

LET THEM RUN WILD:
CHILDHOOD, THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY STORYTELLER,
AND THE ASCENT OF THE MOON

by
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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
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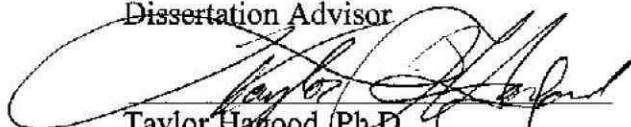
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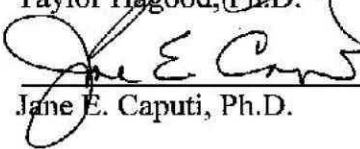
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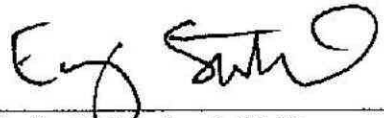
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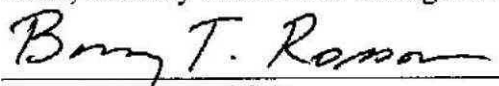
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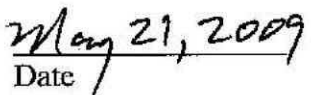
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Abstract

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Drawing from literary criticism, ecological philosophy, psychoanalysis, and the wisdom of the female principle—or what Paula Gunn Allen perceives as “Her presence,” the “power to make and relate”—this interdisciplinary study challenges dominant assumptions that habitually prevail in western cultural thinking. *Let Them Run Wild* investigates alternative, “buried” articulations which emerge in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century narratives that especially engage an audience of both children and adult readers. Recognizing the fictions inherent in linear-driven thought, these articulations celebrate narrative moments where reason is complicated and re-conjectured, where absence is affirmed as presence, and where tale-tellers disappear behind the messages they relate.

By spotlighting legendary characters, Chapter One, “The Jowls of Legend,” explains how “wild consciousness” *resists* legendary status. Chapters Two and Three

discuss the interweaving journey of the wild arabesque in the *Arabian Nights* and untamed desire within Anne's transformative language in L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*. Chapter Four, examining the death drive in Frank Norris's *The Octopus*, describes how it is reconceived in E. Nesbit's *The Railway Children*. Lastly, the Epilogue explores Juliana Ewing's "Lob Lie-By-the-Fire," tracing the manifestation of the female principle through its most wild activity—not hindered by gender—of service rendered through mystery and adventure.

Wild consciousness advances through the collective identity of what Frederic Jameson has called the "political unconscious" and commissions older, better approximations of ideology through willing, spontaneous service. It acknowledges Homi K. Bhabha's articulation of "cultural hybridity," while, simultaneously, it directs such hybrid constructions of history, space, and negotiation outward toward a wild "otherness" that is not a projection, but a distinct, yet allusive, herald of wonder. Consequently, what feminist critic Elaine Showalter has characterized as the "wild zone," customarily understood as a borderland space, is further reinterpreted as a borderless, expressive, timeless calling forth of receptive minds to engage in wildly compassionate, nonsensical acts and cunning, non-heroic feats in order to transform the inert, polemic systems that define our western collective mind. In short, this study refigures what Vandana Shiva identifies as cultural "patents on life," where "civilization" becomes small—a mere idea in a forest's deep heart.

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Prologue

“I got up slow,” he explained, “because if tha’ makes a quick move it startles ’em. A body ’as to move gentle an’ speak low when wild things is about.”

—Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*¹

“Then the voice returns—

Lest limbs be reddened and rent—I spring the trap that is set—As I loose the snare you may glimpse me there—For surely you shall forget!
Row nearer, Mole, nearer to the reeds! It is hard to catch, and grows each minute fainter.

Helper and healer, I cheer—Small waifs in the woodland wet—Strays I find in it, wounds I bind in it—Bidding them all forget! Nearer, Mole, nearer!

No, it is no good; the song has died away into reed-talk.”

—Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*²

Nowhere but in the western world of the twenty-first century could the notion of what is “wild” be more misconstrued. We live in a culture where “wildness” is either disparaged or praised—condemned as destructive or celebrated as creative. To be a “wild” child, for instance, is to be too untamed, too uncontrollable, too unfocused, and too irresponsible. Yet many times the same child whose “wildness” causes distress and the need for wearisome supervision is later praised for the very activities that once heightened worry and concern. The “wild” child, as a more tame adult, becomes that creative, energetic being from the past who simply could not help getting into mischief.

We talk about wild “abandon” as that which is dangerous to our sanity and prosperity, but we also praise it as exciting and liberating. A wild spirit, like a wild fire,

cannot be contained and so must either be subdued or, in a more receptive, open-minded manner, be allowed to range free without restraint. No matter how much pandemonium results due to its participants, a wild party is later perceived as *the* event to be remembered, or, more often by the neighbors, as a disruptive, raucous meeting of dissolute, undisciplined carousers who make far too much noise. A person who is deemed “wild” is, in some way or another, flamboyant. And regardless of our perspective *about* that flamboyance, a wild character, under the attentive eye of the western, twenty-first century, gets noticed.

“Wild” or unusual thinking, too, is sought after in twenty-first-century capitalistic endeavors. Yet, despite the business-related, profit-producing conferences and workshops that prod employees and managers to brainstorm together and conceptualize “outside of the box,” and despite the influence of innovative thinkers who continue to advance technological, cutting-edge designs to provide us with more ways to experience the world around us, we know very little about what it means to think wildly. Beyond doubt, we know how to celebrate that which gets noticed, but know little to nothing about responding to that which is marked by absence.

On the other hand, Frances Hodgson Burnett’s character, Dickon—who emerges in *The Secret Garden* (1911)—knows how to sense presence in what appears to others as absence, and having a wild spirit, he is capable of “mov[ing] gentle an’ speak[ing] low when wild things is about.” Lacking a twenty-first-century mindset, Dickon does not take one side of a dualistic approach and make it his perspective. He does not attempt to regard flamboyance in the wild and then either seek to tame it or praise it for its abandon, creativity, mischief, or noise. What Dickon encounters with and in the wild,

instead, is a relationship. And that relationship allows him to conceptualize in such a way as to know how to communicate outside of dualistic structures of thinking. Dickon does not merely think “outside of the box” of social codes and expectations. Having a relationship with the wild, he also thinks *through* the “box” and restores tangible presence to living absence. He does not perceive one thing or the other—that is, an idea and its opposition. Rather, he is perceptive to and conscious of other rhythms and means of communication that may not make rational sense, but are real communications nonetheless. What Dickon possesses is a consciousness that is, indeed, wild.

This dissertation is about wild consciousness and the abilities that we may possess of being capable of envisaging, in a Dickonsonian manner, the world in which we live. Dickon’s thinking, in fact, initiates a whole new “plot” of growth in the Secret Garden, where relationships evolve out of strange utterances in darkened spaces—rather like a seedling emerging out of the soil overnight, discovering new communications with the wind and the moon. In order to acquire a sense of how wild consciousness moves, it is best to imagine the act of wild thinking as if it were a song. Such a song is one that, through its unfamiliar inscrutability, has never been heard before, yet it exists and so can be heard as it is thought. It can also disappear into the wind, as it were, and become barely perceptible as song. To grasp its meaning, one must first know how to hear its strains, and such hearing is, many times, unfortunately perceived by others as non-rational—even lunatic.

Difficult to discern, dematerializing as it reveals itself, the song of the wild is a mysterious, sapient force that is both inaccessible as it is accessible, muted while it is heard. Its voice is a gift to consciousness, arising in moments too lucid to be forgotten,

but, ever-undulating, also neglected and left unknown in its departure. Nevertheless, it is possible to acquire “wild consciousness,” if one is, like Dickon or like Rat in Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows*, “gentle” enough, patient enough, and “languid” enough to catch its rhythms.³ Thus, this discourse is an exploration of wild consciousness as it emerges in narratives that are open to the gifts the wild provides. Such narratives generally involve those stories that are open to “play” and to “non-sense,” eschewing the accepted, assumed notions that have elevated rationality and reason to lofty pinnacles of “proper” thinking and providing, instead, “better plots” that celebrate, we might say, a poetics of restorative absence.⁴ Although “nonsensical” narratives, which also wind and bend in their furtherance of plots, tend to draw a readership of children, there are, as well, texts that evade logical, sense-driven expression that also interest adults. Because the wild mysteriously acts as a “helper and healer”—as Rat’s translation of its reed-talk in *The Wind in the Willows* indicates—and because it reveals itself as a subject-in-process—lacking discernible “being” while nonetheless expressing its ontological presence—its creative powers arise, as I conceive it, from out of a female principle, whereby “nots” and “negatives” are deemed worthy and interesting. Certain plots do express such worth and interest—when, that is, they are attentive to the wild.

Our conceptions of what constitute a plot are derived from “many sources,” Peter Brooks, in *Reading for the Plot* (1984), points out, but our ability to identify a plot’s “common forms and their characteristics” emerges more specifically from two fundamental regions: from “the stories of our childhood” and from the “great nineteenth-century narrative tradition that . . . conceived certain kinds of knowledge and truth to be

inherently narrative, understandable (and expoundable) only by way of sequence, in a temporal unfolding” (xi-xii). Whereas, Brooks explicates, “[i]n our own century, we have become more suspicious of plots, more acutely aware of their artifice,” in the “golden age of narrative, . . . writers and readers . . . were engaged in a prime, irreducible act of understanding how human life acquires meaning” (xii). Whereas “nonnarrative or antinarrative forms of thought” are the patterns that are “supposed to characterize our times,” *nineteenth-century* narratives immerse their characters in plots that focus on the “burden of repression”—on the “burying and encrypting of a past that insists on continuing to live” and on the nightmares of “living entombment” (Brooks 7, 221-22). Since Brooks’s analysis and interpretation of plot focuses almost exclusively on plots written by men, the “horror” and “nightmare” that the nineteenth-century literary imagination conceives in “the buried utterance: the word, the tale, entombed without listener” (221-22) can only be perceived as a terrorizing monstrosity. Brooks cogently demonstrates the dreadful problematic behind an entombed utterance’s need to assert a “living identity against a historical record that says [it] is dead” (222); however, such a problematic has been the historical case for women, who have lived in the patriarchal, dominant realm *as* “the buried utterance, entombed without a listener,” and have survived its “nightmare.” As a Jew, Gerda Lerner narrates, in *Why History Matters* (1997), that she acquired an “understanding of the problem of ‘Otherness’ and of the denial of self-definition.” That understanding, she explains, “led me to the study of the history of women. For women have, for longer than any other human group, been defined by others and have been defined as ‘the Other.’ Women have, for longer than any other group, been deprived of a knowledge of their own history” (15). Therefore,

whereas some nineteenth-century plots may express the “buried utterance” as a “horror,” as Brooks illustrates, other “wild” texts recognize mutedness or “living entombment” as realms of play where the different “Other,” although denied self-definition, nonetheless emerges *as* living and *as* expressive—perhaps, we might say, as reed-talk—even while confined in a dualism that disconfirms non-acclaimed forms of utterance.

Mary Daly, who associates “realms of Wild be-ing” with “woman-identified bonding and creation,” is innovative and creatively prolific in her adeptness at relating how the female “Other” *is* both living and expressive. In *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (1984), she explains that the “pure lust” she refers to in her title is “pure Passion”—that is, an “Elemental female Lust” which is an “intense longing/craving for the cosmic concrescence that is creation” (vii, 3). “[R]ealms of Wild be-ing,” she explains, are spaces that can be discovered through symbols, for symbols “unlock . . . hidden dimensions.” Using new conceptions of terms that have become symbolic, and, at times, applying reversals to re-identify them, Daly indicates, for instance, that women who are “good, capable, [and] brave” are “Prudes.” Such women, possessing “Lusty spirits,” can and do hear “the Call of the Wild,” and so “conjure webs of Weird words,” finding inspiration in the Fates, or the Weirds, where the “Word of the Weird . . . summons us weirdward—which means to the borders of the *very* natural, the *supremely* natural” (12, 25; emphases in original). Because borders are tenuous spaces, however, clear, concrete classifications of such creative conjurers as they emerge in individual women are difficult to identify. A “Prude” may also be, and very often is, a spirited “Wanton,” a courageous “Sprite,” a shrewd “Shrew,” and a wise “Soothsayer” (13-14). Thus, no one symbol can pin down the “hidden dimensions” of wild realms as they exist

in “be-ing.” Daly acknowledges this difficulty with the symbols that we name and re-name, even when we conjure fresh ideas through the process of sounding them out. “Of course,” she writes,

there can be no One Absolutely Right symbol for all Lusty women, for we belong to different tribes and have great individual diversity. Despite this fact, and also because of it, Prudes prudently heed our intuitions about which symbols ring true, listening to the sounds of their names and to the rhythms of the contexts in which this Naming occurs. (25)

So, according to Daly, although women are unique as “be-ings,” belonging to “different tribes,” nonetheless, she refers to the audience of her text—that is, to the women who are “we” and “us”—as Prudes, “Lusty women,” Wantons, Nags, Brewsters, Dragons, Vixens, Daimons, Muses, “Weird Wanderers,” and “Erratic women,” among others (31-32). Daly thus assumes that although there is no “One Absolutely right symbol for all Lusty women,” nevertheless there is something about femaleness that authorizes her to associate women’s thinking and creative capacities with the symbols she defines and re-defines. That open ability and authority to make such associations between “realms of Wild be-ing” and female “conjuring” or “Naming” comes from an empowered impression on the mind—a validated supposition—that wild female “be-ing” is indeed shared by females and finds expression through the practice, as Daly describes it, of “making possible exits from confinement in elementary spaces [and by] striv[ing] to create an atmosphere in which further creativity may flourish” (18). I am calling the cohesive integrity that allows Daly to refer to female thinking and creativity as “woman-identified” a *female principle*.⁵

In *Gyn/Ecology* (1978), Daly rejects the term “feminine,” for, she points out, “femininity is a man-made construct, having essentially nothing to do with femaleness,” and as a “construct of phallocracy,” that which is considered feminine invalidates the “complexity of female experience” (68, 168). In order to retain the conception that the female principle is, indeed, complex, and that it is empowered as well, I am using “female” as an adjective rather than “feminine.” I see the female principle as being conjoined with the yearnings, as Daly relates it, of a “Wild woman.” A “Wild woman,” says Daly, desires to recall the “questions of her childhood. . . . She recognizes that these have a special aura, that they are imbued with a sense of deep Wonder. . . . For Wonderlusters, this is the quest for Elemental Wisdom” (*Pure Lust* 8). The female principle, then, authorizes a “lust” for wonder, and so merges adult desire (Daly refers to the “Wild woman” as a grown woman, of course) with questions recalled from childhood and with a childlike capacity to wonder. The female principle also moves within consciousness, like the reed-talk in *The Wind in the Willows*, as a “helper and healer”—restoring the sort of cognizance that Daly describes as possessing the ability to “heal the broken connections between words and their sources” by “breathing forth” articulations that create “Spinning/spirating” linkages (18-19). Wild consciousness thus invokes the female principle in its maneuverings, for it does not separate adulthood from childhood, and it entangles together ideas that are typically perceived as incongruous. However, in its creative wanderings, such wild mental roving and articulations can be perceived through a phallogocentric mindset as unreasonable, non-rational, insignificant, or simply lunatic.

