality is not heavy on us, humanity ispublic meaninglessness preying on private meaning. As the weather warms, the driven swarm into the river. pursued by whining engines, missing the world as they pass over it, every man his own mosquito. (1-21)

In poem 15, Berry suggests, "The world is greater than its words. / To speak of it the mind must bend" (37-38). In poem 19, Barry says "And when mind has not outraged / itself against nature, they die and become the place they live in . . . ." (30-33). And in poem 23, he concludes: "She is the comfort of the rooms / she leaves behind" (12-13).

Another attempt to rail against our patent disregard for citizenship and therefore for the very future survival of the earth and mankind is found in Berry's recent poem "A Speech to the Garden Club of America (with thanks to Wes Jackson and in the memory of Sir Albert Howard and Stan Rowe)" which appeared in the September 28, 2009 issue of *The New Yorker*.

As is so characteristic of Berry, he denounces the destruction of the world in order to foster "progress." He apologizes for getting to the Garden Club meeting ". . . by

sustained explosion through the air / Burning the world in fact to rise much higher / than we should go" (4-6). For Berry, there is a diminishing return for "improving" the world in which we live.

This poem challenges the seemingly conventional wisdom that all that the creator has provided is exclusively commodity. Berry asserts that we should always question the cost of attempting to rise higher than we should. He says we must question the value of temporary progress against the backdrop of millennia—even eternity. The important task at hand is to attempt to survive by nature's rules rather than those concocted by man. Berry maintains that nature is immortal. For him, the economy is a pyre that promotes a destructive fire: "An anti-life of radiance and fume / That burns as power and remains as doom" (34-35). He leaves us with the kind of wisdom we may have long forgotten, but need to revive—the kind one can find in Bible verses, Anne Bradstreet's "Meditations Divine and Moral," or Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*. As he says, "The garden delves no deeper than its roots / And lifts no higher than its leaves and fruits" (36-37).

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# Courting Adventure in Civil War Kentucky: Sallie Rochester Ford's Raids and Romance of Morgan and His Men by Sharon Talley

I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game.

— Abraham Lincoln<sup>1</sup>

Southern novelists such as Maria Jane McIntosh, Augusta Jane Evans, and Sallie Rochester Ford published novels during the United States Civil War that framed the political issues and ideologies related to the war and women's roles in established literary contexts and a familiar narrative structure. As a result, they reached a popular readership that was anxious to make sense of a world turned upside down and to retain faith in the future of southern society as they knew it. In contrast to Maria Jane McIntosh's nostalgia for the antebellum past in Two Pictures; or, What We Think of Ourselves and What the World Thinks of Us and Augusta Jane Evans's anticipation of the post-war future in Macaria, Sallie Rochester Ford's Raids and Romance of Morgan and His Men, which was first published in June 1863, stays firmly focused on the war itself.<sup>2</sup> All three novels champion the southern cause; however, unlike her contemporaries, Ford uses her novel not to depict the unity of the Confederacy but rather to show the chaotic disorder and division that existed in key border states such as Kentucky, where she was born and raised. Using a curiously bifurcated structure, Ford also goes farther than her contemporaries in deviating from the conventions of the antebellum domestic novel by presenting the first half of the novel from the perspective of a male protagonist before shifting to portray the action in the second half from a female perspective. As a result, she provides her readers with close views of both military and civilian aspects of the war while using the framework of courtship to tie the two elements together. Today's readers may not agree with the political convictions espoused in *Raids and Romance*. Nevertheless, by recovering and reading it, we can enrich our understanding of the period by appreciating the contributions that Ford made during the war to sustain her society by using her novel to make her argument about the war and especially about the role of southern women.

Before the outbreak of the Civil War, Kentucky was tied to both regions, as perhaps best exemplified by the fact that it was the native state of both Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, who would be elected to lead the opposing governments during the conflict. Strongly nationalistic, the state nevertheless also tenaciously championed the concept of states' rights. As E. Merton Coulter observes, Kentucky's "rather remarkable intermixture of the two philosophies cropped out in many ways before the Civil War, and baffled both North and South during the period of that struggle." The state was bound to the South by its position on slavery and its agricultural base, but "Kentucky was pre-eminently a land of small slaveholders, the gentry of the state. To many, slaves meant more as a constitutional right than as an economic value. . . . No Kentuckian owned over 300 slaves; only seven owned over 100; and only seventy had over 50." Not surprisingly, Ford remains almost completely silent on the issue of slavery in crafting the pro-Confederate stance that characterizes *Raids and Romance*. Although slaves are occasionally present in the novel's domestic settings, the author ventures no direct comments on the "peculiar institution."

Although she avoids commenting specifically on slavery, Ford's fictionalized account of actual events that occurred in the Kentucky-Tennessee area between September 1861 and October 1862 depicts the highly charged political atmosphere that blanketed the state at this time. The novel opens with a description of the "patriotic ardor" of its nineteen-year-old male protagonist, Charley Roberts, who has yearned since Lincoln's 15 April proclamation to "seize his gun and rush to the defence [sic] of the South." Ford contrasts the emotional Charley's youthful determination with the more mature and cerebral indecision of his father, who has been "influenced by his life-long love for the old Union."4 The Roberts family situation, though fictional, is typical of the period. In her study of families with divided loyalties during the Civil War, Amy Murrell Taylor found that border-state families often split along generational lines. In such instances, "numerous sons, who averaged twenty-two years of age, enthusiastically left home to volunteer for the Confederate service, while their fathers remained Unionist advocates of compromise and moderation." Charley, however, rather than rebelling against his father, impatiently but respectfully waits for family approval, and, by September 1861, his father is drawn to permit him to join the Confederate forces because of "the fearful unfolding of the war policy of the administration." Ford lends credence to this position by emphasizing the deliberate and careful decision-making process of the elder Roberts, whom she describes as "a man distinguished for his reticence and aversion to all unnecessary political decision" but drawn to avow and defend his final position "by clear and logical argument, whenever it was attacked" (6).

When armed hostilities erupted on 12 April 1861 with the Confederate firing on Fort Sumter, Kentucky—like Charley's father—originally tried to remain neutral. Although not seceding from the Union, the state refused to respond to Lincoln's proclamation calling for 75,000 troops to repress the rebellion after the fall of Fort Sumter. On 20 May, the governor officially proclaimed the state's neutrality after the legislature resolved: "That this state and the citizens therof shall take no part in the Civil War now being waged, except as mediators and friends to the belligerent parties; and that Kentucky should, during the contest, occupy a position of strict neutrality." Nevertheless, there was a strong secessionist minority within the state, and, aggravated by the 16 August election of a strongly Unionist slate of state candidates, divided loyalties soon ended any pretence of neutrality. On 18 November, a convention of southern sympathizers from 68 of Kentucky's counties passed an ordinance of secession and created a Confederate shadow government for Kentucky. "By the end of the year 35,000 Confederate troops occupied the southwest quarter of Kentucky, facing more than 50,000 Federals who controlled the rest of the state."

In Raids and Romance, Ford depicts the divided allegiances that separated friends, as well as families, and that often resulted in courtship conflicts as the Confederates sought to wrest Kentucky from Union control. After Charley leaves to join the Confederate troops, his sweetheart, Mary Lawrence, is courted by a Union captain named Fred Morton. While speculation circulates among her friends about the likelihood of this match, Mary and the captain attend a fashionable Lexington party given by Mr. and Mrs. H, who sacrifice their southern sympathies to court the popularity that comes with hosting the elite of both factions at an opulent gathering. Maintaining a façade of gracious complacency, southern women converse with Union officers, who tease them by asking if "the trappings of war" will win their hearts and affections. Responding to this banter "spiritedly, yet with no manifestation of unkind feeling," one woman nevertheless puts the men in their place by remarking, "There is a wide difference in our views of patriotism.... I deem it far more noble, far more patriotic to oppose the wrong than to perpetuate it: to fight for freedom and liberty than for subjugation." Though socializing with the Yankees, these women, Ford explains, "were at heart Southern, and were only awaiting an opportunity to get through the lines to join" the Confederates (155). Similarly, Evangeline Lenoir, the female protagonist featured in the second half of the novel, is also courted by a Yankee officer, Edward Lasley, after Harry Roberts, her childhood sweetheart, enlists to serve the Confederacy. Eventually recognizing she has been misguided in allowing herself to fall under Lasley's spell, she must maneuver carefully to evade his insistent pursuit of her hand in marriage and reconcile with Harry. At the same time, the orphaned Evangeline, who has been raised in the Louisville home of her pro-Union Aunt Cecelia, must also strive to juggle her close relationship with her aunt, and the obligations that come with such familial bonds, with her own staunchly held Confederate views.

Ford's personal opinion of Kentucky's self-division is never in doubt. After describing "the Lincoln hordes pouring into Kentucky" without opposition during the early years of the war, Ford makes her own judgment clear by appending a pointed authorial comment:

Poor degraded, subjugated Kentucky, thine is a sad story of vacillation and fear; of wrong and oppression. The faithful chronicler of this wicked war must pen with shame and regret thy irresolution and its ruinous results. While I write as one of thy children, I weep as my thoughts go back to thee in thy deep humiliation, and linger amid thy once lovely scenes—thy once free and happy sons and daughters, now so oppressed, so downtrodden. (43-44)

Still hopeful that Kentucky "wilt rise from thy fallen position," she nevertheless must concede its failure to do so as of the date of her writing (44).

Although he had been captured and was imprisoned at Camp Chase in Columbus, Ohio, at the time *Raids and Romance* was first published, the flamboyant figure of John Hunt Morgan provides Ford's vehicle for exemplifying the spirit through which Kentucky could free itself from what she saw as shameful Yankee subjugation. Born in Alabama but a longtime resident of Lexington, Kentucky, Morgan, who eventually reached the rank of brigadier general, commanded a Confederate cavalry brigade that made four raids through Kentucky before he was finally killed on 3 September 1864. Morgan was disparaged for his guerrilla warfare tactics and branded "King of the Horse Thieves" by Northerners, and he frustrated the Confederate military command, as well as some of his own men, because of his failure to maintain discipline or obey orders.

Nevertheless, at a time of rising discontent in Kentucky against the military regime, he was viewed as a larger-than-life hero and potential savior by many residents.<sup>9</sup>

Depicting Morgan in his early years before he became bitter and disillusioned, Ford tracks history as she shows him raising and organizing his cavalry, leading some minor skirmishes in Tennessee, and then launching his first major raid through Kentucky in the summer of 1862. In the novel, Morgan never interacts personally with Charley, who comes to serve with pride in Company C of Morgan's Second Kentucky Regiment, but the devotion of Charley and his comrades to their commander is clear from the beginning. When Morgan first appears, before he is even introduced, his description is as singular as Charley's response:

He [Morgan] was about medium height, well-formed, and sat his horse with an elegance not often equaled even by the best riders. Every feature of his face bespoke daring and determination. . . . As he rode forward to the group he lifted his hat, and spoke. There was manly dignity, combined with graceful ease, in the movement. His manner fixed the attention of our young hero [Charley], who felt, he scarce knew why, an irresistible impulse to move forward towards the stranger. (28)

Described as "eager for an adventure," Charley initially finds his expectations met in the daring early skirmishes in which he participates as one of Morgan's raiders and that serve to reinforce his idealistic view of war (29).

Ford picks her examples from Morgan's exploits carefully and then embroiders them to present a thoroughly dashing and gallant portrait of Morgan and the Second Kentucky. Her depiction of the 11 May 1862 raid of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad at Cave City, Kentucky, illustrates her approach throughout the novel. In this raid, Morgan first seized the depot and then stopped the next train that arrived. As presented in the brief and somewhat flat account of Basil W. Duke, Morgan's brother-in-law and second-in-command, "Forty freight cars and a fine engine were captured in this train, and destroyed."10 According to other reports, Morgan set the train afire and then sent it "at full throttle . . . down the track toward Nashville. 'It was a grand sight,' he said, 'that burning train going at headlong speed to destruction.' The subsequent explosion, when it came, was deafening."11 To avoid having to explain or mask Morgan's gleeful enjoyment of this act, which the New York Times of 25 May 1862 estimated resulted in a loss of "\$40,000 or \$50,000 worth of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad rolling stock," Ford wisely omits any mention of the first train.<sup>12</sup> Instead, she focuses on the passenger train from Louisville that arrived shortly thereafter and on Morgan's gallant assurance to one frightened woman on this train that he would not kill her husband. According to Ford, "[t]he grateful woman, in the joy of her heart, grasped the knees of the noble benefactor, and thanked him in the most passionate strains" (135). 13 In Ford's account, Morgan also tells a cotton agent concerned about \$30,000 of funds in a nearby safe, "Give yourself no uneasiness, sir, . . . my men are not thieves. Be assured, not one cent of private property shall be touched" (136). Imbuing her title character with the traits of romantic chivalry, Ford here depicts Morgan as only making "such disposition of government funds and stores as he deemed proper" before surrendering the train with instructions to return straight to Louisville (136). Although Morgan and his men were not always so conscientious, contemporaneous reports do not dispute that Morgan took only government funds in the Cave City raid; unlike Ford, however, they clearly stipulate that the amount confiscated was between \$6,000 and \$10,000.14