Rather than “wild” consciousness, the consciousness that has dominated ethical and religious thought in western culture is what Val Plumwood refers to in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) as the “master model,” which is “deeply entrenched” in the “overvaluation of reason” and the “overvaluation of rationality” (24, 26). Summarizing the critique put forth by those associated with what has been called “cultural feminism,” Plumwood explains that because “western culture has conceived the central features of humanity in terms of the dominator identity of the master, and has empowered qualities and areas of life classed as masculine over those classed as feminine, it has evolved as hierarchical, aggressive and destructive of nature and of life, including human life” (30).⁶ To overcome the story of the master power “to direct, cast and script this ruling drama,” we must, argues Plumwood, search for “better plots” that have been “cast as *outside reason*”—narratives that “can be drawn from sources other than the master, from subordinated and ignored parts of western culture, such as women’s stories of care” (196; emphasis added). What we generally deem as being “outside reason” is not ordinarily connected with “women’s stories of *care*”; yet, Plumwood’s association of women’s stories of care with that which is *outside* reason provides an example of “wild” thinking. “Wild” consciousness, then, involves not only the creation of connections between ideas that are normally disparate, but it also involves an awareness, through a female principle involving a furtherance of ministrations, of the interdependencies that exist within issues that are at variance. Thus an examination of the “wild,” as it demonstrates the female principle and as it emerges in writings that show an openness to its presence, can facilitate a more complex, and therefore more judiciously-based, conception of difference and yield a more varied

understanding of the dichotomies that naturally exist in culture, and through that diversified appreciation, celebrate difference as it both draws upon and *redefines* dualistic structures of thought.

To develop what I am calling “wild consciousness,” one must explore, to use Plumwood’s phrase, “better plots,” which involves a search for examples, for illustrations, of narratives that draw upon the wild within their story lines. Although Daly speaks about and to women whose creativity has been “misdirected” and “misplaced” through “patriarchal control” (*Pure Lust* 18), wild perceptions, I am saying, informed by the female principle as it moves through wild consciousness, are potentially accessible by both women and men. Writers and storytellers, whether male or female, who find inspiration in the “Word of the Weird,” summon their readers and listeners “weirdward,” as Daly puts it, “which means to the borders of the *very* natural.” Writers, storytellers, readers, and listeners who respond to wild “borders” of thinking and perceiving begin to discover that rationally conceived lines of demarcation and separation lack an affinity with wonder. Therefore, they prefer to listen for wild intimations and intonations that reveal a different, “borderland” consciousness—where, for example, “living entombment,” which Brooks asserts is at the heart of nineteenth-century narratives, becomes not a symbol of horror, but a realm of play. Readers, listeners, writers, and storytellers who are “Wonderlusters” tend to gravitate towards narratives that convey a sense of wild consciousness, for writers and storytellers attentive to the wild are compelled by its song as they relate their stories, and listeners and readers who can catch the strains of the wild are compelled to move freely within and about a narrative’s articulations, participating in the play that draws them

“weirdward.” Children, who tend to be immediately responsive to play, are therefore, many times, wild listeners, as, too, are those adults (female or male) who are capable of perceiving the power of the female principle as it creates “an atmosphere in which further creativity may flourish”—to use Daly’s phrase—even in the spaces that appear confined to the “horror” of a “living entombment.” By exploring the “better plots” that create and express such creative atmospheres—capable of finding presence (or that which is living) in absence (or in buried entombment), for instance—we can discover ways of developing our own thinking so that we, like Burnett’s Dickon, may develop a relationship with the wild.

Thus, focusing on fiction that draws audiences of both adults and children, this exploration into wild consciousness will investigate nineteenth-century narratives that, by demonstrating the wild wisdom of the female principle, convey “better plots” than those that are not conscious of other rhythms and means of communication that exist beyond the rational messages and disseminations of the “master model.” Such an exploration, celebrating difference as it redefines dualistic structures of thought, can further a consciousness of the untamed wisdom that asks the deepest *whys* and so encourage thinking that not only includes theoretical models of cultural hybridity, for example, but which dares to look even beyond those models in order to search for new responses *outside* reason. Sometimes, stories that convey ideas and associations that exist outside reason are narratives that are relegated to the genre of “children’s literature” and so are marginalized due to their supposed lack of sociopolitical, scientific, or philosophical subtexts. Lacking rational “sense,” many times, they are not assigned valorization. But the voice, or song, of the wild is a gift to consciousness, and as such—

that is, as a gift—it cannot be earmarked with some form of appraisal under the code of the “master model.” Daly writes that “philosophers of phallicism . . . are living, as it were, in a house of cards,” and so the dealings that go on within that house, even though they are accepted by the mainstream culture, lack associations and attachments with the “quest for Be-ing.” Under the rational mode of the “master model,” when one object possesses value, another comparable object is invalidated. But “Wanton women”—or, as I am saying, those who possess wild consciousness—are not “preoccupied with terror of ‘the negation of everything that *is*.’” Instead, they are attentive to the “intuition” that knows that “Powers of Be-ing are constantly unfolding, creating, communicating—Be-ing more” (*Pure Lust* 30; emphasis in original). “Be-ing more” can occur by giving away—a concept that our twenty-first-century, mainstream, western culture cannot and will not discern, as long as it continues to conceive of the earning of a profit as a gain and the giving of a gift as a loss. Whereas the “master model” supports the giving of a gift *occasionally*, gift-giving as a practice that involves little to no incoming profit is an insane endeavor. But “women’s stories of care” (to refer to Plumwood’s example of a “better plot”), as well as other wild narratives that incorporate illogic and absurdity—such as texts that draw an audience of children or texts that draw an audience of adult “Wonderlusters”—express the *powers* of “entombment,” where what appears to be stifled, muted, or stationary is actually “Be-ing,” singing, and moving—breezily weaving its way and the ways of others who join it through a systematized, static house of cards.

In addition to examining nineteenth-century literary texts, this venture into the entwining, intervolving wild, following Mary Daly’s lead in *Gyn/Ecology* in finding

benefit in the “strange and improbable voice of the dictionary,” will interweave definitions of “wild” from the *Oxford English Dictionary* into its perusal of texts—while also combining and relating lesser-known works considered, generally, as children’s fiction, with canonical nineteenth-century novels.⁷ In her preface to *The True Story of the Novel*, Doody explains that her endeavor in her book is “an attempt to trace connections.” She explains:

If I . . . boldly venture to treat an admittedly protean form as if constantly visible from century to century, I do not mean that that is the only way to treat the subject. It merely seems necessary that now somebody should do so, in order to help us to see the range of surviving forest and not merely the individual trees, or, at best, small groves. . . . If I emphasize continuities, it is because . . . fences have been too sturdy or too barbed—it is good sometimes to leap over fences, or even to break them down.

(xxvii-xviii)

In a similar fashion, I propose to leap over fences, not by attempting to show the entire range of the forest, but by providing, instead of a terrestrial view, a moon’s eye-view of the “small groves” that have, through time, been shaping our definitions of the wild—for moonlight can peek at groves and expose clearings in the most dense forests, penetrating both whereabouts and connections. The *OED* provides more than seventeen definitions of “wild,” including many subdivisions within definitions, as well as combinatorial forms, such as “wild-spirited,” and special collocations, such as “wild beast.” They are like “groves” of definitions, where some ideas are clustered together and others lie fenceless. In linking together concepts traditionally associated with the “wild” to more

varied understandings of its untamed wisdom, I plan to show how certain texts written by nineteenth-century writers demonstrate a “necessary lunacy” which, through their invocations of the wild, reveals connections to the borderland that has the power to reshape consciousness.⁸

Before examining how wild texts “unmute” those utterances which have been muffled and “buried,” it is first necessary to understand the narrative forces that have buried them—that is, those forces that shape and glorify legend as if it were “wild” while drowning out, ignoring, or demonstrating an obliviousness to or deafness to the wild’s call. For instance, we find narratives shaped by the authority of the “master model” being crafted by editors such as the nineteenth-century American John Newman Edwards, who succumbs to the narrative forces that mold legend by using words that “revere” the deeds of terrorizing bandits like Jesse James. Commenting on a robbery by James and his gang where a little girl is shot and wounded, Edwards publishes an account, which reads, in part, that it “was a deed so high-handed, so diabolically daring and so utterly in contempt of fear that we are bound to admire and revere its perpetrators for the very enormity of their outlawry” (qtd. in Stiles 223). Such admiration and reverence is, as I see it, inspired by a force not driven by the wild, but by a domineering, insatiable hunger. Hence, I will begin first by delving into the “jowls” of legend, which are intent upon consumption.

Legend, which rises out of history, commissions itself as ahistorical—transcending time and place. However, legend is also tied to history in the sense that a legend is a story that is “handed down by tradition from early times and popularly regarded as historical.”⁹ As women have, as Lerner points out, “for longer than any

other group, been deprived of a knowledge of their own history,” female subjects, we could say, have existed ahistorically in that they have been removed, or disconfirmed, in history—except when they become “legendary” by conforming to the prototypes that define legendary distinction in the social order. However, in wild consciousness—a consciousness that is *not* shaped by the consumptive forces that govern legend—the female subject/female principle is ahistorical in the sense of its *moving through* history, where the notion of “gift” survives even when the giver is unremarked. Legend, which is “popularly regarded as historical,” situates itself in history, yet it is also connected with narrative in the sense of its derivation from the twelfth-century French term *légende*, which means “what is read.”¹⁰ When utterances are not buried in the social realm, they create what Pierre Bourdieu calls “embodied history,” which becomes “internalized as a second nature and [is] so forgotten as history.” This *habitus*, as Bourdieu names it, installs a “principle of regulated improvisations” within the embodied history and, in its “practical sense . . . [is] objectified in institutions” (56-57). “What is read”—what becomes legend—thus takes on the “regulated improvisations” of the social order. Therefore, I will be comparing the legendary stories of historical figures with ahistorical figures in narratives in order to show how the habitus shapes even the legends we deem as “larger than life.” On the other hand, figures that emerge as demonstrating wild consciousness do not tend to become “larger than life.” Instead, the female *principle*—an impression on the consciousness, a validated supposition that there is a complex and shared something about femaleness that possesses a unique authority and a breathing, healing power to name and re-name “be-ing” creatively—emerges through them.

Such an emergence of the female principle as it informs wild consciousness can be identified as it materializes in men, as well as in women. Writers who are conscious of wild maneuverings and transformations, such as Charles Dickens, illustrate wild consciousness through their characters as it imbues them with the capacity to wonder. So, for instance, Ebenezer Scrooge, Dickens's character from *A Christmas Carol*, is a figure transformed by wild consciousness and is thus representative of figures who engage with the wild. His change of heart and newfound ability to give merge with and become part of the moving spirit of the season. When his spirit is altered and he gives of himself, Scrooge discovers a new relationship with the wild as he begins to hear its song, and so he, as a non-authoritative figure, becomes less remembered in favor of the spirit of blessing that is voiced through the character of a child, Tiny Tim. However, in contradistinction to the wild, which calls forth intimations of the gift and its powers rather than the *giver*, legend remembers and glorifies notable figures and grandiose acts of valor or, as in Scrooge's case, of resistance. Whereas Dickens's narrative ends with the transformed, "wild" Scrooge, unfortunately, the legendary, larger-than-life Scrooge as we know and remember him, through the embodied history of the habitus, has been "internalized as a second nature" so that the concept of "scrooge" in the symbolic order of language and the social realm has come to mean a skinflint. In the making of the legendary term, the wild Scrooge—that is, the transformed, non-humbug, transported Scrooge—has been forgotten. The "better plot" that Dickens created at the end of the story has not reached the level of signification—of the symbolic—for a "scrooge," as we know the term, is not a wild, spontaneous giver. Just as the "master model" has developed an embodied history for the term "prude," which is generally perceived as a

pejorative description of a woman, so has it established the term “scrooge” as a miserly moneygrubber. A writer possessing wild consciousness, such as Mary Daly, however, understands that a “Prude” is, instead, a “good, capable, brave” woman, and by conveying that understanding, she is presenting a better “plot” for the term, where different storylines can unravel. As long as a “prude” is conceived of as a prig, and as long as a “scrooge” remains a skinflint, the wild will go unnoticed, and the same static “house of cards” will dominate consciousness. However, when we begin, ever so slightly, to perceive the muted bravery in a prude and the buried joy in a scrooge, we will begin to find ourselves not at the foothills of legend, but rather at the borders of consciousness, where different strains of sound and meaning can prepare us to hear and respond to the enigmatic call of the wild.

Although the wild resists classification, it still emerges out of its mysterious “reed-talk” and so does become unmuted in wild texts, even when its song or voice cannot be heard by some—such as Grahame’s character, Mole, for example, who “cannot catch the words” (126). Part of the difficulty in hearing the call of the wild is due to the dynamic inherency of demonstrative interdependence within the wild’s unrest. Like a moving narrative without beginning or end, or even, at times, transitions, the wild becomes unmuted in texts that narrate the trivial—or what appears to be “other” or trifling—in order to elicit transformation in the non-trivial. The transfiguring consequences that emerge out of a wild story mark a narrative *as* wild, but the transformative agents—the “strange aspects” or “fantastic appearances” that are narrated—work alongside the “everyday,” the assumed, or the accepted in order to increase the uncommonness of the “common.”¹¹ In a wild text I explore in the pages

that follow, *The Thousand Nights and a Night*—otherwise known as the *Arabian Nights*—the wild weaves narrative after narrative in order to draw out the most “fantastic” aspect of all—the ability of a ruler to rule without rule.

In addition, the wild may be dis-covered, or unburied, as it were, in “fenceless,” uncultivated spaces. The *OED* defines “wild” in one of its definitions as “uninhabited” or “desolate.” To hear its call, then, one must discover in the uninhabited the habited—the “not-that-is” in the “not,” or the “nevertheless” in the “I-am-not-what-is.”¹² Lucy Maud Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* interweaves wild desire into its language and “unmutes” it by creating a listening-to-what-has-been-excluded. Listening in *Anne* involves a redefinition of hearing, where the death of the character who possesses wild “ears” is not an assignation of a death drive, but the enabling of a drive of transference, where the “ears” of a character are extended beyond and outside of the text.

Whereas Freud presented the “death instinct” as “manifesting itself in destructive impulses and operating in fusion with the life instinct” (Klein 290), Joan Riviere expresses such “fusion” not only in terms of one drive counteracting the other, as does Melanie Klein in her analysis of anxiety, but also in terms of a different conception of the death drive, where its destructive tendencies possess the capacity for restoration.¹³ A subject possessing the “capacity to bear the pain of true guilt-feelings and the ability to make real sacrifices,” she writes, is driven “to compensate and restore others” (“Psychical Conflict” 63). The wild, which is defined in the *OED* as being “of the sea” and “turbulent,” is, by extension, also connected to tidal forces and to subterranean undulations. As such, the disturbances of the wild find expression in texts that overcome the anxiety occasioned by the death drive through a form of the death drive itself. *The*

Railway Children, by E. Nesbit, is a wild text that names the death instinct while it leaves nameless its active agent—an old gentleman who works, as it were, “underground.”

The “underground” movements of the wild emerge, as well, in texts that draw attention to the rhythm and tone of oral tales—providing illusions of the oral even as they are inscribed on a page. Texts which supply such impressions suggest a lack of mastery, as if subscribing to the *OED*’s definition of “wild” that describes the term as meaning “artless, free, unconventional” and “fanciful.” Mark Twain presents the problem of mastery when he discusses the ability to master “the language of . . . water.” Once he learns the physical features of the Mississippi, “as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something . . . which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry had gone out of the majestic river!”¹⁴ Although a written text can never be oral, when a plot relates a certain un-mastery of its features, the “fanciful” elements that characterize wild traversings take on the song that distinguishes wild occurrences—often perceived as unexplainable—from accounts approved by the habitus of the social order. “Artless, free, unconventional” and “fanciful,” the wild is also defined as “unconfined” and “unrestricted.” Writers of wild texts recognize the quality of moving free without constraint within a consciousness that is wild and so describe the giving of services in ways that transcend assumed roles *about* service. The female principle, which emerges out of a freedom that gives, rather than out of a controlling demand for servitude, is asserted in wild communication, where gendered roles do not limit wild expression. Juliana Horatia Ewing, in “Lob Lie-By-The-Fire,” portrays how the wild provides the

gift-still-freely-given through the wonder of human effort, where a charmed sustenance is provided and recognized through the mysterious benefits discovered through loss and absence.