In describing Morgan's July 1862 raid through Kentucky, Ford concedes that the main object of the expedition was the destruction of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, which was a defensible act of war to disrupt the North's supply line, but she minimizes the destruction involved and never acknowledges any disregard for property rights or thievery by Morgan's troops or their lack of discipline. <sup>15</sup> At one point, after she describes Morgan taking possession of Georgetown, Ford quotes at length from a proclamation that he published on 15 July as a recruiting manifesto:

Kentuckians! I come to liberate you from the despotism of tyrannical fanaticism, and to rescue my native State from the hands of your oppressors. Everywhere the cowardly foes have fled from my avenging arms. My brave army is stigmatized as a band of guerillas and marauders. Believe it not. I point with pride to their deeds as a refutation of this foul assertion.

We come not to molest peaceable individuals, nor to destroy private property, but guarantee absolute protection to all who are not in arms against us. We ask only to meet the hireling legion of Lincoln. The eyes of your brothers of the South are upon you. Your gallant fellow-citizens are flocking to our standard. Our armies are rapidly advancing to your protection. Then greet them with the filling hands of fifty thousand of Kentucky's bravest sons. Their advance is already with you. (207)<sup>16</sup>

Imbuing her tale with just such touches of righteous valor and romantic chivalry, Ford uses the charismatic Morgan sparingly to inspire her audience to maintain hope that by emulating his bold and adventurous spirit, Kentucky—and the South as a whole—can still emerge victorious against Yankee injustice.

The Georgetown episode, thus, fits Ford's political agenda by emphasizing the rising discontent against the Yankee military regime that had established itself in Kentucky, as well as the residents' positive response to Morgan. As Howard Swiggert makes clear, however, Morgan's position at Georgetown was tenuous at best, and although his men camped for two more days in the vicinity, "they could not stay forever. Kentucky did not rise around them." Rather than acknowledging that only a disappointing number of recruits actually came forward in response to Morgan's exhortation, she states instead that "[t]he citizens believed his words, and reinforcements assembled around his standard from Franklin, Scott, Trimble, Owen, and Bourbon counties. Brave hearts and strong arms rallied to swell the number of Kentucky's deliverers" (207). With such comments, Ford strives to characterize Morgan's departure from Georgetown simultaneously as an "advance" and a daring evasion of Union forces, although it was just as clearly also a lucky escape (212).

Ford's portrait of Kentucky during the late summer and fall of 1862 emphasizes the disruption, confusion, and chaos that reigned among the civilian population as the Confederacy made its last concerted effort to gain control of the state. Lack of reliable information caused much of the turmoil as rumors spread, not only about Morgan's anticipated movements but also about what to expect from the invading forces of Confederate General Braxton Bragg. For instance, after Morgan leaves Lebanon and the citizens of Shelbyville contemplate his arrival in their town, Ford writes that "the wildest confusion prevailed. Here, as at Lebanon, the most conflicting rumors ran riot through the streets." Although Morgan was actually pursuing a course through Springfield to Mackville at the time, the men of Shelbyville "flocked to the town to hear the news, each one receiving a different statement from every informant he met" (176). Meanwhile, in what Ford describes as the "seething cauldron of Unionism" at Danville, news of "Morgan's deeds at Lebanon," filled the residents' "hearts with

terror. They knew their guilt in oppressing the Southern men in their midst, and while, like the Babylonian king, they saw the handwriting on the wall, fear seized their souls. There was alarm, anxiety, consternation, depicted on every face. Fear and confusion characterized every movement" (180).

As the novel's plotline follows historical time, Ford documents the increasing uncertainty about the eventual outcome. One Southern sympathizer explains, "There is a great contrariety of opinion respecting Bragg's intensions; some believing that he designs to remain here through the winter—others that he only wishes to force Buell from Tennessee, and regain Cumberland Gap, by forcing General Morgan to abandon it" (271). Meanwhile, the Yankees use the time to increase their presence around Louisville and to move prisoners, arms and supplies, and other valuables out of danger, while bystanders continue to debate the state of affairs. One citizen acknowledges the truth that others still refuse to accept: "It would not be worth the trouble and loss of life" for Bragg and his men to attempt to take Louisville now since "[e]very thing of value has been removed beyond the river" and since holding the city would be impossible "against the gunboats and the artillery the enemy could bring against it from the opposite side of the river" (272). Finally, on 22 September, as Bragg approaches, Union General "Bull" Nelson issues an evacuation order for all noncombatants to leave the city and threatens to destroy Louisville if necessary to keep it from Bragg. Ford details the "fearful rush of thousands, eager to escape the dreadful doom of conflict," that respond to what turns out to be just another false alarm (341). With no Confederate victory to celebrate, Ford must settle for reintroducing Morgan into the action so that she can end the war commentary on a hopeful note as he mounts another raid through Kentucky in October.