The wild texts I plan to examine, then, present adult themes yet also invite an audience of children. The imaginative consciousness that informs wild texts does so rather in the way that the wind sings through the reeds in *The Wind in the Willows*, causing Rat both to discern and forget the words. That is because the wild, whose plots are continuous, speaks and acts for the “[s]mall waifs in the woodland wet,” even if we have forgotten in adulthood that we are still such waifs. P.L. Travers, the creator of the character, Mary Poppins, reminds us of the “cross-fertilizing”—that is, of the creative interdependence—of one upon the other:

Many people forget this; but who are we but the child we were? We have been wounded, scarred, and dirtied over, but are still essentially that child. . . . You do not chop off a section of your imaginative substance and make a book specifically for children; for if you are honest you have, in fact, no idea where childhood ends and maturity begins. It is all endless and all one. And from time to time, without intention or invention, this whole body of stuff, each part constantly cross-fertilizing every other, sends up—what is the right word?—intimations. And the best you can do, if you are lucky, is to be there to jot them down. This being there, this being present to catch them, is important; otherwise they are lost. Your role is that of the necessary lunatic who remains attentive and in readiness, unselfconscious, unconcerned, all disbelief suspended,

even when . . . nursemaids, against all gravity, slide up the banisters.

(20-21)

The “necessary lunatic” fares well when, “against all gravity” and against rationality, she is able to think, as it were, like the moon.

The moon, conventionally a metaphor for lunacy or lunatic thinking, provides a figurative gateway, in fact, for wild thinking. When moonlight is strewn on a path, that path appears in a strange light—resembling but differing from its daytime image. Our perspective of it changes as darkness enshrouds its borders and as its surrounding environment is highlighted in various places by scattered moonshine. The path, clear to the eye in the daylight as it extends to the horizon, becomes more like a winding arabesque-like figure at night, and one, if one is traversing it at night, has either to have memorized the path’s undulations and turns or to have made the decision to trust that each upcoming turn will be illuminated with each step forward. Shadows not present by day move and extend themselves at night, and sometimes make faces appear where faces shouldn’t be—or appear to sketch smiles in the bark of trees along the way, making each step forward curiouiser and curiouiser. Moonlight has the effect that we are familiar with in the dream-state—a space described frequently by wild-conscious writers. Lewis Carroll, for instance, puts Alice on a path in the woods, and one memorable scene in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, when she meets the Chesire-Cat, evokes a “moonlit” atmosphere, for the Cat fades in and out, rather like a mysterious shadow slow-dancing in the trees. When the Cat fades, and his grin remains, Alice remarks: “Well! I’ve often seen a cat without a grin, . . . but a grin without a cat! It’s the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life!” (67). A cat without a grin is a logical enough image, but to see a

grin without a cat is, ordinarily speaking, representative of lunatic thinking. To hear the cat, bodiless, speak is even worse.

But, wild thinking asks, what makes such hearing “worse” or lunatic? Yi-Fu Tuan, in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977), assists in answering that question by describing the nature of visual perspectives. “Spatial prepositions,” he explains, “are necessarily anthropocentric,” and so we place external objects in categories in terms of their relationship to our bodies. As an example, he explains that a book is always *on* a desk: “It is hard to imagine a real-life circumstance in which the answer ‘the desk is *under* the book’ is appropriate. . . . Statements of location, therefore, normally give far more than simple locational facts.” However, in the *madhouse*, “‘the book is on the desk’ and ‘the desk is under the book’ are equivalent and interchangeable parts of speech” (45). In the madhouse, then, interchangeability between ideas and their mutual interdependency upon one another is possible because anthropocentric conceptions of location are abandoned. But “madhouse” associations are disqualified—that is, when one is inside, and not outside, reason.

In the search for “better plots” that are cast outside reason, voices that speak with a language that finds statements like “the desk is under the book” as appropriate cannot be discounted—cannot be relegated to the “background” or to a “living entombment.” The call of the wild, many times, is the call of the “moon”—speaking forth associations that seem “crazily” mixed, confusing a venturer drawn by such a call, as he attempts to make his way down the established, worn path. Returning to the place of the call, such a traveler could possibly begin to view that mysterious space not as unfavorably “strange”

or as conveying inadmissible lunacy, but more as a *somewhat* familiar place—a place visited before, perhaps in a state of deep sleep.

The way we encounter others in dreams is many times erratic, or lunatic, for we want to make sense of connections in our waking hours, and such sense is generally absent in the dream-state. Yet our nighttime journeys, lacking rational sense, can often reveal underground plots that, if we “free-fall” under their momentum, can benefit our inert, wakeful thinking. Dreaming of a river in a grove, for instance, Deena Metzger found that the dream river split a “real grove on one side [from a] false grove on the other.” Besides there being the problem of the “false grove,” Metzger also points out that another problem emerged, for “[t]hen down through the river came a glut of VW cars.” Metzger’s dream, clearly lacking a rational landscape, nonetheless reveals a state of reality, for, she writes, “[a]lthough this was a dream image, we know that rivers are really glutted, are really dying” (119). That dream, as well as a previous dream about the moon, led Metzger to write “Invoking the Grove,” in which she relates how she finds wisdom through a wild force—that of the voice of trees. The tree, she explains,

speaks to us about bringing opposites together. The tree and the grove are not only important in themselves but in what they point toward, . . . what they symbolize. When we cut down the literal tree, when we cut down the literal grove, when we cut down the forests which provide most of the essential oxygen in order to feed cattle for MacDonald’s hamburgers, we cut down everything, all of culture and all of spirit.

When the sacred groves of Demeter were cut down She cursed us:
“The more you eat, the more you’ll want.” This is the curse of

imperialism, capitalism, expansionism. The curse of greed. This is the curse of our time.

How do we remove this curse? How do we restore the groves? . . .

We have to restore balance and the equality of things, . . . [and] the word that is used to embody this understanding of the absolute equality of all things is *compassion*, but we haven't gone far enough in our understanding of this concept, its implications, and how it is to be lived. We can't begin to imagine how difficult this is to do—it is not only a task of the mind or will—and how necessary! (122-23; emphasis in original)

Thus, a singular, seemingly inconsequential, crazy image from a dream has impelled Metzger to recognize and foretell, like a wise “Soothsayer,” the “curse of our time” in our western, mainstream culture. Through dreams, trees can and *do* speak—a lunatic idea in the waking world, but an articulation, nonetheless, that speaks volumes about our unfortunate, wakeful reality. Besides revealing the curse we are under, the wild communications of the trees also tell us “about bringing opposites together”—that such connections are, indeed, possible. Like Plumwood, who points out that we need to search for “better plots” outside of reason, such as “women’s stories of care,” Metzger discovers, through the crazy, mixed-up dream-state, that compassion, a simple concept and a simple act, is actually a complex, difficult-to-grasp, difficult-to-impart, wildly elusive act in western culture—an act that is so irrational as to be considered lunatic and thus avoided—otherwise the “curse of our time” would have been lifted long ago.

The call of the wild, by drawing us into spaces where we begin to make associations that are perceived as insane under the “master model” (such as a grove

where speaking trees reveal to us the state of our culture) leads us to recognize that there do exist different and better plots—different realities—that are more valid, more natural, or, as Daly puts it, more “*supremely* natural” than the rational narratives of the “master model.” Since we fall asleep every night, the dream-state should not be perceived as such an irrational space, just as acts of compassion should not actually be so foreign to us. Yet the fear of losing control, of including in consciousness what appears to be “primitive” or “undeveloped,” as Ursula LeGuin points out, is a fear that is “ancient, profound, and violent,” and the loss of familiar, “civilized” constructs through an acknowledgement of wild spaces perceived as a “no-man’s-land” tends to be too disruptive to the “house of cards” that has been established as the real world (46-47). As Tuan points out, “[i]n deep sleep man continues to be influenced by his environment but loses his world.”¹⁵ Even as we begin to think more wildly, we cannot escape being influenced by our environment—by, for example, noticing the dichotomies that call attention to diametrical differences. However, using wild thinking, we can escape the fears of our “civilized” world by searching for the fantastic in the shadows—for the transformative power in the misty borderlands—and hopefully, through the re-imagining and re-casting of new and varied narratives, we can recognize how, more and more, we can discover the ways available to us of losing our tame, guarded, fathomable world.

Notes to Prologue

¹ Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (1911; New York: HarperCollins, 1987) 116.

² Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (1908; Cleveland, OH: Collins World, 1966) 126.

³ Grahame describes Rat and Mole as being tired before they hear the music of the wind in the reeds. They are not “body-tired,” however. Mole feels “as if I had been through something very exciting and rather terrible, and it was just over; and yet nothing particular has happened.” When they hear the wind playing in the reeds, Mole says that the sound is “like music—far-away music,” as he nods drowsily. ““So I was thinking,’ murmured the Rat, dreamful and languid.” And then Rat clarifies that sound is like

“[d]ance music—the lilting sort that runs on without a stop—but with words in it, too—it passes into words and out of them again—I catch them at intervals—then it is dance music once more, and then nothing but the reeds’ soft thin whispering.”

“You hear better than I,” said the Mole sadly. I cannot catch the words.”

See *The Wind in the Willows*, 125-26.

⁴ I am referring, here, to Val Plumwood’s call for “better plots” to be taken into account arising from the “sustaining stories of the cultures we have cast as outside reason.” Plumwood writes that “[i]f we are to survive into a liveable future, we must take into our own hands the power to create, restore and explore different stories, with new main characters, better plots, and at least the possibility of some happy endings.”

See Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 196.

⁵ Additionally, Paula Gunn Allen refers to the “true creatix” as female. Primary power, or “the power to make and to relate,” belongs, she argues, “to the preponderantly feminine powers of the universe.” See Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon, 1992) 14-17.

⁶ Plumwood explains that “cultural feminism,” also called “radical feminism,” perceives the “origin point of the distortion of culture” in its “denial of the feminine” (30). In attempting to “resolve the problem of the inferiorisation of what that culture has denied,” radical feminist opponents of the dominant culture many times use “the reversal strategy,” which is “giving a positive value to what was previously despised and excluded—the feminine and the natural” (30-31). However, a problem exists in the use of the “reversal strategy,” Plumwood argues, in that it often only reaffirms the distortions prevalent in dualistic thinking, for “it reactively preserves and maintains the original dualism in the character of what is now affirmed” (32). Embracing an ecological feminist position, Plumwood contends that the diverse experiences of women should take precedence over male authority in terms of recognizing human identity “as continuous with, not alien from, nature” (36). She writes:

To the extent that women’s lives have been lived in ways which are less directly oppositional to nature than those of men, and have involved different and less oppositional practices, qualities of care and kinds of selfhood, an ecological feminist position could and should privilege some of the experiences and practices of women over those of men as a source

of change without being committed to any form of naturalism. (35)

In privileging women's experiences, the ecological feminist position should reject the "master model," a concept introduced by Donna Haraway in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991) and by Nancy C.M. Hartsock in "Foucault On Power: A Theory for Women," in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990). The rejection of the "master model" would be equivalent to an attempt—or attempts—to reconceive dualistic constructions. Clarifying her position, Plumwood writes: "A major point of the critical ecological feminist position I shall develop is to argue that we should reject the master model and conceive human identity in less dualistic and oppositional ways; such a critical ecofeminism would conclude that both women and men are part of both nature and culture" (35). See Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 19-40, 200n15.

⁷ The dictionary, says Daly, "in spite of itself, transmits [the] call [of the wild]." It assists in determining new constructs that are not "timid" when definitions are used to "aid us in hearing/remembering the call of our wild." Thus, in contrast to timid constructs, newly created spaces, "like the new semantic/cognitive/symbolic spaces—will be dis-covered/created further out/in the Otherworld Journey." See Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon, 1978, 1990) 342-43.

⁸ P.L. Travers, the author of *Mary Poppins*, refers to a writer as a "necessary lunatic" in describing an author's relationship to what I am calling the "wild." See P.L. Travers, "On Not Writing for Children," *Children's Literature* 4 (1975): 15-22.

⁹ Connected with the idea of legend arising from history is the notion that a story is “popularly repeated” about a person of “fame or distinction,” whether the story is “true or fictitious.” Thus, the *OED* relates the repetition of a story in history to the phrase: “a legend in one’s (own) lifetime.” It is interesting to note that “fame or distinction” lifts a person out of history into legend or the ahistorical, whereas Peter Brooks’s presentation of the “buried” utterance, “entombed without a listener,” is a “nightmare,” whose historical record says it is dead. Where, we might ask, is the middle ground? See the etymology of “legend, *n.*” in the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed., 1989: Oxford University Press, 2009 <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>, and Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 1984) 221-222.

¹⁰ See “legend, *n.*” in the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed., 1989: Oxford University Press, 2009 <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>.

¹¹ One of the definitions of “wild” in the *OED* is: “of strange aspect; fantastic in appearance.” The definitions for “wild,” as well as all subsequent definitions cited from the *OED*, are from the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed., 1989 and/or Draft Revision Mar. 2009: Oxford University Press, 2009 <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>.

¹² Here, I am drawing upon the theoretical work of Julia Kristeva in particular, and the terms I’m referring to will bear more careful consideration later on.

¹³ Klein writes that “the anxiety arising from the perpetual activity of the death instinct, though never eliminated, is counteracted and kept at bay by the power of the life instinct.” See Melanie Klein, “On the Theory of Anxiety and Guilt,” *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Joan Riviere (1948; London: Hogarth, 1952) 291.

¹⁴ Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, *Mark Twain: Mississippi Writings*, ed. Guy Cardwell (1883; New York: Library of America, 1982) 284.

¹⁵ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1977) 35.

Introduction

*Whenever the moon and stars are set,
Whenever the wind is high,
All night long in the dark and wet,
A man goes riding by,
Late in the night when the fires are out,
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,
And ships are tossed at sea,
By, on the highway, low and loud,
By at the gallop goes he.
By at the gallop he goes, and then
By he comes back at the gallop again.*

-- Robert Louis Stevenson¹

Robert Louis Stevenson's collection of poems, *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885), is dedicated to his nurse, Alison Cunningham, who, he writes, "led me through the uneven land." The dedicatory poem that is at the front of the collection asks for all who read Stevenson's rhymes to hear the voice of his nurse, a voice "As made my childish days rejoice!"—a voice that belonged to a comforter, an "angel," "second Mother," "first Wife," guide, and storyteller.² A touching dedication, Stevenson's rhyme also makes a reader wonder about that voice of Cunningham's, especially of the whisperings, cadences, rising tones, and, perhaps, cackles of a night-time guide and storyteller who, through her tales, inspired Stevenson to write verses of his own, including "Windy Nights," a striking, mysterious description of a rider galloping about on the highway under the moon and stars while trees cry and ships are tossed at sea. Appealing to a child's natural desire to want to know *why*, Stevenson writes: "Why does

he gallop and gallop about?” Why, indeed? Is he, perhaps, being chased by a headless horseman, like Washington Irving’s Ichabod Crane? Is he on a midnight ride, like Paul Revere, determined to deliver a message? Why does he go and come back again? But, most of all, why is he out riding about on a wet, windy night, when the sea is stormy and the trees are making an outcry? Is he, perhaps, confined to that particular highway? Can he only ride at night under the moon? And then, too, what, specifically, is the “uneven land” that Cunningham led Stevenson through? Although Stevenson writes that Cunningham lay awake for long nights for his “unworthy sake,” which suggests those times when he was ill, the “uneven land” is also clearly connected to childhood itself—an uneven terrain, but also the atmosphere of the “bright, fireside, nursery clime,” where tales, and adventure, reign.