Although Morgan's exploits do not ultimately bring the desired results, Ford consistently presents her title character as indisputably heroic; however, in depicting the two paired sets of sweethearts around whom the dual storylines revolve, it is the females rather than the males whom she draws with similar bold strokes of courage. determination, and strength of character. For his part, Charley Roberts is a bland and lovesick youth who seems oddly lacking in the stamina and grit that Southern readers of the day would hope to find on the battlefield defending their honor. In his first weeks at Morgan's "Camp Secret," he quickly adjusts to military life. Ford observes that "[h]e could stand on picket or guard, go scouting or foraging, make coffee or corn-bread," and because he is "[p]rompt, obedient, kind," he soon wins "the respect of his officers and the esteem of his fellow-soldiers" (42). During this mostly idle period of waiting for action, Charley's "letters to his friends at home [are] characterized by a spirit of cheerful endurance of present discipline, and heroic determination to make good his cause in the field of conflict" (43). As a youthful volunteer, however, Charley, like many of his comrades, is ill-prepared for the exigencies of war. Even before he is truly tested in battle, he begins "to experience something of the hardships of the campaign" as the weather turns cold and he thinks of home: "Tears sprung to his eyes, and he wept like a child. It was not sorrow nor apprehension, but tender remembrances of the past that caused him thus to grieve" (45). Charley attempts to control his emotions by focusing on the justness of the Confederate cause, but his morale plunges as he experiences prolonged separation from loved ones, illness, the trauma of battle, imprisonment, and fear of death.

Although she crafted her novel as a propaganda piece for the Confederacy, Ford makes no attempt to blunt the harsh realities of war itself. Even though Charley has "a fine constitution, which had been well preserved and developed," he is unused to the rigors of marching and exposure to the weather, which eventually result in "a severe

attack of pneumonia" (46). According to George F. Linderman, "The first shock for the Civil War soldier was the extent and deadliness of disease," as he discovered first-hand that he was twice as likely to die of disease as being killed or mortally wounded in combat." Thus, Charley's adamant refusal to be sent to the hospital—because he associates it with "almost certain death"—rings with the authority of truth (46). During his convalescence, "after weeks of pain and feebleness," the youth's feelings of homesickness and nostalgia for his sweetheart Mary intensify his natural fears of death. Charley eventually regains his strength and is able to rejoin his regiment as 1861 draws to a close, but he observes that many are now absent, some having been sent to the hospital and others having succumbed to illness rather than battle wounds.

In February, the still melancholy and increasingly lovesick Charley is sent with the Second Kentucky to reinforce the troops at Fort Donelson. Here his idealistic notions of war are further compromised as he, for the first time, experiences the horrors of actual battle. This battle ended with the unconditional surrender of General Simon B. Buckner and his 12,000-13,000 Confederate troops to Union General Ulysses S. Grant. <sup>19</sup> Attempting to put a positive spin on this catastrophic defeat, Ford prefaces her fictionalized account by declaring, "This dreadful war hath many a page all bright and glorious with the heroic caring, the patriotic fortitude, the brilliant victory of Southern freeman, but none can ever be more lustrous, can ever speak in words of more thrilling eloquence to the generations of all coming years, than that of Donelson, the synonym of all that is sublime in suffering, heroic in daring, and nobly triumphant in patriotism (53). She then, however, forsakes romantic hyperbole for naturalistic detail in the lengthy description of the battle that follows.

Even as she recounts the early success by the Confederates in repulsing the enemy, Ford clearly takes no glee in the toll of human life extracted as she observes,

Ah, it was a fearful sight to witness the carnage and death that swept along that close, dense line. Like grain before the reaper's sickle, they fell, mowed down by bullet, shell, and shot. Affrighted, they paused—'twas but for a moment: rallying, they pressed forward. Again sped the horrid missiles of death from the intrenchments, and down went scores of the rash besiegers, mangled, torn, bleeding, writhing in the tortures of agony and death. Discomfited, the decimated regiments retire, to make room for others, who dash on to the same dreadful fate. (55)

As the first day ends, the enemy retires, "leaving the field covered with his dead and dying. Ah," she again laments, "it was a sad, sad sight to see them there, cut down in their manhood's prime, in servile obedience to the behest of a tyrant." In this carefully modulated account, Ford honors these dead soldiers of the North, faulting them only for their servility to what she deems a tyrannical government. Because of the close proximity of the two sides, many of the wounded could not be removed from the field. Ford acknowledges the agony endured by those who were left to suffer and die by observing that "[m]any weltered in their gore far away from all relief, sending out on the dead, dull ear of night, piteous moans and cries for help, which, alas, would never come; for when the morning rose and woke to life their comrades, they had passed away" (56).

Continuing her account, Ford acknowledges the ghastly human bond created by Donelson, where

[o]n the bloody battle-field lay friend and foe in ghastly death enwrapt. Everywhere were mingled, mangled forms of men and horses, and broken remains of guns and caissons. In

some places the dead bodies lay piled several feet deep. In many instances, the wounded lay pinned to the moist, cold ground by the forms of dead comrades, whose fixed and agonizing eyes looked out as if in search of the foe; while the shrieks of the suffering and dying broke in horrid cries on the ears of those who could give them no aid (56).

Through her description of the gruesome scene at Donelson, Ford provides an apt illustration of the shocking effect of the Civil War on antebellum sensibilities. The mass scale of human suffering and destruction created by the war contradicted the domesticated concept of death as an individual and personal experience through which human perfection and sanctification might be achieved, shared, and commemorated through deathbed rituals, mourning practices, and the conventions of sentimental literature. Shivering with cold as freezing sleet falls, Charley and his friend John Lawrence, who has also joined the Second Kentucky, at last can no longer remain in their trench as they nerve themselves to respond to the desperate calls of a nearby sufferer for water and then manage to pull him to safety so that a surgeon can dress his wounds. Many, however, were not so fortunate.

In the hard-fought struggle at Donelson, which Ford clearly strived to document authentically, the fictional Charley, like the Confederacy he serves, is also disabused of the common notion that the war would be short and that the South would easily triumph. By the third day of combat, the Confederates are thoroughly exhausted, not only from lack of sleep and exposure to the elements but also because of the determination and stamina of the Union forces, who they are surprised to discover have "fought like men in earnest" (59). Persevering, however, the Confederates launch a desperate breakout attack that finally succeeds in driving the enemy back and gaining them an opening on the field. Surprisingly, they are then ordered to fall back just "at the point when the object for which the men had fought desperately for seven hours was gained" (65). As a result of this ill-conceived strategy, the men are forced back into their trenches. In the lull that follows, Grant capitalizes on the Confederate indecision and regains the field, eventually forcing Buckner's unconditional surrender.