Stevenson, of course, was a master of the adventure tale—especially the *boy’s* adventure tale—and he was keenly attentive to the call of the sea and the other wild murmurings of the wind, forests, inlets, and rivers. He knew how to draw a child into a tale, making the story, scene, details memorable and “real.” “Can you hear,” he seems to be asking, “the rider approach and pass? Do you hear the sound of the horse’s galloping hooves on the highway fade and disappear? And now, what is this? Can you hear it? Through the howling wind, the horse and rider return! Why is he returning? Did he forget something? Why, you ask? Well, now, that’s a good question.” And so, we have the storyteller, and with the storyteller, we have mystery, and with the mystery, we have, well, a nurse, a voice, a fireside, a windy night, the moon, our imaginations, and, as Wolfgang Iser would have it, the experience of a new reality.

Although some critics find Iser's work involving reception theory to be a theoretical restatement of a "traditional view of the function of literature" as a whole, where reading is assumed to be a form of self-realization, his work serves as more than a mere reminder of the dynamics that occur between the text and a reader.³ That is because Iser does not present, as a given, the ability for self-realization that may occur as a result of the reading of a text. Describing the reading of a literary text as an adventure, Iser, in "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" (1974), explains that a reader "provides the unwritten part of the text," and "it is only by leaving behind that familiar world of his own experience that the reader can truly participate in the adventure the literary text offers him" (282). Iser also explains that the reader is involved in a "paradox" in that he cannot experience a new reality without, as it were, looking into the mirror. New experience presupposes the revelation of oneself, but such a revelation can occur only when the "new" is given room to take on a form of life that endures (276). The literary text can *offer* the *possibility* for a reader to adventure into a fresh self-revelation, but to assume that such revelation occurs regularly, or in terms of a traditional understanding of how interaction with a text operates, is to assume too much. To arrive at an experience that is new, a reader must negate what Iser calls the "familiar": "[I]t is only when we have outstripped our preconceptions and left the shelter of the familiar that we are in a position to gather new experiences. . . . Once the reader is entangled, his own preconceptions are continually overtaken" (290). Iser thus indicates that involvement in a literary adventure through the action of reading is limited when preconceptions block entanglement with the text. Any new experiences afforded by a text require a willingness to be enmeshed in the intricacies and obscurities of its plot or

plots, where a reader's imagination only "provides the unwritten part of the text" through the continual desire to abandon predisposed thought. The reader can thus only supply missing gaps in the text by acquiescing to "gaps" in his or her thought presumptions, and the willingness to do so must not only be ongoing but must also be sustained.

The reason why Iser focuses on the idea of sustainability is that he connects the reader's new "reality"—when it so happens that a reader is able to achieve a new experience—to life outside of the text. He begins "The Reading Process" by referring to Virginia Woolf's study of Jane Austen, where, explains Woolf, Austen's greatness can be seen as a result of her ability to motivate a reader "to supply what is not there. What she offers is, apparently, a trifle, yet is composed of something that expands in the reader's mind and endows with the most enduring form of life scenes which are outwardly trivial" (qtd. in Iser 275-76). Certain "trivial" scenes, then, achieve a form of life that endures in a reader's mind and can be carried outside of the text—beyond it—possessing "far greater significance than it might have seemed to possess on its own." However, observes Iser, "[w]hat constitutes this form is never named." Nameless, the enduring form of life that arises out of a text involves "the interaction between text and reader," but it is an interaction that involves "turns and twists," and continual variations of thought (276).

Such "turns and twists" are prevalent, too, in Stanley Fish's theories of interpretation, for Fish links reading—and subsequently interpretation—to art that is "kinetic." "Kinetic art," he says, does not lend itself to a static interpretation because it refuses to stay still and does not let you stay still either," which results in being "aware

of yourself.” Although a book may appear to be a “stationary object,” literature is, Fish indicates, “a kinetic art. . . . Somehow when we put a book down, we forget that . . . *it* was moving . . . and forget too that *we* were moving with it” (43; emphases in original).

Outside of literature, visual art that is kinetic requires moving parts that are constructed so as to present a new or unusual perception of time. George W. Rickey explains that artists involved in presenting a “limitless dimension to traditional art” through kinetic art create, for instance, spokes of wheels in motion, images that move “rhythmically on a screen,” “machines in diverse forms, driven usually by electric motors, with gears, cams, cranks, and levers pushing, pulling, lifting, turning,” and wind-driven mobiles. With persistent repetition, many of these artistic creations proclaim “their own uselessness.” What is important in the movement is not its usefulness, but its engagement with the viewer. Sometimes it’s the movement of the artistic piece and other times it’s the movement of the viewer that “produces some kind of intense sensation or startling revelation” about space and perspective (220, 222-23). Of course, one of the best literary references to a kinetic, “wind-driven” apparatus is Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poetic articulation of the eolian harp—a box with strings drawn across its open ends so that when placed in a breeze, the currents of air that move through it make music. In his poem, “The Eolian Harp,” Coleridge purposely draws the reader into recognizing the harp as a personified being, where it lilts forth a “soft floating witchery of sound / As twilight Elfins make” and carries “Rhythm in all thought.” “What if,” the poet asks, we think of “all of animated nature”—which would include human as well as non-human forms—as “organic Harps diversely fram’d, / That tremble into thought” when a great “intellectual breeze, / At once the Soul of each,”

sweeps over them?⁴ To ask the question in another way, what if the articulations of narrative and story-telling—the turns and twists in literature—are conceived of as moving breezes that pass over and through consciousness? If literature is kinetic art, as Fish maintains, then the words on the page mean nothing unless there is movement and animation—that is, motion that only creates “music” or sound or communicable meaning when the stringed-boxes-that-are-us are understood as being part of the narrative. Indeed, if literature is kinetic art, then we must be not only a *part* of the narrative but a required element, for the “music” is only transmitted through the presence of the “box.” The poet, novelist or storyteller breathes forth a tale, but each of us as “Harps diversely fram’d” animate or give life to those “breezes” as our own personal “strings” interpret—or move rhythmically with—the wafting whiffs of air, or the gusts, that stir us. Rickey indicates that with kinetic art, the movement of the viewer elicits, many times, a “startling revelation.” In terms of a text as kinetic art producing a revelation, Iser uses the image not of an eolian harp or of a wind-driven mobile, but of a mirror, which may seem to be a stationary object but is, figuratively, when we look into it, kinetic. A mirror reflects back to us our process of becoming, occasionally causing an “intense sensation or startling revelation” about ourselves as we recognize alterations and discover the new, different, or perhaps even strange “narratives” that are about to or have been taking place in our lives. When he describes the text as acting as a “kind of mirror,” Iser means that a reader “reveals aspects of himself” while simultaneously discovering that “he must think in terms of experiences different from his own” (281-82). In other words, Iser views a reader’s reception of a text as twofold and as dynamic—paradoxically twofold in that self-realization is achieved by looking outside

of the self, and dynamic in that the “interaction between text and reader” possesses the potential to endure and “lead to something being formulated in us” (294).

One cannot think of the concept of the self in connection with a “mirror image” without considering the theories of Jacques Lacan. It is important to note, however, that Iser’s conception of the “kind of mirror” that the text functions as deviates from a Lacanian apperception in that, with Lacan, the mirror is defined as a certain “stage”—that is, when an infant begins to disassociate itself from its mother and view itself in relation to another, separate image. In “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” (1949), Lacan explains that the mirror stage begins the process of representation, where a child learns to fill in the gap between itself and an other with words, or with language, and so enters into “socially elaborated situations” (444), but the terms Lacan uses to describe the mirror-stage and its revelations are terms of terminations. There is a moment, he says, when the “mirror-stage comes to an end,” when the “specular *I*” becomes the “social *I*” (444). That “end” produces a “mirage” of an external form that “fixes” itself “in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him” (442). The perception of the *I* of the subject becomes “that apparatus for which every instinctual thrust constitutes a danger,” and the characteristic formations of the *I* are marked by “inertia” (444-45). What “constitutes a danger” thus becomes a rival of the would-be superior manifestation of the ego, and that rival, as Kirsten Campbell explains it, must somehow become, for the ego, as inert or as fixed as the ego itself. Explaining Lacan’s epistemologies as they relate to the mirror stage, and referring especially to the “theoretical complexity” (31) of Lacan’s *Écrits* (1966), Campbell writes:

The genesis of the ego in a series of alienating and objectifying identifications gives it a paranoiac structure. The ego perceives its objects in relation to itself in a “formal stagnation,” which constitutes the ego and its objects “with attributes of permanence, identity and of substantiality.” The “formal stagnation” that Lacan describes is the capture of the self and its objects in the imaginary order, such that the ego gives its objects and its self form, fixity and presence. The ego posits itself as having mastery and knowledge of its others and its objects, which it perceives as frozen reflections of its self. (36)

For Lacan, then, self-realization involves terminations, fixities, rivalries, and fears. As Kelly Oliver clarifies, the gap the infant recognizes “between itself and the other opens up the possibility of being cut off, castrated, from the source of its satisfactions” (111n2). The Lacanian mirror stage, then, which begins the process of representation, is a process that is ultimately inert—where the gap that could represent dynamic interaction, instead, dominated by a fear of failure of a flawlessly intact mastery of self, shuts out new experience in favor of the mental “structures of fortified works” (Lacan 444) and so eschews entanglements in order to give the imaginary order of the ego a frozen, “alienating identity” (Lacan 444) that communicates aggressively with an other and others perceived as similarly frozen.

Iser, emphasizing the entanglement with the literary text—where its gaps and mirror-like function provide potential for a mysterious, nameless, but nonetheless creative form of life that he views as a dynamic interaction between reader and text—encourages an understanding of self-revelation, as it emerges from the experience of

reading, as an adventure. However, he also points out that the text as adventure is not always possible. When “frozen” conceptions are not abandoned, then interaction between the reader and the text, where “the possibility that we may . . . discover what had previously seemed to elude our consciousness” (294), is unrealizable. When the mirror-image is a literary text, where a reader not only participates in the text by filling in gaps but also participates through a continual abandoning of the “fortified works” of the fixed mirage of the *I*, then adventure can begin. Words, rather than acting as a communicative link between separate, inert, fixed rivals become, instead, forms of life entangled in thought that is at once losing a masterful sense of self-perception while it allows expanding, creative energies to formulate other live forms of expression. Thus, the experience of the literary adventure—which, I would add, involves not only the reading of stories but the listening to verbal storytelling—involves a willingness to free-fall, to let go of comfortable, known, “fortified” experience. It involves a journey into uneven lands. It involves risk. It involves play. Ultimately, it involves a venture into the wild.

But what, exactly, does it mean to venture into the “wild” terrain of the literary text? I begin with Stevenson’s poem, “Windy Nights,” in particular because it evokes the restlessness of the rider—a rider who initially appears to ride by with purpose and direction, but who returns. His returning, ceaseless galloping takes place at a crucial time: when “the trees are crying aloud.” The “scene” of time portrayed in the poem is not relegated to a moment only, for the rider gallops “[a]ll night long”—appearing to be caught up, on land, in the experience of the ships as they are tossed at sea, unable to proceed forward on the highway. Like the tossed ships, the rider can be perceived as

being in a state of freefall, unable to plan or navigate his journey, having to rely upon the forces of the wind and upon any guidance the cries of the trees might relate—cries that appear to distract him from his venture. The experience of being distracted—of being unable to complete a task—is a circumstance that occurs oftentimes in wakefulness, but when it occurs in the dream-state, the unsettled experience of displacement tends to be sustained by a different engagement with non-normative controls and upon an altered impression of rationality than is experienced in wakefulness. The rider in Stevenson’s poem is suspended, as it were, in that peculiar realm of the dream-state and cannot actively pursue his journey. He is, I would say, at the point of hearing the call of the “wild,” and just as no charts or maps can assist a navigator in a ship that is being tossed at sea, so is Stevenson’s rider, lost in a dream-like, frenzied gallop that is both directionless and deprived of an unambiguous mission, beginning to lose his world.

The phrase, “the call of the wild,” tends to evoke images of a howling wolf due to Jack London’s 1903 novel about a domesticated dog, Buck, that sheds its domestication in order to lead, as its alpha male, a wolf pack. Referring to London’s use of dreams in *The Call of the Wild*, Donald E. Pease directs our attention to the narrator’s ability to read the “inner speech” of the protagonist, the dog (15). Through the use of free indirect discourse, the narrator portrays the substance of Buck’s dreams, dreams which “give Buck access to the inner life of objects and beckon him to a nature other than that which culture imagines itself capable of governing” (35). In other words, a governing control of situations as well as an *imagined* governance are not readily available or active in the dream-state. That which “beckons” does so with twists and turns, providing “access” to that which is other than culture, but not direct nor rationally-

perceived access. Like Woolf, who sees in Austen's "trivial" scenes something which endows the reader's mind "with the most enduring form of life," and like Iser, who describes the reading experience as a "paradox" where something can be "formulated in us" only when preconceived formulations are abandoned, London, in *The Call of the Wild*, also conceives of an artist's work as emerging from a "paradox of living," where a moment of ecstasy "comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive. This ecstasy, this forgetfulness of living, comes to the artist, caught up and out of himself in a sheet of flame" (22). In the story, such a moment of ecstasy is translated to an experience of Buck's, when he is running through the trees under the moonlight, being "mastered" not by a unified mirage of a Lacanian ego separate and distinct in its terminal perceptions, but instead, while "sounding the depths of his nature . . . that were deeper than he, going back to the womb of Time," he is "mastered by the sheer surging of life, the tidal wave of being, the perfect joy of each separate muscle, joint, and sinew in that it was everything that was not death, that it was aglow and rampant, expressing itself in movement, flying exultantly under the stars" (22). Buck's paradoxical "moment" of intense life in forgetfulness, of being both "caught up and out of himself," is an expression of an intimation of the wild, where the "surging of life" rolls in with a nameless signification and, like the white rabbit Buck is chasing, flashes on ahead into the moonlight.

London's story is helpful in understanding what it means to venture into the "wild" terrain of the literary text in that the narrator catches the moving energy of wild experience, relating the mysterious communication of the wild as it expresses itself in flashes of consciousness and in the dream-state. However, his portrayal of Buck at the

end of the story, where the protagonist becomes the great “alpha” male, leading the pack in rivalry and revenge against violent civilization, departs from a consciousness of the wild, for London does not sustain what Woolf calls the “trivial.” Instead, Buck wins “mastership” over the pack and becomes a “gloriously coated” wolf with prints “greater than the prints of any wolf” that are found where slain dogs and tribesmen, their throats cruelly slashed, are mournfully discovered by the men and women of the Yeehat tribe (54-55). Rather than attempting to suspend and sustain those paradoxical moments of intense life in forgetfulness, of Buck’s being both “caught up and out of himself,” London, instead, turns to concepts and depictions that are traditionally found in legends, where the protagonist, rather like Lacan’s ego-mirage, “fixes” itself as larger than the “specular *I*” and, in Lacan’s words, “in contrast with the turbulent movements the subject feels are animating him.” Denying the feelings Buck has shared with men in civilization, the converted dog-as-wolf becomes marked by inertia, repeating the same vengeful acts, locked in fixity, rivalry, and fear. Leading the pack, “leaping gigantic above his fellows,” and howling loudly with “his great throat a-bellow” (55), Buck, by the end of London’s story, fails in his ability to *hear* the call of the wild.

In contrast to the conclusion of *The Call of the Wild*, Stevenson, in “Windy Nights,” combines mobility with suspension, accentuating that point, or moment, when the call of the wild is about to be heard—where inertia gives way to being, as London put it, “caught up and out of himself.” Stevenson presents a “scene,” seemingly trivial in a child’s collection of verses, that involves a certain positioning of the moon and stars. They are “set,” but are not inert, for they are representative of those moments of intimation, or of what London calls “ecstasy,” that reveal themselves not once or twice,

but many times, for ears that hear the call of the wild cannot forecast the occurrence of such moments but know that they can be and are capable of being known again.

Stevenson begins the poem with the word “whenever,” which suggests that the moon and stars occasionally act as signals, seemingly moving to their “places” in order to observe—and perhaps permit—the experience of the rider on the wet, windy night.

With the wind high and the fires out, the moon and stars provide the only light for the galloping rider on the “dark and wet” night—distant beacons that seem to perplex more than they provide guidance. Yet more than seeming to portray bewilderment, the rider, “low and loud,” returns, as if he cannot leave the poised, beckoning “set” scene, but also, perhaps, as if he *desires not* to leave the scene—drawn by the impassioned cry of the trees, possibly abandoning his journey in response to the call of the wild, a call that is not always clearly heard or understood, but which possesses a mysterious, animating influence over those who hearken to its utterance.

Stevenson’s “Windy Nights” thus provides a “scene”—a metaphoric picture—not only of the distraught, distracted, sinuous dream-state, but of the attentive, animated response to a call that is disassociated from traditional, conventional summons within the sheltered, recognizable world of experience. In other words, Stevenson’s scene is helpful in supplying a signifier for the call of the wild, most importantly because the call itself must be inferred, for nowhere in the poem is it made clear that the rider hears a call. Nevertheless, the scene *suggests* that the rider is drawn—in a recurring, returning gallop—to something beyond his control and beyond the guidance of the customary “highway” or path.

To extend the metaphor of the wild “scene” of “Windy Nights” to Iser’s claim that a reader must leave behind the familiar world of experience in order to participate in the literary adventure is a step towards grasping alternative ways of viewing, of looking back at, that “familiar world.” In other words, Stevenson’s poem portrays the restless movement of a man on a horse as he struggles with the “highway” that has been the customary path for those who traverse it. To leave behind the accustomed path is to risk journeying into unknown spaces, and the literary adventure provides the means for the trek into “uneven lands.” What makes a text “uneven,” generally, involves the complications that arise when traditional moral codes are drawn with motley hues—that is, made multifarious and complex. In her extensive, comparative study of the novel, Margaret Anne Doody, in *The True Story of the Novel* (1996), writes that the “Ancient Novel is—as the Novel has forever been—interested in moral life, in relations between one person and another, in trying to evolve some new responses or definitions” (170). Although Doody is concerned particularly with the novel, other literary genres, such as the short story or dramaturgy, also pursue the arousal of “new responses or definitions” of established codes. While some texts may “outline” a new path, works that invoke the “wild” many times do not provide a clear-cut method for re-envisioning alternative realities. Instead, they express *intimations* of the wild, in order to draw readers or listeners into the experience of the wild, so that the artistic rendition—the literary piece—might provide the means of reinterpreting reality based on the unstructured, “uneven” consciousness of the wild. We may thus envision a wild text as a winding path carved artistically in the wilderness, in arabesque-fashion, seemingly leading to some termination, as all texts must. However, what a wild text does is to stress the possibility

that the path might be interrupted, a traveler/character might hear something and move in a different direction, a trivial moment might change the course of action down or up yet another circuitous path, so that each pause and turn becomes a new “scene” that, to use Woolf’s words, “expands in a reader’s mind and endows with the most enduring form of life.” In other words, what is foremost in a wild text is not so much the way the plot is constructed so as to move us from a beginning, to a middle, and finally to a well-constructed end. Instead, the wild text’s significant characteristic is the ability to convey the experience of anticipating another “scene” or moment that provides recognition of the wild’s moving force as it traverses the paths of plot. The wild is thus sustained in wild narratives not because it is *consistently* present but because a reader learns to recognize its force and anticipate its reappearance in what is generally viewed as trivial or as simple and therefore unimportant and unconnected to a larger, rational, traditional code. Because the simple and trivial are commonly glossed over, the wild’s emergence in and through such moments seems incongruous, for a reader does not expect to be arrested at such a juncture. A wild text, emphasizing the unstructured, “uneven” consciousness that is necessary for alternative thought, is thus able to address morality without providing a rigidly structured moral or, indeed, without *overtly* stressing a tidy, cut-and-dried moral system. It relies on the reader to contribute those entangling, non-fortified, non-inert emotions and rhythms that convey possibilities of thought and care that extend beyond rivalry, fear, and distinguishable, straightforward, stagnating missions.

When a moral code is drawn with motley hues, instead of with sharp dark and light contrasts, complexity emerges due to the portrayed elaborations. A view by one of

Edgar Allan Poe's characters is helpful here, in terms of understanding that the muddling of set codes does not imply, in terms of wild thinking, the abandonment of choices that lead to life and its sustenance. In "The Domain of Arnheim, or The Landscape Garden," Ellison, who possesses a "contempt of ambition" (476), conceives of a grand landscaping project, whereby, through his artistic conceptions, the natural landscape of Arnheim is transformed into the magical. In explaining his endeavor before he begins it, Ellison uses the image of a terrace as an element in a garden to describe the union of art with nature and the moral aspect that is involved. A landscaped garden is partly pleasing to the eye, he says, and it is also "partly moral. A terrace, with an old moss-covered balustrade, calls up at once to the eye the fair forms that have passed there in other days. The slightest exhibition of art is an evidence of care and human interest" (481). Nature and art together, for Ellison, create the experience of the new. A writer, for example, may personally experience intimations of the wild, but when the wild is woven into a text in a manner that illustrates its articulations, in an artistic attempt to show others how the wild may communicate, then its rhythms acquire a furthering of significance. To the narrator, Ellison remarks: "[Y]ou will understand that I reject the idea, here expressed, of recalling the original beauty of the country. The original beauty is never so great as that which may be introduced" (481). When Ellison undertakes his landscaping project, he does not merely create a garden surrounding a terrace. He takes great pains to conceal his art under the magnificence of ravines, with walls rising to elevations of a hundred and fifty feet, towering trees, and draperies of foliage and flower blossoms. The windings of the channel he transfigures cause a traveler to become lost. "The thought of nature still remained," writes the narrator, "but her character seemed to have undergone

modification, there was a weird symmetry, . . . a wizard propriety in these her works” (485). Nature, or the “original beauty,” through Ellison’s conceptions and endeavors, is “introduced” in a new, fresh way so that it appears to be the work, “conjointly, of the Sylphs, of the Fairies, of the Genii, and of the Gnomes” (488). In other words, something is introduced from the outside of the original design or scheme—made active by Ellison’s imagination—which creates a new “weird symmetry” that communicates through a different, better social interconnection—better because the alienated, Lacanian ego, instead of remaining inert and separated in its “captured” state of the “imaginary order”—to return to Campbell’s words—conceives of a new plot that conjectures beyond origins—that is, beyond the set “mirror stage”—in order to communicate on a different plane involving a different social exchange, while at the same time working with and within the “language” of origins, which, in Ellison’s case, is nature as it presented itself before its transformation into Arnheim.

Ellison’s retreat into the background as “creator” of the landscape allows the “character” of nature to be modified, Poe’s narrator explains. But it is really incorrect to call Ellison a “creator” in the large, god-like sense of the word, for he is dependent upon the original landscape, and his participation as artist involves a re-conception of the “original beauty” where, not Ellison, but the new landscape that is introduced becomes the communicative agent. Ellison does not disappear, completely, but his efforts to draw a visitor’s attention to the mysterious communication of the landscape become understood as a social endeavor, whereby Ellison’s “creation” is not solely his own, but the work, “conjointly, of the Sylphs, of the Fairies, of the Genii, and of the Gnomes.” The “original” is transformed not to *negate* the original, but to introduce and draw

attention to its complexities—to mystery as a form of communication involving unwaning interchange.

What Poe does through Ellison, then, is to draw a reader away from a stagnant view of origins. The focus on origins in psychoanalytic studies has caused scholars such as Griselda Pollack, Susan Siegfried, and Kathleen O’Grady, among others, to pursue the reasons why that focus attracts so much scrutiny and study.⁵ Julia Kristeva, whose theoretical engagement with language and identity politics involves a consistent engrossment in the subject of beginnings, has addressed such inquiries about the examination of origins. Origins, she says, are “one of the fundamental questions of metaphysics that cannot be entirely avoided in linguistics or psychoanalysis” (qtd. in Pollack 9). However, Kristeva’s conceptions of origins, or beginnings, as they relate to a subject, differ from static views that rely on a singular occurrence—or “stage” in the case of Lacan—in order to explain subsequent experience. Kristeva’s apperceptions are drawn from the example of maternity, where the semiotic element—that is, “drives as they make their way into signification”—is not conceived of as a rival manifestation in terms of Lacan’s symbolic order of language and the social realm, but as “dialectical tension” (Oliver 101). As Kelly Oliver explains, Kristeva “argues that maternity calls into question the boundary between culture and nature [and] . . . uses maternity as an example of an experience that calls into question any notion of a unified subject. Maternity becomes a prime example of what Kristeva calls a ‘subject-in-process,’” illustrating the ability of the semiotic—signification that is correlative with rhythm and tone—to move “both inside and beyond the [Lacanian] Symbolic order” (100, 101). As maternity is a “subject-in-process,” so, too, is language, which is connected with the

Symbolic (the capital “S” is in reference to Lacan’s theory of language acquisition) and the social order. Thus, Oliver elucidates, “Kristeva does not see the social as an immovable structure” (103). While attempting to arrive at signs, explains Kristeva, “we arrive at emotions, at sensations, at drives. . . . This is something unnameable. . . . I am interested in language [*langage*], and in the other side of language which is filtered inevitably by language and yet is not language.” She is occupied, that is, with addressing that “other side”—that rhythm which courses through the semiotic and is “irreducible to language” (qtd. in Pollock 9).

That which is “language and yet is not language”—which is “something unnameable”—emerges rather like the mysterious communicative element that Poe addresses in “The Domain of Arnheim.” The narrator, describing the experience of a visitor to Arnheim, explains that in the journey, the visitor is transported out of the social realm:

But here the voyager quits the vessel which has borne him so far, and descends into a light canoe of ivory, stained with arabesque devices in vivid scarlet, both within and without, . . . but no oarsman or attendant is to be seen. The guest is bidden to be of good cheer. . . . The larger vessel disappears, and he is left alone in the canoe, which lies apparently motionless in the middle of the lake. (486)

The canoe *appears* motionless at first, but it is not. The adventurer, contemplating what direction to proceed in, “becomes aware of a gentle movement in the fairy bark. . . . It advances with a gentle but gradually accelerated velocity, while the slight ripples it creates seem to break about the ivory in the divinest melody—seem to offer the only

possible explanation of the soothing yet melancholy music for whose unseen origin the bewildered voyager looks around him in vain” (486-87). Never lifting the “paddle of satin-wood” in the canoe, the journeyer is guided forward, through no effort of his own, in a steady advancement, towards new forms of communication, where, for example, he is confronted with a “gush of entrancing melody,” with “an oppressive sense of a strange sweet odor,” and with a “dream-like intermingling to the eye of tall slender Eastern trees” intertwined with “lines of silver streamlets.” The narrator seems to be separated from social interaction—from the Symbolic in the form of the larger inhabited vessel that leaves him—yet he is not separated from the social—from, we could say, Kristeva’s moveable semiotic—for he encounters a magical architectural work, “upspringing confusedly from amid all” and embellished with “oriels, minarets, and pinnacles,” sustained in mid-air (488). Ellison’s notion of “original beauty”—which we could say is Lacan’s visible, unified mirage of identity-in-language as it separates itself during the mirror stage—acquires new significance through an element that is *introduced*, which is associated with intermingling melodies, aromas, trees, streamlets and edifices that communicate, through a “weird symmetry,” evidence, to use Ellison’s words, “of care and human interest.” The architectural construction, suspended magically in mid-air, is a pictorial illustration of what Kristeva describes as “the other side of language” that is filtered by language and “yet is not language”—but with a difference. Calling it “the semiotic in relation to the symbolic,” Kristeva seeks out its mystery in love, abjection, and horror (qtd. in Pollock 9). Although Poe addresses love, abjection, and horror in other tales and poems, in “The Domain of Arnheim,” the mysterious force of communication is connected not only with the transmission of varied emotion, but with

the transmission of a rhythm or melody of sapient conveyance, where “weird symmetry” is akin to labyrinthine interchanges of *estimable* regard, and where the interchange of *wonder* requires the presence of a “paddle of satin-wood”—that is, of language—but not its direct use.

When Poe transfers the voyager from the larger, peopled keel—that representing the Symbolic or social realm—to the canoe, he places the journeyer in a vessel that is “stained with arabesque devices in vivid scarlet,” which suggests that the canoe is a type of body, possessing scarlet “veins” that transport the flow of blood—the indicator of life—in mysterious ways in order to provide sustained life for the body. The hidden workings of the physical body thus become a metaphor for enigmatic communications. Just as our heart pumps and blood flows underneath our skin without our thinking about their movement, so do other forms of communication—possessing a social intercourse and conviviality that is unnameable in language and the Symbolic order—take place. Although the voyager is lost in a strange, labyrinthine place and is left to pursue his journey alone, guided by the canoe, he is connected both with the new social realm—where sylphs, fairies, genii, and gnomes participate in the construction of thought—and with the “original” social order of the keel. Those on the keel bid their “guest” to “be of good cheer” (486). The Symbolic order, or language as it is expressed customarily, is, in Poe’s rendition, a hospitable form of communication. Undeniably, the expression of language in culture is necessary and of a certainty, but Poe’s story suggests that the Symbolic order is secondary to the newly introduced wonderment of the communication and guidance that is unnameable, arabesque-like in its winding depths and movements, and most frequently held in suspension—in air, as it were—waiting for a responsive

voyager who is unafraid of labyrinthine interchanges that lack the codification of the Symbolic order, who is able to suspend disbelief and communicate “paddle-less” or ungrounded, and who possesses ears that can hear the “divinest melody” in soft ripples on conversable streamlets.

Whereas Kristeva associates “that body of sensation and feeling irreducible to language” (qtd. in Pollock 9) to drives—whether they involve love or horror, seemingly antithetical in their articulation—Poe’s “The Domain of Arnheim” emphasizes communicative exchange with a music that is to be regarded not only as an “inner” drive, but as a vitality that is “introduced” from that which is *outer*—that which is sentiently interrelated to other mysterious, but social, forms. Poe’s conception of the unnameable music which communicates is similar to Shakespeare’s presentation of it in *The Merchant of Venice*. When Jessica remarks that “I am never merry when I hear sweet music,” Lorenzo responds: “The reason is, your spirits are attentive” (5.1.69-70). Regardless of the hardness or rage that “bellows” from within the inner regions of those possessing a “hot condition” of blood, a spirit that will attend to music can be transformed. Music, says Lorenzo, “for a time doth change” one’s very “nature”:

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov’d with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, strategems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music. (5.1.73-88)

Shakespeare combines the physical sound of music with the concept of “motions” of “spirit,” where an inner transformation is occasioned by a perception—or more appropriately by a hearing—of something that occurs from without, yet at the same time, works within. The music Lorenzo refers to is, we might say, language that can be heard and shared in the social realm, which is yet not language—for not all are capable of being transformed and, therefore, of being trusted, even if the same strains are heard by all.