Ford acknowledges the moral dilemma that Buckner faced in deciding whether to surrender or to sacrifice the lives of his men for what he saw as his own personal honor, but she chooses to emphasize the response of the Confederate troops, who also saw their own honor at stake in the decision. As "the dreadful intelligence" that they are now "prisoners of the hated foe" is circulated, Ford unifies the soldiers' reaction to serve her purpose: "Never," she writes, "never will they submit to this ignominy. Sooner shall their own swords drink their life-blood, than they become the scoff and butt of Yankee vengeance. The whole garrison was moved as one man to oppose this shameful fate" (71). According to Bertram Wyatt-Brown, the Civil War soldier believed that courage was "the first dictum of honor. Cowardice was, of course, its contemptible opposite."<sup>21</sup> Thus, to be forced to surrender suggested the unthinkable to most soldiers. Although Buckner's staff, "knew it was all the general could do, and every man expressed himself ready to share his leader's fate," Charley and the other soldiers on the field sit "stupefied under the consciousness of being captives in the hands of the Yankees." As they realize that resistance is futile, Charley tells his friend, "I have fought for three days, John; I have slept in those muddy trenches, exposed to driving snow and sleet; have gone without a mouthful of food for twenty-four hours; my feet are frost-bitten, and my clothes are frozen on me, but I would rather endure all this a thousand times over than go to one of those Yankee prisons" (72). With these words he suggests the underlying fear of imprisonment that also underlies his resistance to surrendering.

During the Civil War, "409,608 soldiers—one out of every seven who served in the Union or Confederate armies—became prisoners of war.... Of the 194,743 Yankees who were confined in Confederate prisons, 30,218 died; of the 214,865 Rebels who entered Union camps, 25,976 never left them alive." The management of prisoners on both sides was plagued by a lack of organization and inadequate facilities during the first year of the conflict. Because of Lincoln's refusal to establish a formal exchange cartel until July 1862, the number of prisoners held mounted steadily during this time period, creating problems of "overcrowding, exposure, inadequate medical care, and shortages of rations and basic supplies."22 As they are transported and taunted by their Yankee captors, whom Ford terms "a base and inhuman foe," Charley and his comrades, though wearing "garb looking worse by far than their slaves at home, . . . nevertheless remembered they were born freemen, and on every occasion . . . hurled back with defiant scorn the ruthless jests of their coarse and ill-breed assailants" (75). Charley's bravado evaporates, however, as he weeps at the thought of home. Embarrassed by his tears, he admits to the more stoic John, "I am unmanned, . . . but I cannot help it" (76).

In describing the prisoners' arrival at Camp Chase, Ford writes that they are "herded like swine," as they are "driven into this filthy inclosure [stet], there to remain through long months of dreary suffering, deprived of every thing like comfort or cleanliness, subjected to neglect and coarse insult, and in many instances to violent death at the hands of their brutal guard" (79). In his history of Camp Chase, which was first published in 1906, William H. Knauss uses terms strikingly similar to Ford's in describing the condition of arriving prisoners: "Often they came here sick and in tatters and were driven to Camp Chase like so many cattle, and when they got there they were lucky to find an open shed to lie in."23 The make-shift facility, which was originally intended as a Union training depot, received its first prisoners on 5 July 1861. Intended to accommodate only 450 inmates securely, the prison at one point during the war housed as many as 8,000 Confederate soldiers - mostly privates and noncommissioned officers. According to Charles W. Sanders, Jr., "during the Spring of 1862"—at the time period Ford depicts—"conditions rapidly deteriorated.... The prison buildings were filthy, and basic sanitation was so wanting that a 'nauseating and disgusting stench' permeated the entire area. . . . The prisoners were 'in rags' and rations at the camp were 'very inferior."<sup>24</sup> Ford is, thus, justified in the alarming depiction of the prison that she incorporates into her novel:

It was a loathsome, disgusting place, unfit for the abode of the most wretched criminals. Filled with every species of offensive vermin, the mud knee-deep, in which the men had to stand like beasts in the stall, with no room for exercise by day, and nothing but the bare floor of an open plank shanty, through which the bleak winds and driving snows had free access, to sleep on at night; their disgusting food doled out to them in such scant measure as wholly to fail to meet the actual demands of nature; without medicines or nurses for the sick; could it be expected that these weary, half-clad men could do otherwise than die by scores? (78)

Although the officers are soon transferred to a separate facility at Johnson's Island, as was common practice, Charley and the other soldiers, remain here for two months, with little contact from home to console them.

Charley and John, along with another soldier named Bob, are convinced that escape is their only hope of leaving Camp Chase alive; however, "[n]o scheme suggested itself that was not attended with great difficulties" (86). While they idle in indecision,

Charley's sister Lu and Mary, who is not only Charley's fiancée but also John's sister, take more daring and forthright action. Travelling from Louisville to Columbus and disguising themselves as Catholic nuns to avoid suspicion or arrest and possible imprisonment, they enter Camp Chase and find the three men. <sup>25</sup> When she learns that they have been unable to determine a plan to escape, Mary takes charge, finding solutions to the obstacles that the three men seem curiously unable to resolve for themselves. Although Charley has determined that digging out is the only method with probability for success, he has been unable to decide how to get rid of the accumulated dirt to avoid detection as they work. Mary swiftly resolves this issue by telling him, "Why, the dirt—that's but a small matter, Charley. Put it in your hats and pockets until you get out" (90). When he next questions how they will be able to pass through Ohio to safety in Kentucky, the ineffectual men directly appeal to Mary and Lu to "solve this difficulty for us! Woman's wit is always ready for an emergency" (90). And the women do not disappoint as Lu quickly directs Charley to seek help from their cousin, who lives about fifteen miles from Columbus. Having succeeded in moving the men from their paralyzing state of inertia, the two adventurous women depart.