Lorenzo’s understanding of the music that creates motion in the spirit—that *moves* the spirit by means of an outside medium—can be likened to Kristeva’s theoretical speculation about the *doubling* of language. Kristeva’s semiotic, explains Oliver, “is not strictly opposed to the Symbolic order. Rather, the semiotic is part of the Symbolic order. Which is not to say that it is confined within the Symbolic— . . . The semiotic moves both inside and beyond the Symbolic order” (101). This “doubling of language,” where neither the semiotic nor the Symbolic reign separately but interact so that the semiotic is both within and without the Symbolic, says Kristeva, “seems, at the moment, to be of more interest to women than to men” (qtd. in Pollock 9). That is because, Kristeva implies, the accepted explanations of origins are questioned by women. For example, she points out that “the intervention of Jacques Lacan, which was very significant and sane, was, none the less, reductive because he appeared to reduce everything to the logic of language” (qtd. in Pollock 9). Furthermore, she adds, “[w]e have to rid ourselves of the history of religion” since much has been disregarded. For instance, “the primary message of Thomas Aquinas: love the other as oneself” requires a reevaluation of narcissism before a subject can extend him or herself to be of service to

others. Loving oneself has to first mean “being settled within oneself, by delighting in oneself. Thus: heal your inner wounds which, as a result will render you then capable of effective social action, or intervention in the social plane with the other. Therefore, I would argue that we must heal our shattered narcissism before formulating higher objectives” (qtd. in Pollock 11). Kristeva thus takes fragmentation to a different level. Lacan’s mirage of the “whole,” united ego in the mirror—perceived as that “stage” when the subject recognizes himself in the Symbolic order as separate and fixed—is not simply a mirage. It is, as discerned by Kristeva, a *shattered* mirage. As such, Kristeva argues, “[w]e have to rid ourselves of the history of religion”—of traditions which present fixed, but shattered perceptions of origins—for, in the words of Shakespeare’s Lorenzo, that needful music—that “concord of sweet sounds”—has gone un-“marked” or unheeded, and so such histories and traditions cannot be trusted. The consciousness that pervades a “shattered narcissism” is too fixed, too immovable, in its fractured state. Such consciousness, if it *is* to formulate “higher objectives,” must first learn to pick up the strains of the wild.

What occasions the fixity of shattered perceptions of origins can be explained, in part, by Pierre Bourdieu’s conception of *habitus*. The habitus, as Bourdieu defines it, is “embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history” (56). It is a “durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations,” where its “practical sense . . . reactivates the sense objectified in institutions” (57). Various scholars of Bourdieu’s social theories have described the habitus in diverse ways. For Aaron V. Cicourel, it is the development of “long-lasting training consequences” (100). Rogers Brubaker explains that it is the habitus that “determines the kinds of problems

that are posed,” as well as “the *manner* in which problems are posed, explanations constructed, and instruments employed” (213; emphasis in original). The habitus is generative, he clarifies, in “that it generates practices in an unconscious, unintentional manner,” and it can be thought of as the “disposition to think in dispositional terms”—to see, for example, “the social world as structured by fundamental binary oppositions, or polarities—dominant and dominated, noble and base, male and female, right and left, inside and outside, and the like” (214, 220-21). The concept of habitus, summarizes James Collins, involves “‘embodied social structures’ that serve as principles [which] organiz[e] practice” (116). However, in terms of its improvisational aspect, the habitus is also a “site for struggles over . . . representation” in the social order. Representations, explains Collins, are “views taken from points in the social space. . . . They are closely related to schemes of perception founded in the habitus, which is itself formed at one ‘moment’ of the social space, but with trajectory effects that outlast the moment in which they were formed” (124). What outlasts the moment is the improvisation falling under regulation—a regulation which provides a reassuring sense of the Lacanian Symbolic order, for the Symbolic order itself, projected through the ego, is, as Judith Butler explains it, a “sedimented history.” The Lacanian ego, she clarifies, is established as a “relation” and involves “the cumulative history of such relations. As a result, the ego is . . . a sedimented history of imaginary relations. . . . In this sense, Lacan’s mirror . . . provides the *frame*, the *boundary* . . . for the projective elaboration of the ego itself” (“Lesbian Phallus” 158; emphases added). Just as any elaboration of the ego is bound within the frame of the mirage of the mirror image, so are the “trajectory effects” of momentary “schemes of perception” bound by the dispositions of the habitus.

In his influential work, *Of Grammatology*, Jacques Derrida argues that when the “rationality” that “governs a writing” is allowed to be “enlarged and radicalized,” then that transformed “rationality”—which, he points out, should be abandoned as the proper term for it—launches the “destruction, not the demolition but the de-sedimentation . . . of all the significations that have their source in that of the logos” (10). In a discussion about ontology in “Differance,” he points out why rationality—that is, thought that is “committed to the Greco-Western logos”—as it is enlarged, should be relinquished as a governing term. Ontological Being, he remarks, “has always made ‘sense,’ has always been conceived or spoken of as such, only by dissimulating itself in beings.” Differance, however, is “‘older’ than . . . the truth of Being” and derives its sense of being through play—that is, play “that has no sense and is not, a play that does not belong” (153-54). The de-sedimentation of the Greco-Western logos, then, occurs through a regard for differance—of Being that is not—which derives its sense of being (that is, its *non*-being) through play in and about a rationality that is not actually rationality when differance enlarges its borders. Not only history, but Being itself must be apprehended as unstable and nonsensical when the regulations that shape reason are allowed to be “radicalized” and viewed as foreign classifications. Through a mental process of approaching both ontological Being and history through de-sedimentation—or deconstruction—we discover that the idea of rationality itself loses the signification of what is deemed rational. History can then be viewed, as Butler explains it, as a narrative of “imaginary relations” that has been interpreted as what is so. A consciousness that de-sediments sedimented history is thus able to see history in a new light—as a big “as if” pattern that has taken hold, when many other “as if” possibilities have remained ignored or

unclaimed due to the accumulated, shared disposition that shies away from enlarging and abandoning familiar, fixed, conventional sense.

Bourdieu's most interesting speculation about the habitus is that it does possess an "as if" impression or stamp. "Everything takes place," he writes, "as if the *habitus* forged coherence and necessity out of accident and contingency; as if it managed to unify the effects of the social necessity undergone from childhood" (79). The habitus, in its similarity to the Lacanian ego, "posits itself," to return to Kirsten Campbell's elucidation, "as having mastery and knowledge of its others and its objects, which it perceives as frozen reflections of itself" (36). Just as the Lacanian perception of the *I* of the subject becomes "that apparatus for which every instinctual thrust constitutes a danger" (Lacan 445), so does the habitus protect itself from alteration by rejecting that which might question its unifying formula:

Early experiences have particular weight because the *habitus* tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information, if exposed to it accidentally or by force, and especially by avoiding exposure to such information. . . . Through the systematic "choices" it makes among the places, events and people that might be frequented, the *habitus* tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible, that is, a relatively constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions by offering the market most favourable to its products. (Bourdieu 60-61)

Bourdieu uses economic terms in order to stress the reliance of the habitus on its “pre-adapted” milieu because a reconstruction or alteration of its “accumulated information” which would not “market” its embodied history can thus be seen as non-profitable, and its rejection can therefore be justified.

In response to Bourdieu’s presentation of “the pre-given structuring of a situation,” James Collins, in “Determination and Contradiction,” argues that social contradictions, “in the realm of face-to-face interaction,” give rise to a needed “plurality of interpretations” (131). Hence, he maintains that “[w]e need to allow for dilemmas and intractable oppositions; for divided consciousness, not just dominated minds” (134). However, Collins’s notion of a “divided consciousness” still relies upon the habitus’s disposition for binary oppositions. In allowing for “intractable oppositions,” we may unprotect the habitus and insist that it not reject critical challenges, but allowing for “intractable oppositions” simply maintains the old dispositional formula of perceiving binary oppositions—“dominant and dominated, noble and base, male and female, right and left, inside and outside, and the like” (Brubaker 221)—as a functioning constant that privileges one side over the other within the habitus’ milieu. Allowing for opposition is not the same thing as allowing for further *possibility*.

There is a space, Bourdieu points out, where the dispositions built into the habitus are effectively challenged and where the habitus goes unprotected. Bourdieu finds this space in one exclusive place: “Only in imaginary experience (in the folk tale, for example), which neutralizes the sense of social realities, does the social world take the form of a universe of possibles equally possible for any possible subject” (64). Hence, Kristeva, holding a similar view, directs us to consider the female subject’s

experience within the Symbolic order as an illusory experience—one that is occupied in play—as she directs us to perceive the Symbolic order as a *shattered* mirage where a splintered narcissism is in need of health-giving powers.

Relating a controlling metaphor in fairy tale—that of the *magic mirror*—to the use of it in women’s recent autobiographical writing in particular, Elizabeth Wanning Harries, in “The Mirror Broken: Women’s Autobiography and Fairy Tales,” refers indirectly to Lacan and addresses the *problem* involved with attempting, in Kristeva’s words, to “heal our shattered narcissism.” Harries explains that “[o]ne could say that the controlling metaphor of recent women’s autobiographies is the *broken mirror*, the mirror that does not pretend to reflect subjectivities or lives as unified wholes. . . .

Autobiography, as we have long understood it, should be a serene and accurate reflection of a life.” However, all that an autobiographer “can do is attempt to reproduce the reflections in the broken shards of the autobiographical mirror” (110; emphasis in original). In that attempt, what has been emerging in women’s recent autobiographical writing is no direct, complete, unified narrative. Instead, “[t]here is no single story of individual growth and development but rather a tangle of stories caught up . . . in cultural currents and political realities that have yet to be described in any way that can contain or explain them.” Harries describes women’s autobiographical writing as a “tangle of stories caught up” in order to explain that such tangling is a result of the “puzzle of identity” where, she argues, “[f]ractured identities demand fractured forms” (110). Writing that is “caught up” in such a way is rather like Jack London’s presentation of Buck’s experience of being “caught up and out of himself,” where a “paradox” or a “puzzle” arises when one attempts to “sound the deeps” of one’s nature—discovering

intense life in forgetfulness and in the encounter with a mysterious, sonorous language, which is, in London's words about Buck, "deeper than he, going back to the womb of Time."

Hence, women who write about themselves, explains Harries, are faced with the "puzzle" of having to address "conflicting selves" (110). However, I would emphasize, such conflict is not between one version of a whole self and another version of a whole self. Nor is the conflict a battle between a mirage, conceived of as complete, of oneself and one's fragmented self. The entanglement is more complicated, and in addressing its intertwisting interconnections, women who encounter their "conflicting selves" are drawn into the adventure of *play*. Women, Kristeva points out, seem to be more interested in the "doubling of language" than men (qtd. in Pollock 9) due to the perception that stories of origins are not trustworthy, but also due to the connection between the "doubling of language" and the double negation involved in what Harries calls the "puzzle of identity." According to Kristeva, a young girl arrives at the understanding that there is a dissociation between the signifier (what Kristeva calls the "phallic Kairos") and the sensuous, which is "accompanied by the *belief* that the symbolic-phallic order is *illusory*" ("Experiencing" 33; emphases in original). A discrepancy arises when the girl *perceives* herself as disadvantaged, for "she is not the phallus." The feeling of deception

reactivates the *hallucination of past experiences* related to . . . sensuous experiences that either preceded the acquisition of language or that took place outside of language. This being the case, the discrepancy between what is perceived in the present, under the sway of the phallic Kairos, and

the hallucination of past perceptions, entails that the phallic monism that is assigned to the other (the man) that “I am not” thereby marks the being of the female subject with a negation: “I am not what is,” “I am, nonetheless, if only by sheer force of *not*.” The *extraneous* or *illusory* character of the phallus is perhaps another way of designating this double negation of “nonetheless” and “not.” (“Experiencing” 33; emphases in original)

Kristeva stresses the concept of the “extraneous” and “illusory” character of the phallus in order to draw attention, specifically, to the derivation of the term, “illusory,” whereby we learn (or remember) that the word originates from the Latin *ludere*, which means, “to play.” Because she knows there is “an undefinable, ineffable something else,” the female subject identifies her access to the phallic Kairos—that is, to the law, or to power—as a game. Kristeva clarifies that she does not mean that women automatically or consequently have a playful attitude about life, but that “women are able to keep on going . . . *because they don’t believe in it, they believe it’s an illusion*” (“Experiencing” 34; emphasis in original). The female subject, understanding that her identity involves a double negation—where “I am, nonetheless, if only by sheer force of *not*”—perceives her participation in the phallic order as “a case of play-acting, of make-believe, which, indeed, for the female-subject, is all the so-called truth of the signifier or of the subject-of-speech boils down to” (“Experiencing” 33-34). We may therefore understand that the Symbolic order is not a fixed mirage of wholeness, however adamantly it may assert itself as such. Rather, it is, in the perception of the female subject according to Kristeva, a continually shifting, illusory world of make-believe, even though it demands to be seen

as the signifier of language and of stable, reasonable, rational thought. Complicating the “phallic monism” that relies on one “moment” or “stage” to explain social identity and action, Kristeva’s explanation of both the female subject’s perception of “double negation” and her interest in the “doubling of language” exposes consciousness as perseveringly multifarious and prone to a willing responsiveness to an unnameable “something else” that guides play-acting in the Symbolic order. Kristeva, I would say, draws our attention to a consciousness that is wild.

That “something else,” or that unnameable “other,” tends to be lost or absent in the Symbolic order due to its non-stable, non-rational communications. Referring to the thinking that is upheld in western civilization as the “master narrative,” Carolyn Merchant explains that the consciousness that has dominated “Western history” is driven by “linearity.” Linearity, she says, is the “property of modernity itself. Mechanistic science, progress, and capitalism all draw power from the linear functions of mathematical equations. . . . [But] [t]o the extent that these linear [functions] intersect with a real material world, they refer to a limited domain only. . . . The world is more complex than we know or indeed can ever know” (53-54). The problem with linear thinking is that it is exclusionary. “Mathematical formalism,” Merchant points out, relies on the isolation of elements in order to focus on that which is “relevant” and so disregards “discordant harmonies” and “disorderly order” in favor of “comfortable predictability” (54, 87). The “master narrative” of the “intellectual fathers,” then, relies too heavily on “an historically associated, interlocking structure of dualities: subject and object, activity and passivity, male and female, and culture and nature” (60, 62). In a similar vein, calling the consciousness that has prevailed in western culture the

“universal mode” of knowledge, Corinne Kumar D’Souza indicates that under “this mode of knowledge, the dominant view has consistently weighted competition over cooperation, exploitation over conservation, rationality over intuition.” Thus, in order to offset the too overbearing story of the too linear, too rational “master narrative,” D’Souza suggests that we find “newer and richer perceptions of knowledge that are more complex, creative” (35). Merchant argues, correspondingly, that we need to recognize the “master narrative” *as* narrative—that ideology is a story, a “grand narrative . . . of which we are a part.” Ideology, she explains, is simply

a story told by people in power. Once we identify ideology as a story—powerful and compelling, but still only a story—we realize that by rewriting the story, we can challenge the structures of power, . . . [for] both history and nature are extremely complex, complicated, and nonlinear, [characterized by] many authorial voices; a multiplicity of actors; . . . dialectical action and process rather than the imposed logos of form; [and by] situated and contextualized, rather than universal, knowledge. (54-55)

Merchant goes so far as to suggest that the rewritten stories she urges us to compose may not be able to be committed to paper, for perhaps they “can only be acted and lived, not written at all” (55).