"In trying to gain a prisoner's freedom," as George C. Rable argues, "women entered a political and logistical labyrinth. The task demanded assertiveness, persistence, luck, and, above all, influence." Before the prisoner exchange cartel was established, women often had no alternative but to rely on their own ingenuity, as well as deception and subterfuge, to locate, visit, and attempt to free their loved ones from prison. Although such escape plans as Mary and Lu devise may sound ludicrous to modern readers, they were possible at the time because security was slipshod. When he was incarcerated at Camp Chase in 1863, Morgan himself was able to dig himself out "after twenty-three days of unrelenting labor, and getting through a granite wall six feet in thickness" to reach the soil. 27

Anticipating Morgan's later feat, Charley and his friends succeed in digging out of the prison, but they then remain passively content to depend on others—and especially on women—to ensure their safe return to Kentucky. John tells Charley, "We will have to trust ourselves to the ingenuity of the girls to provide for our safety to Louisville." Agreeing with the confidence John places in their sisters, Charley acknowledges that "[t]heir visit to us proves them equal to any emergency. It was a novel affair, really. Who would have thought that those two demure-looking nuns, with their baskets of tracts, were our merry, timid sisters, come to plan our escape from prison? If I were a writer I'd immortalize these heroines." Bob concurs by responding, "Your sisters deserve immortality and fame, boys. I do believe we should now and forever have been in that miserable place if they had not encouraged us in our undertaking" (97). With this exchange and her depiction of strong decisive women throughout the novel, Ford clearly attempts to extend recognition of the critical role that women were playing in the war effort. As Nina Silber argues, Southern women were "[c]loser to the chaos of the battlefield, frequently subjected to the constraints of Union occupation, and often shaped by the trauma of defeat," and so "felt the repercussions of war far more directly than Northern ones."<sup>28</sup> Though constrained more than Northern women by conventions of female decorum, they nevertheless were moved to subvert traditional restrictions in sometimes creative ways as they fought to protect their society and established way of life.

Ford reflects the transformation of gender roles that occurred during this period of national crisis by fashioning feisty, heroic female characters who repeatedly must prop up their more traumatized, embattled male counterparts. After returning to his regiment, Charley's spirits soon dip again as he begins to fear that Mary is being unfaithful to

him in his absence. As if these fears are not enough to test his endurance, he is also repeatedly captured and imprisoned. Charley initially refuses to take the pledge of allegiance to the Union that would result in his release, steadfastly insisting, "Never, never! Death a thousand deaths first!" (116). His strength of conviction quickly fades, however, and, after rationalizing his decision in a debate with himself, he determines to take the oath to gain his freedom. Back at camp, Charley grows alarmingly despondent over false rumors of Mary's engagement to Morton. Ford depicts her young hero as internalizing his fears and eventually falling into a suicidal despair in which "[t]he world to him was one wide-spread void, over which rested the blackness of darkness. Despair, deep, fearful, had unfolded her sombrous wings over his heart, shutting out all hope—all joy. Gladly would he have lost his weary weight of anguish in that long sleep where dreams do never come" (146). As McPherson observes, "[]]etters from home have been of crucial importance in sustaining morale in all literate armies," and, for the volunteer regiments of the Civil War, which were composed of communitybased companies like the Second Kentucky, this was especially true. Although such correspondence could sustain a soldier, "the wrong kind of letter could have the opposite effect."29 Thus, when even Lu believes the gossip and writes to warn her brother that "he has been deceived—wronged—cursed—in bestowing his wealth of love on this unworthy girl," Charley loses all faith in Mary's love and determines that "[h]enceforth, he would court death" (158, 174).

The two lovers are finally reconciled only when Mary confronts Charley as he and Morgan's men pass through the area near Louisville, giving her the opportunity to prove his doubts of her loyalty to him and to the region are groundless. In finally facing and verbalizing his fears—both with John and Mary—Charley realizes how foolish he was to credit "idle rumors, when he had received from her whom he had known from childhood vows of eternal faith" (196). Shortly after they part and the regiment returns to Tennessee, however, he falls ill with typhoid fever and in his weakened condition is not allowed to accompany his comrades on Morgan's July raid through Kentucky. The last remnants of his patriotic ardor evaporate as he reacts to this unfortunate situation by foundering in self-pity:

"Gone—gone—to Kentucky!" he sadly murmured to himself. "And I am here alone—left without a friend—perhaps to die! They go to meet with parents and sisters, and mingle with them in joy and gladness amid the haunts of olden times, while I, in sickness and pain, must linger here in a strange land, with strange faces around me, where no one will care for me—and all the kindness I shall receive will be bestowed because I am a Southern soldier. Hard—hard fate! Oh, the horrors of this dreadful strife! When shall it end, and we be permitted to return to homes and friends in peace?" (259)

In spite of both his doctor's and John's assurances to the contrary, the melodramatic Charley exaggerates his condition by maintaining he probably will die from his illness, insisting that his friend take a lock of his hair and other death mementos to give to Mary and his family at home.

It was not unusual for Civil War soldiers to experience periods of discouragement and depression as their naïve expectations of war were tested by actual encounters with illness, battle injury and death, with the hardships of camp life, and with other traumatic experiences such as imprisonment. "Forced to absorb the shocks of battle, to remodel combat behavior, to abandon many of the war's initial tenets, to bear discipline of an order intolerable not long before, to rationalize a warfare of destruction, and to come to terms with changes in their relationships with commander, conscripts,

and civilians, soldiers suffered a disillusionment more profound than historians have acknowledged."<sup>30</sup> Charley's constitution seems ill-suited to such stress, rendering him unable to adjust to the reality of his situation and to maintain his psychic equilibrium. Unfortunately, Ford's melodramatic presentation of his character minimizes the readers' sympathy for his inability to withstand the traumas to which he has been exposed. As a result, even modern readers with an appreciation for the debilitating psychological effects of war may fail to empathize with his condition.<sup>31</sup>

At this point, Ford moves the novel's point of view away from her passive male hero's sickbed to focus the rest of the novel on the civilian side of the war and especially on the role of women. When death does occur shortly thereafter, it comes not to Charley but to Mary's mother, leaving Mary not only to grieve for her own loss but also to take full responsibility for herself since her father decides to leave Louisville to enlist in the Confederate army. Because he refuses to take her with him, she must devise and execute her own plan to leave Louisville and get within the Confederate lines to see Charley in Tennessee. In this endeavor, she enlists the support of her friend Evangeline, who is trying to extricate herself from her relationship with Lasley so that she can reconcile with her Confederate sweetheart Harry, who has been arrested and imprisoned by the Yankees for attempting to visit her in Louisville.

Echoing the earlier adventures of Mary and Lu at Camp Chase, Evangeline visits Harry in prison under the auspices of Mrs. Hanna, "a Union lady" and friend of her aunt, who manages to outwit the illiterate guard by producing a gas bill when he asks for her permit to enter the facility (282). Determined that he must escape before he is transferred to Camp Chase, Evangeline slips Harry a "small purse filled with gold," instructing him to use it to bribe the guard, and she also tells him that she has detailed her plan for his escape in a note that she has concealed in the bouquet of flowers she has brought him. To ensure that he understands what he must do, she then gives him clear and precise verbal instructions: "If you find you can carry out the plan, be at the second window on Third-street Sunday evening, at four o-clock, and give the signal mentioned. Be plain, distinct, so that I can understand you. I will attend to the rest. . . . Be careful; don't betray yourself. You will be shot if you do!" Taken aback by her forthright assurance, Harry gazes at her in wonder and astonishment "[t]o behold her so calm, collected, planning his escape from prison" (288). With this exchange, Ford again seeks to illustrate the heroic strength of character, composure, and resourcefulness with which elite Southern women responded to the national crisis. To drive home her point, she counterpoints Evangeline's calm assurance with Harry's lack of composure. Evangeline must warn him to guard his expressions to avoid the guard's suspicions. Further, as he extracts the note to hide it in his pocket with the purse, she observes his nervousness; fortunately, however, "the others, unacquainted with the young man's manner, did not" (289).

In a conversation between Evangeline and Mary, Ford extends her treatment of this issue. When Mary expresses doubts about her friend's ability to accomplish her objectives of freeing Harry and, if necessary, leaving Kentucky with him, Evangeline tells her, "These are times when the very foundations of society are moved, and what would be regarded under ordinary circumstances as insanity, will pass current now for heroism. Many females in every age have dared every thing for their lovers' sake; why may not I do the same? If I can once get within the Confederate limits, I shall have nothing to fear" (295). Mary encapsulates Ford's central theme when she responds, much like Harry, "Why, Evangeline, you astonish me! You are really a heroine. Who could have thought that you—always so thoughtless, so gay—would have ventured upon an experiment so full of danger and requiring so much thought and courage?" (295). Mary herself, however, reflects this same courage in her desire to follow her

father to the South and to find Charley in Tennessee to ensure that he is recovering. When they despair of the Confederates coming to free Louisville from Union control, the two women join forces to achieve their goals.

Drew Gilpin Faust argues that "[a] midst the overwhelming uncertainties and changes brought by Civil War, women clung ever more tenaciously to structures of authority and belonging that had given them both identity and security. As cherished relationships seemed ever more imperiled by the rising death toll, preserving their traditional forms may have appeared all the more important."32 Thus, Ford endeavors to show that the self-conscious transformation of her female characters, though momentous, is initiated only out of their sense of duty to their loved ones. In reflecting on Evangeline's situation, the narrator observes, "How strange, how wildly strange, to her was her present position! She who had been the petted child of fortune — who had lived so dependent on others, and who, hedged about by kind protection, had never felt otherwise than safe from all danger, from all care! It was the turning-point of her life. She had now assumed to act for herself." At the same time, however, Evangeline declares that her plan, "is for Harry . . . and whether or not I am successful, I must make the attempt. For his sake I will encounter every obstacle, endure every trial, meet every reproach. He is worthy of all this on my part, and I shall not show myself unworthy of him. If I accomplish my purposes, I secure my happiness for life; if I fail, I have done my duty all—all I could—and this, poor as it is, will be some consolation to me amid my grief and helplessness" Although fearful of failure and close to despair in her loneliness, she nevertheless determines, "Yes, yes, if I perish in the attempt, I'll try it! I will not shrink now, that dangers seem to surround me on every side; I'll nerve this heart of mine to bear all things, that I may accomplish my purpose" (313-14). Mary suggests the same strength of conviction when she adamantly refuses to evacuate to the North despite the urging of friends and neighbors. As she tells one woman, "I shall never cross the river to seek for safety. I will die on Kentucky soil first" (346).

In spite of complications in executing Evangeline's plan, Harry finally succeeds in escaping from his captors, but in seeking to rejoin Morgan he is again arrested and imprisoned in Bardstown as a result of Lasley's attempt to seek revenge against him and Evangeline. Thwarted by conventions of the day that deemed it inappropriate for women to travel alone—even in times of safety—Evangeline and Mary nevertheless persevere in securing suitable chaperones so that they can journey to Bardstown. When Lasley steadfastly refuses to release Harry unless Evangeline promises to marry him, she sorrowfully consents with the stipulation that she be allowed one last visit with her sweetheart to say goodbye. Meanwhile, Mary decides to proceed south, determined to build a future there, assuring her friend, "It is all darkly wild, fearfully strange; but I will brave it all, believing it to be right" (377). Before they part, however, Morgan and his men sweep into town, freeing Harry, imprisoning Lasley in his place, and extracting Evangeline from her promise.

Ford's depiction of female heroism does not end here, however, as Evangeline and Mary accompany the raiders so that Evangeline can be with Harry and Mary can seek her father and Charley. In doing so, they gain their "first acquaintance with the 'art of war," as they witness a small skirmish in the area between New Haven and Elizabethtown. Although the Kentucky campaign has failed, Ford reminds her readers that Morgan's "object was to secure recruits, and give opportunity to the guerillas . . . to get through into Tennessee, and in this he succeeded finely, accomplishing his purpose, besides destroying Federal stores at many points, and interrupting communication with Nashville" (381). All is not lost, thus, and Kentuckians should keep the faith that the Confederacy will emerge as victors in the end. Ford, thus, chooses to end her novel

on a cool evening in October 1862, as the two young couples are married and "four tried but heroic hearts found at last the full consummation of their hopes, the fruition of earthy joy" (385). She acknowledges that the young lovers must again separate and that the pain and suffering of war is not yet over. Nevertheless, rather than anticipating and dwelling on "the cares, the anxieties, the fearful looking-for of news from the dread battlefield" that will follow, she instead closes with determination that "[v]ictories must yet be won; many an ensanguined pain must yet attest the heroic and successful struggles of Morgan and his men, before a nation can shout, in loud and grateful strains, 'Victory! victory!! independence! independence!!" In crafting this conclusion, Ford pins her hopes, and those of the South, on Morgan and "numbers of unknown heroes, whose endurances and achievements, full of chivalry and romance, will yet be added to the page of history . . . and whose names, covered with glory, shall become household words with a free and prosperous posterity" (386). At the same time, however,

## **Endnotes**

the reader recalls most vividly the steadfast and heroic courage of the women behind

these men and their contributions to the Confederacy.