Val Plumwood, too, argues that the “framework” of rationality is both destructive and unwise. In “Paths Beyond Human Centeredness” (1999), she points out that “in the case of scientific observation, a framework of perception and reason designed for subjugating and denying the other is not a good framework for attentive observation and

careful understanding of that other” because a “promotion of insensitivity is . . . its function.” The rational mind that thinks within that framework of comprehension is “unable to see its own embeddedness in what it destroys,” and through that blindness, it “distorts and limits the possibilities for *what we can become as humans*” (94-95, 100; emphasis in original). Thus, what we need to do, Plumwood argues, is to generate “more storied” communicative constructs than the “master model,” envisioning other plots that are not driven by the promotion of insensitivity, but which are inspired by means of “transformation” and by “care” (93, 101). In *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, she argues that “better plots” should be sought that are “cast as *outside reason*,” such as “women’s stories of care” (196; emphasis added). What does not advance insensitivity—what demonstrates *care*—then, is not comprehended by reason. Rather, there is some unnameable “something else” that exists *outside* rationality, linearity, and reason, which women’s stories—or, as I am saying, the narratives that are influenced by the female principle—are able to convey, and that “something else” is connected to care and to compassion, acts that are complicated, mysterious, and difficult to understand and to live by, as Deena Metzger has pointed out. We remain under the “curse of our time,” to use Metzger’s phrase (122), because acts of compassion and stories invoking a consciousness of care are too imperceptible, too irrational, too connected with lunacy to be significant in a system that is characterized by a limited framework—an “interlocking structure of dualities.” Plumwood’s connection of the “better plots” of women’s stories of care to a type of consciousness that exists *outside* reason is an example of wild thinking, for Plumwood, like Merchant, suggests that “disorderly order” should inform our narrative plots. To put it a bit differently, the wild invokes the creation of plots that

disorder order, overturn limited, confined domains, and affirm new, “better” arrangements that celebrate arabesque-like disarrangement.

It is interesting that Plumwood, in her development of a feminist *environmental* philosophy, would call for “better plots,” for although she is referring to a “plot” as a story line, the term itself is also connected, markedly, with the land—the natural earth. Typically, a plot is related to a story line that is pre-constructed by an author and structured according to the author’s designs. However, the term, *plot*, itself, is mysterious in that it lacks origins. According to the *OED*, the origins of the word plot are unknown; however, the term, *plat*, may have originally been a variant of *plot*, for *plat* is “first attested earlier” in the sense that we think of it in terms of a plan, scheme, or literary plot. As an outline, or sketch, of some proposed arrangement, it is first used in 1548, but is not referred to as a “plan or scheme of a literary or dramatic work” until 1613. The notion of a plot as a “plot construction,” “plot formula,” or “plot-structure” does not emerge until the 1890s. Hence, if we search for the origins of *plat*, we discover that one of its meanings connects it to an “area of land,” and another of its meanings is associated with “a plan of an area of land or a building on a flat piece of paper or parchment.” The term, *plot*, too, most probably due to some confusion in letter forms, the *OED* tells us, possesses an alliance with *plough*. A *plotbene*, also a *ploughbene* and a *plough-boon*, referred, in the thirteenth century, to “ploughing done as a service by a tenant for a lord.” One could receive payment for a *plough-boon*, called a *ploughboon silver*, but payment also tended to be received in the form of bread or other food.

In “Boon-Services on the Estates of Ramsey Abbey,” an historical study of thirteenth-century English tenantry researched in 1867, N. Nielson explains that the

villeins, the most common type of serf in the Middle Ages, fulfilled their obligations to their lords through week-work and through boon-services (214). Before a revision of practices took place in the thirteenth century, a lord would provide food from the harvest to the villeins in a gesture of gratitude for their extra services during the harvest. By the thirteenth century, however, “the giving of food had become an obligation to which the lord was as much bound as were the tenants to the rendering of boon-services. This transformation of a voluntary gift into an obligation gave rise to a new group of boon services [where] . . . extra days of service [were] demanded as a return for the food given” (Nielson 219). The extra work required by the tenantry thus extended beyond the work week and could be demanded “at the lord’s discretion.” However, even if the lord demanded the work, since the boon-services were services connected with the land, the boon-work depended more upon “the weather and the condition of the crops” than upon the lord’s calculations and commands (222). The plotbene may have received its *general* directives from the lord, but because the services were enterprises involving the earth, other forces—outside of the control of the lord—shaped the timing and path of the plough.⁶

Thus, if we think of the word, *plot*, in terms of its unknown origins, and then in terms of its connection to the land, we can recognize that the term itself is mysterious and not so neatly immured in structure as we may have originally thought. A plotbene is the active service of ploughing—or, we may say, of writing or conceiving—that has a general directive—that of the lord’s or writer’s expectations—but also may be hindered or redirected according to other forces beyond the lord’s—or writer’s—prospects. The plotbene—or plot—that falls into place at the lord’s—or writer’s—commandment with

no seeming divergences from any disruptive weather—or from that unnameable “something else” that Kristeva refers to as moving within the semiotic—is that sort of plot that we think of when we think of a story line. However, sometimes weather, unexpected upheavals in the earth, or crop irregularities—or that unnameable “something else” of the semiotic—does intervene, redirecting the original command or design, or, as Poe expresses it through Ellison, introducing the original—that is, the land or the plot—in a fresh way through “furrows,” we might say, that emerge from unknown origins, taking their direction not from the “lord,” but from the wild.

The “plotbene” of the wild text, then, is that which is that active service not regulated by the “week-work,” nor by a writer’s overall, general plan for a story, but which emerges in the *midst of* the general plan—rather like Kristeva’s conception of a “subject-in-process,” where signification that is correlative with rhythm and tone moves “both inside and beyond the Symbolic order” (Oliver 100,101). Another way of thinking of the plot of a wild text is to consider it as a dynamic working for the gift-still-freely-given. In other words, before a lord in the thirteenth century concluded that his gifts of food and sustenance were an obligation requiring repayment, the original gift from the harvest was given freely by the lord, in gratitude for the cultivation of land that yielded, from *its* gifts, ample provisions. The very definition of *plotbene* cancels out the gift, for it is extra work required in payment of a gift-turned-into-obligation. In fact, besides the plough-boon, Nielson points out that certain additional boon-services, called *lovebones*, ended up being rendered to “any service, outside the regular work, performed at the need and demand of the lord” (219). Such services generally involved reaping or carrying. Thus, although *lovebones* did not involve ploughing, their services were still related to

the land—or to the plots themselves. With such an understanding, we may perceive the wild text as that which conveys the active ploughing—a plotbene influenced by and regardful of outside intervention—but which also involves the other services, the *lovebones*, that further draw our attention to those elements of a subject-in-process—elements that may appear, at first, as trivial, as Virginia Woolf points out, but which are “composed of something that expands in the reader’s mind and endows” such elements “with the most enduring form of life” (qtd. in Iser 275-76). That endowment of the “most enduring form of life” surfaces in wild texts due to a writer’s ability to impart a remembrance—or, as Kristeva describes it, due to the “*hallucination of past experiences* . . . that either preceded the acquisition of language or that took place outside of language”—of gifts once and still freely given. In other words, the wild text does not forget that a *plot*—of figurative land, that is—is one small segment of the earth, which uncovers mysteries as it is overturned and which gives ample provisions when we heed its rhythms.

It is thus helpful to think of a wild text, even when it is written, in terms of a tale spoken orally. Such a conception involves a paradox, of course, for once an oral tale is written down, the oral version becomes imaginary, and the written version becomes limited in its retellings, since the written word appears to “solder” its telling to the page. The action of the plough, as it were, leaves behind furrows—apparently “set” in their direction and path. However, in speculating about the paradox concerning the spoken and written elements of language, we can find an invaluable aid in the examination of the relationship between the oral and written forms by looking once again at Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*. Referring to the linguistic theories presented in Ferdinand de

Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*—a manuscript assembled by Saussure's colleagues, primarily from lecture notes taken by his students and published in 1916, three years after Saussure's death—Derrida criticizes the structuralist notion of writing as “tyrannical and enslaving” (*Of Grammatology* 38).⁷ In the *Course*, Saussure discusses the “tyranny of the written form” in order to explain that its influence

may be strong enough to affect and modify the language itself. That happens only in highly literate communities, where written documents are of considerable importance. In these cases, the written form may give rise to erroneous pronunciations. . . . These phonetic distortions do indeed belong to the language but they are not the result of its natural evolution. They are due to an external factor. Linguistics should keep them under observation in a special compartment: they are cases of abnormal development. (31)

Challenging the idea that alterations in a language resulting from the “tyranny” or violence of the written form should be compartmentalized and therefore excluded, Derrida advances the view that deconstruction offers—that is, that the traditional conception concerning the origin of languages, the idea that speech came before writing, should be deconstructed. He explains: “Deconstructing this tradition will therefore not consist of reversing it, of making writing innocent. Rather of showing why the violence of writing does not *befall* an innocent language” (*Of Grammatology* 37; emphasis in original). Derrida's argument is that the old idea that writing corrupts language is unfounded. Because it seems to intrude upon the language that came first (speech), it appears violent and artificial. However, instead of corrupting language, writing

participates with the spoken word, and cannot therefore be expelled (*Of Grammatology* 38). His purpose, he says, in terms of his discussion about Saussure, is to “announce the limits and the presuppositions of what seems here to be self-evident: . . . [that] no practice is ever totally faithful to its principle” (*Of Grammatology* 39). In other words, play always interferes, and the principle (or theory) can never be stable.

The “natural evolution” of language, in the conceptions of Saussure, is something that has to be challenged, according to Derrida. To exclude writing from that “natural evolution,” defining it as an “external factor,” is to deny that that “natural evolution” *is* affected and so evolves along with participation from the written word. It *is* affected, writes Derrida, “from without—by an overturning which modifies it in its interior, denatures it and obliges it to be separated from itself.” But its “gathering [of] its outside into its inside” should not necessitate the traditional view that such an overthrowing of “nature” is a “monstrosity” (*Of Grammatology* 41). What I see inherent in Derrida’s deconstruction of the origins of language is an insistence on acknowledging the interdependent relationship that exists between a spoken language and its written form. One cannot say that the spoken word is more “natural” than the written word, for the written word, too, plays its part in a language’s evolution, and though separate from its oral counterpart, nevertheless it modifies the spoken language as the oral aspect “gather[s] its outside into its inside.”

With that said, there are nevertheless written texts which are able to “speak,” as if involved in active, dynamic storytelling, which adopt a “style,” we might say, that conveys wild consciousness. When a story is told orally, it possesses the possibility for alteration—due to responses from its listeners, for example, or due to other external

forces that may shape its progression—such as, for instance, a sudden, unplanned knock on the door by a person unaware that a story is being told occurring exactly at the moment a storyteller is narrating the arrival of a mysterious personage. Wild consciousness, like Kristeva’s “subject-in-process,” is a consciousness that seeks rhythms both in and beyond the Symbolic order. It recognizes language in the Symbolic structure and conceives of narratives in terms of a general plan, but it also is open to intimations that may change the course of the plan, that may cause a thinker to dwell on one seemingly trifling, but nevertheless somehow enduring “scene” or thought before listening for the next one. Written texts, then, that adopt such a mode of consciousness into their style, are not necessarily more “natural” or “innocent” because they seem to convey *language* as spoken, but, more to the point, they are concerned with conveying a narrative where *ideas* are active and alterable—where expected, customary ideas, instead of being emphasized and internalized as the pre-adapted milieu of the habitus, are overturned—an overturning, like the action of a plough, that modifies the interior of conventional thought, de-“natures” its conception that it is *the* central focus, message, or signifier, and obliges it to see its fragmented, illusory state—a fragmentation that is interdependent upon the “outside” influences of the forces of the wild. Thus, although a written text is not subject to the unplanned occurrences that can and do affect an oral telling of a tale, a text may nonetheless be written in order to convey a sense—or sensuousness—that it is a dynamic working for the gift-still-freely-given and that it is a work still in readiness, still in active service—not burdened by an obligatory, set path, but intent on introducing fresh thought, freely given, as it overturns conventional thought, intermixing one with the other. Gathering its outside into its inside, a wild text

conveys thought in motion, and because it turns as it overturns, as does a plough in action, its divulgements are, many times, missed.

When the wild emerges in a text—when, for example, we leave behind the familiar world of experience, as Iser describes it, and stumble upon, through the literary adventure, an intimation of an alternative consciousness—we are usually not directly cognizant of its emergence. For when the wild speaks, or calls—however loudly—it is either shrouded in mystery, or else it speaks so simply that it is discounted and is, therefore, all the more so shrouded in mystery. Due to its nature, the wild is not didactic, yet its force—ongoing in its motion—is such that it instructs through transient manifestations of its presence—grasped by those who observe its disclosure, overlooked by those who do not. To possess wild consciousness is not to exist in a state of unbroken awareness of the wild, but to be in a state of unwaning *readiness* to hear its intermittent call. Mary Daly, addressing women and celebrating their identities as “Amazons” and “hags,” writes in *Gyn/Ecology* (1978) that the ability to hear the call of the wild occurs concomitantly with the “enspiriting” of the self. To be attentive to the “call to wild-ize our Selves,” it is important to listen with the “Inner Ear”: “Hags know that the appropriate tactics present themselves to our consciousness when we are deeply conscious of the Journey. We know that there is not one tactic for each specific situation [as we follow] the call of our undomesticated, wild be-ing” (342-43). Daly does not emphasize a compulsion to understand the Journey’s *end*, but instead focuses our attention on being conscious of the Journey itself, which suggests the importance of *journey-ing*. “Those who have continued the Journey,” she writes, “know that the Basic Tactic is to keep moving” (342). Thus, being able to possess wild consciousness—that

is, having the ability to hear the call of the wild—involves a certain restless dependent upon unnavigable exploration, upon unmethodical plans. The “new responses” to moral life that the novel has forever been interested in, as Doody points out, arise in wild texts as variable, improvised responses—as responses “cast as *outside* reason” in order to further a more complex perception of customary, habitual thought.

If a writer develops a narrative that presents a plot, as most narratives possess, then, one might argue, any “improvised responses” are not “improvised” at all, but follow the writer’s design. However, a “plot,” possessing unknown origins and connected with the unregulated service of the *plotbene*, can, indeed, intimate a sense of bearing hazy beginnings and inconclusive endings. In *Reading for the Plot*, for example, Peter Brooks explains that plot, for him, “is not a matter of typology or of fixed structures.” It is the “dynamic of narrative, and narrative itself a form of understanding and explanation” (10). He likens plot to a snakelike arabesque, which represents “deviance from the straight line,” and he thus defines the plot of narrative simply and directly as “tension” (104). Plots, he points out, are driven and consumed by desire, where the “need to tell” is “a primary human drive . . . *that never can quite speak its name—never can quite come to the point,*” but which nonetheless insists on moving “toward that name” (61; emphasis added). In using the snakelike arabesque as a metaphor for plot, Brooks, knowingly or unknowingly, draws upon an element of the female principle, for snakes and serpents emerge in association with goddesses in ancient myth. To expound, in *The Great Cosmic Mother* (1987), Barbara Mor and Monica Sjöö point out that

everywhere in world myth and imagery, the Goddess-Creatix was

coupled with the sacred serpent. . . . The snake was first of all a symbol of eternal life (like the moon), since each time it shed its skin it seemed reborn. . . . The serpent path on earth was the terrestrial energy-flow; the serpent path in the sky was the winding spray of stars in the galactic spiral-arm, or Milky Way. (57-59)

Thus, in defining plot as the “dynamic of narrative,” Brooks sets what he calls the “transformatory function” of narration into serpentine movement, explaining, as an example, that Scheherazade’s storytelling in the *Thousand and One Nights* possesses curative powers that are “life-giving” since she “takes a desire that has gone off the rails—the Sultan’s desire” and prolongs, or narrativizes, it (60-61). Plot, as impelling tension, then, can be seen as possessing powers of transfiguration and renewal, as it uses both terrestrial and cosmic energy to communicate winding, restorative desire.