- 1. On 22 September 1861, Kentucky-born Abraham Lincoln expressed this view in a letter to Orville H. Browning, who was a senator from Illinois and a personal and political friend of the President. For a complete copy of the letter see Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 8 vols., ed. Roy B. Basler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 4: 532-33.
- 2. In response to the popularity of the limited first edition, Goetzel released a "typographically reset, enlarged, second edition of Ford's book, dated 1864." The 1864 pirated edition, which was published by the New York firm of Charles B. Richardson, carries the notation "Reprinted from the Mobile Edition" on its title page and appears to have been based on Goetzel's first edition, as it does not incorporate some of the corrections of Goetzel's 1864 version. See Cathleen A. Baker, *The Enterprising S. H. Goetzel: Antebellum and Civil War Publisher in Mobile, Alabama* (Ann Arbor, MI: Legacy Press, 2008), 15.
- 3. E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina P, 1926), 3, 7-8.
- 4. Sallie Rochester Ford, *Raids and Romance of Morgan and His Men* (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1864), 354-5. For ease of reference, all further quotations from the novel will appear parenthetically within the text.
- 5. Amy Murrell Taylor, *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: U of N Carolina Press, 2005), 15.
  - 6. Lowell H. Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1987), 9.
- 7. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine, 1989), 297.
- 8. Captured near Lisbon, Ohio, on 26 July 1863, Morgan escaped from Camp Chase four months later.
- 9. Numerous biographies of Morgan and chronicles of his command have been written. For the first chronicle, originally published in 1867, see Basil W. Duke, *A History of Morgan's Cavalry*, ed. Cecil Fletcher Holland, Civil War Centennial Series (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960). Other accounts include Edison H. Thomas, *John Hunt Morgan and His Raiders* (Lexington: U P of Kentucky); Howard Swiggert, *The Rebel Raider: A Life of John Hunt Morgan* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing, 1937); Dee Alexander Brown, *The Bold Cavaliers: Morgan's* 2<sup>nd</sup> *Kentucky Cavalry Raiders* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1959); and Betty J. Gonn, *Morgan Is Coming: Confederate Raiders in the Heartland of Kentucky* (Prospect, KY: Harmony House Publishers, 2006).
  - 10. Duke, 165.
- 11. George Walsh, "Those Damn Horse Soldiers": True Tales of the Civil War Cavalry, (New York: Forge Books, 2006), 52-53.

- 12. "Affairs in Kentucky: John H. Morgan Again," New York Times, 25 May 1862.
- 13. Duke reports the conversational exchange between Morgan and the woman in almost the same terms as Ford (166).
- 14. The *New York Times* of 25 May 1862 reported that Morgan "grabbed \$10,000 from the express agent" ("Affairs in Kentucky"). According to Duke, "About eight thousand dollars in greenbacks—Government funds—were captured" (166). Walsh, who bases his account on the *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, records the figure at \$6,000 (53).
- 15. As Thomas observes, even before Morgan defied orders and crossed the Ohio River in July 1863, his men's lack of discipline and their insensitive "disregard for property had manifested itself" (xiii).
- 16. Ford's representation of Morgan's proclamation is almost *verbatim* what appeared in print. See Brown, 85-86.
  - 17. Swiggert, 66.
- 18. George F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Macmillan-Free Press, 1987), 115.
- 19. No official report of the number of Confederate soldiers surrendered at Donelson was made. Of the 17,000 or more men in the garrison, some 500 were killed in the battle, at least 1,000 of the wounded were evacuated before the surrender, and 2,000 or more escaped. See McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 402n.
- 20. For an in-depth study of the transformational effects of the Civil War on American attitudes toward death, see Gary L. Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes toward Death, 1799-1883* (New York: Yale U P, 1996). Although Laderman focuses on the North, his base argument is also applicable to the South. See also Randy J. Sparks, "The Southern Way of Death: The Meaning of Death in Antebellum White Evangelical Culture," *Southern Quarterly* 44.1 (Fall 2006): 32-50. Sparks argues that "Evangelicalism fundamentally shaped the southern way of death and surrounded the death-bed with a complex and highly ritualized culture" that served to domesticate the process as a way to convert "the terrors and grief surrounding death and dying into a sense of triumph and rejoicing" (43).
- 21. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2001), 209.
- 22. Charles W. Sanders, Jr., While in the Hands of the Enemy: Military Prisons of the Civil War (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U P, 2005), 1, 3.
- 23. William H. Knuass, *The Story of Camp Chase*, 1906 (Galloway, OH: Camp Chase Memorial Association, 1994), 122.
  - 24. Sanders, 100.
- 25. Ford was a staunch protestant, married to a respected Baptist minister, and co-editor with her husband of the *Christian Repository*. Nevertheless, her representation of Catholicism and the nuns who visited prisons such as Camp Chase, while acknowledging religious tensions, suggests that the Catholic Church's war effort was well intentioned. When John hands a religious tract to Charley, he complains, "I am tired to death . . . of these Catholic books. I'm a Protestant, and don't believe one word in their holy water, and penance, and purgatory, and saints." John, however, responds, "But this doesn't say a word about saints and crucifixes. It is an appeal to sinners, and you know you are one" (89). For a study of the roles played by Catholic nuns in the Civil War South, see Virginia Gould, "Oh, I Pass Everywhere': Catholic Nuns in the Gulf South during the Civil War," *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2006), 41-60.
- 26. George C. Rable, Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1989), 66.
  - 27. Knauss, 131.
- 28. Nina Silber, Introduction, "Colliding and Collaborating: Gender and Civil War Scholarship," *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2006), 7.

- 29. McPherson, For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War (New York: Oxford U P, 1997), 133.
  - 30. Linderman, 240.
- 31. It was not until the Vietnam era that the long-lasting psychological impact of war was fully documented and recognized. For an in-depth study of the connection between the psychological and readjustment problems experienced by Vietnam soldiers and those of the Civil War, see Eric T. Dean, Jr., *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997).
- 32. Drew Gilpin Faust, Mothers of Invention: Women and the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 122.



James Baker Hall Self Portrait