If plot, as a whole, is perceived as non-fixed and dynamic in its telling, then what distinguishes a text without wild elements and associations from a text that elicits a wild consciousness is, appropriately enough, difficult to discern. Yet the writer who seeks to call forth responses that are “outside reason” tends to present plots that, although the author’s creation, appear to draw the writer, too, towards that which, to use Brooks’s phrase, “never can speak its name.” Thus, Stevenson, who describes himself as being led “through the uneven land” by the hand of his nurse, is compelled to draw others through that land by composing poems, such as “Windy Nights,” that portray an uneven movement of advance and return in order to accentuate and share an awareness of and sensibility to promptings of the wild.

Indications of the wild, then, appear in texts that not only possess the snakelike arabesque of plot itself; more distinctively they reveal themselves in narratives where the call of the wild, within the plot, is carried forth in an arabesque fashion—“interlaced” in complex, flowing spirals and zigzagging messages that are “strangely mixed.”⁸ The *OED* defines “arabesque” as a “species” of decorative art, “composed in flowing lines of branches, leaves, and scroll-work fancifully intertwined.” If we think of the call of the wild as the voicing of “branches” and “leaves” within the artful dynamic of narrative, then we can appreciate its enigmatic utterance and its polyphonic, interwinding intonations. It is also helpful to think of the arabesque as a narrative form in the way that Poe presents it, for in 1839, he published stories that he specifically titled *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. According to L. Moffitt Cecil, in “Poe’s ‘Arabesque’” (1966), Poe means to ascribe to the arabesque the idea of a writing technique that echoes the illustrative design of intertwining branches and leaves as well as its connection to the term, *Arabian*, “which points to the characteristics of an Eastern race and geographical area” (55-57). Thus, *arabesque* also means “in the manner of the Arabians” (69). One of the distinguishing features of Poe’s “Arabesques,” Cecil points out, is “their characteristic Oriental view of man and his world.” Such a view means that Poe’s narrators “postulate an omniferous universe”:

The supernatural, ordinarily hidden from us, might at any moment crowd miraculously over into the sphere of the senses. The charted segment of the earth we inhabit is surrounded by vast unexplored realms differing in kind as well as in degree from the narrow world we know. Out yonder one might expect to find in substantial fact all of the strange, wonderful,

terrible figments of man's wildest imaginings. (64)

Thus, Ellison, in "The Domain of Arnheim," transforms the landscape of Arnheim into the magical, even when, in "substantial fact," it is a landscape. Ellison introduces to the landscape the idea of the subject-in-process, which involves the "omniferous," which is, the *OED* explains, that which is capable of "bearing, carrying, or consisting of all things, or many kinds or sorts of things"—including, in Arnheim, sylphs, fairies, genii, and gnomes. Hence, Arthur Hobson Quinn, in *American Fiction* (1936), explains that the material Poe chooses for his "Arabesques" is "selected with care on account of its strangeness, its appeal to the faculty of wonder" (80). It is this characteristic of wonder associated with the wild's call, primarily, that, as it is sounded in various narratives, possesses the power to evoke the necessary improvised responses that, operating outside reason, discover other omniferous "borderland" paths than those habitually traversed.

Historically speaking, the "paths" that have been habitually traversed are those that, throughout time, have emphasized difference in order to establish and maintain systems of power, where one strong account dominates over other "lesser" narratives deemed nonessential or irrelevant. In one of Poe's tales of the Arabesque, "MS. found in a Bottle," the narrator draws upon that which is normally perceived of as "nonessential" or outside of reason in order to invest it with significance. The narrator describes himself as being able to "feel as I have never felt before" when he is in the mysterious presence of a new "spirit of Eld." Figures on a ship, "Discovery," possess great age, yet seem as well to have about them a "second childhood," and something "ineffable" that causes the narrator to regard them with "reverence and awe mingled with the sensation of wonder" (524-25). The ship he finds himself on is not a ship of

war, he writes in the MS. “What she *is not*,” he writes, “I can easily perceive; what she *is*, I fear it is impossible to say. I know not how it is, but . . . there will occasionally flash across my mind a sensation of familiar things, and there is always mixed up with such indistinct shadows a recollection, an unaccountable memory of old foreign chronicles and ages long ago” (523; emphases in original). These unaccountable memories—later in the story also associated both with a movement onward “to some exciting knowledge” and with an “eagerness of hope” (526)—have nothing to do with age or history as we conventionally perceive it, for the narrator declares that “I have been all my life a dealer in antiquities,” but such dealings have caused him to lose his very soul. He has, he writes, “imbibed in the shadows of fallen columns at Balbec, and Tadmor, and Persepolis, until my very soul has become a ruin” (525). The historical paths that have been habitually traversed, then, are inadequate and annihilative—*ruinous*, as it were—as Poe’s arabesque narrative demonstrates, for they continue to deny the wonder of “lesser” narratives.

Although Poe’s narrator in “MS. found in a Bottle” seems to be destroyed—the ship plunging into a whirlpool as the narrator completes the writing of his last words and seals the manuscript in a bottle—Poe describes, through the narrative arabesque, the narrator as being launched into new, exciting discoveries, not contingent upon the antiquated worldview, which kills the soul. That antiquated worldview and its destructiveness is the focus, too, of writings by women, who describe, like Poe, the age-old dealings “in antiquities” as ruinous. In “Split Culture” (1984), Susan Griffin argues that it is *dualistic thinking* that has “split” the mindset and consciousness of what she calls our “phallogentric” culture—dualities such as masculine and feminine, mind and

body, spirit and matter, where the former of each pair possesses more importance than its counterpart. The phallogentric consciousness which splits such concepts, says Griffin, needs to be perceived for what it is—a delusion. She points out that we are “dying by increments” attempting to defend delusion.⁹ Our hastening “death,” described by Griffin as a slowly advancing illness, is plainly not being cured by the “split” narrative that has been the authoritative script presiding over western culture.

The “split” narrative that has been causing death by increments is not a wild narrative. It is marked by inertia—stagnant in its inability to think beyond binary oppositions, where one side is dominant and the other is dominated. To illustrate, in attempting to portray the problem of the habitus in terms of gender assumptions, Bourdieu falls into the dispositional thinking of the habitus. Bourdieu links male/female sexuality with male/female conceptions of religion, and in the process, provides a supposedly authorized—or accepted—understanding of magic. He writes:

[T]he opposition between male sexuality—public and sublimated—and female sexuality—secret and, so to speak, “alienated”— . . . is no more than a specific form taken by the opposition between the extraversion of politics or public religion and the introversion of private magic, the secret, hidden weapon of the dominated, made up for the most part of rites aimed at domesticating the male partners. (78-79)

That Bourdieu describes magic as being, *for the most part*, a ritualistic endeavor designed to domesticate male partners, is, one could say, an extremely strange definition of magic. The *OED* defines *magic*, in one instance, as “the use of ritual activities or observances,” but refers in no definition to the idea of females attempting to *domesticate*

males. Instead, the use of magic is “intended to influence the course of events or to manipulate the natural world.” The term is borrowed from *magique*, an Old and Middle French term, and the French meaning is also related to the Middle French *magicien*, or sorcerer. So if Bourdieu’s understanding of *magic* is based on a French apperception, there is still little, in terms of the word’s etymology, to support his concept about domestication. In terms of its English usage, the *OED* adds:

The relationships between magic, religion, and science are central to the history of the term in English. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, magic, and esp. conjuration, are regarded as falling outside the province of religion proper. However, those areas of magic which stemmed from Hermetic and Neoplatonic traditions were widely regarded in the medieval and early modern periods as legitimate and necessary fields of enquiry.¹⁰

To assume, then, that politics and public religion are male oppositional constructs divided against female private magic—having as its primary goal the desire to domesticate male partners—is first, to establish a “disposition” of two competing binaries—which is what Bourdieu is attempting to do in order to illustrate the habitus as it generates its partialities—and second, to take that disposition to an interpretive level that increases the subjugation of the dominated. In Bourdieu’s explanation, the habitus asserts that private magic is a “weapon” used against the larger social constructs of politics and public religion. But Bourdieu’s interpretation additionally reinforces the disposition of the habitus through its assumption that the “weapon” of private magic has, for the most part, no other creativity beyond an intense focus on the male subject.

Magic, conceived of under binary thinking, appends layers of misrepresentation in order to ensure that the dominated remains dominated by the dominator—so much so that Bourdieu’s presupposition about how the social order defines *magic* is expected to be recognized and adopted as part of the disposition of the binary opposition. As a “weapon,” private female magic is impugned, and then it is further negated through the assumption that it is bound to its opposition, sightless, and lacking any creativity that might address other subjects beyond the male. The dominated side of the binary thus becomes embroiled in a double “double negation.” Besides Kristeva’s designation of the “double negation” of “not” and “nonetheless,” the perceived binary opposition constructs, in the dominated side, a “not” added to another “not,” both of which are yet “nonetheless.” It is the “nonetheless” that drives the habitus to protect itself from new information, and it is the “nonetheless” that drives the female-subject to perceive the dominant realm as an “illusion,” as Kristeva describes it, and as a “delusion,” as Griffin portrays it. Either way, the intense commitment to thinking in oppositional terms is a practice grounded in inertia.

In addition to creating double and triple negatives on the dominated side of a binary construction, such stagnated thinking has caused meaning, or signification, to adopt a secondary role. In “Notes on Semantics in Linguistic Practice,” William F. Hanks elaborates on the decay of signification by pointing out that the “truth of an utterance can only be judged relative to a set of assumptions about the world”:

Given an authorized speaker under authorized circumstances, to describe the world is to define it and therefore to set the terms on which other actors must treat it. . . . The question of how speakers understand an

utterance and who is authorized to produce it emerge as more important than whether or not it could be claimed to be true. Indeed, to claim that *p*, and make it stick, is an act that always rests on a social foundation. It is therefore erroneous to elevate it to the position of an analytic standard against which all meaning is judged. (143)

The error occurs due to the act of elevation. Rather than the signification of an utterance itself possessing authority, the sanctioned utterance maintains meaning due to the recognized authority of its speaker and inappropriately accumulates further misconceptions under its umbrella. Elevation—or the act of making a concept “stick”—is therefore equivalent to sedimented misconception, or delusion, as Griffin maintains.

Gerda Lerner therefore proposes a method for developing “better plots” that do not defend delusional thinking. In *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986), she describes the history of patriarchy as a stage, where the script has been written, characteristically, by the patriarchs. Women, acting on stage in the limelight, only continue to foster delusion as long as the script continues to be written by the men who construct the narrative. Thus, Lerner proposes that women begin meeting and talking between the acts, or even while the performance is going on, in order to free up the energy—energy that has been lying dormant—that can generate new ways of thinking. Lerner acknowledges that dichotomies, ever-present, will continue to endure. It is the thinking *about* those dichotomies that requires transformation (13). In *Why History Matters*, for instance, Lerner argues that simple acts of deviance do not provide a solution. Deviance only strengthens oppressive cultures because oppressive mind-sets thrive on difference. The minds that control oppression use difference to their advantage by deciding which part of

any duality is weaker, and then the oppression thrives on emphasizing the “Other” as less valuable and able to be exploited. Therefore, Lerner argues that difference must be embraced—off stage, that is—but in embracing difference, we must recognize the interdependence that exists between dualities (144-45).

The recognition of such interdependence requires, ultimately, “off-stage” thinking, for consciousness that operates within the scripted stage directions tends to remain blinded by the footlights—hog-tied, as it were, to the elevated platform. Providing an example of such blindness, Nancy Tuana, in *The Less Noble Sex* (1993), points out how, historically, dualistic thinking controlled the science of alchemy. Alchemy, one would assume, would involve thinking with a sense of “hybridity”—of desiring to mix elements. But Tuana informs us that sulfur was considered a “more pure” substance because it was based on the masculine principle of the sun, and dryness and heat were more “stable” states. On the other hand, mercury, less stable because it is volatile, was connected to Luna, or the moon, and its connection with moisture, coldness, and the female principle made it less worthy (27). Why, we should wonder, has it ever been assumed and believed that dryness and heat are more “pure” or valuable than moisture or coldness? Not to question the authority of such a presentation of values is to remain “on stage” and to allow other creative energies to lie dormant. “Off stage” consciousness, however, discovers a great deal of worth in “borderland” thinking—that is, in thinking that is attentive to the wild.¹¹

Consciousness that is mindful of the wild is thus able to conceive of not just *different* plots—where worthiness and elevation can be ascribed to some narratives and not to others—but *better* plots. That is because wild plots are concerned with the

dynamics of overturning, of introducing the new, of incorporating together in order to develop fresh, dynamic origins—perpetual and extending—that foster, rather than elevated inertia, growth that is apprenticed to the wonder of the gift-still-freely-given. Wild plots, which overturn, are not intent upon *subversion*. To subvert is to “overthrow” or to “raze to the ground” that which is elevated. Subversion is also intent upon corrupting and undermining character. It is an action, according to the *OED*, which is committed to ruining as it overthrows. Like the moving plough, which breaks up the soil and overturns it, wild plots do not eliminate or corrupt the topsoil. Instead, they introduce the “elevated” to the subterranean—cutting through topmost, sedimented layers and muddying boundaries so that the landscape changes, where “furrows” are created in order to prepare the new terra firma for cultivation. What makes a wild plot “better” and therefore needful involves both its discerning observation *about* the “topsoil,” about its illusions—where arid, unfertile thought, locked in dualistic thinking, is repeatedly and unwisely “elevated”—and its further interest not only in intermixing the sterile with the arable, but in developing new landscapes that produce abundant gifts due to the commingled “loam” and the winding, unobstructed furrows. A wild plot also foresees that, when growth is evident, further ministrations of reaping and carrying will be required, thus leaving the once arable soil fallow and in need of fresh cultivation—a cultivation that will not be *repeated*, but *revised*, as other forces move above and below the topsoil, altering conditions and therefore approaches to tillage and development. Like a subject-in-process, a wild plot is *better* because it knows all about sterility, but it also knows about vitality that can and does move through and beyond the sterile. In breaking up and overturning, it purposely muddies boundaries in order to advance

conceptions of new origins. Like women's interest in the "doubling of language," as Kristeva notes, the wild plot seeks to introduce its readers to the semiotic as it moves both within and without the Symbolic, avoiding reductive explanations of beginnings in favor of thinking that loiters in "muddied" areas, in "marshlands," in the "I-am-not-what-is"-but-"I-am-nonetheless."

Elaine Showalter's "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" (1982), in its drawing attention to the mysterious borders of women's experience, is helpful in terms of recognizing the wild's lack of expression—that is, its identification with the "I-am-not-what-is"—in the Symbolic, or dominant, order. In referring to two essays by Edwin Ardener, Showalter explains that Ardener "suggests that women constitute a *muted group*" (29), and "muted groups must mediate their beliefs through the allowable forms of dominant structures" (30). Ardener presents a diagram of the "relationship of the dominant and the muted group," where two circles intersect so that the circle of the dominant group of "MEN" possesses a fraction that is outside the realm of the circle of the muted group of "Women." In the same way, the circle representing the muted group has a corresponding fraction that is outside the realm of the circle representing "MEN"; however, whereas the crescent of "MEN" is within the dominant circle, the crescent of "Women" is not. Showalter presents Ardener's diagram as follows:

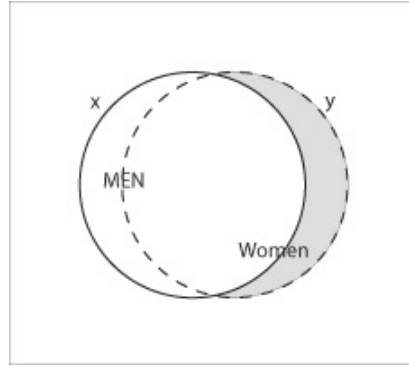


Figure 1. Showalter: Defining the “Wild Zone”

Showalter explains that we can call the crescent of the circle of “Women” that is outside the dominant structure “the ‘wild zone’ of women’s culture.” Having “no corresponding male space,” the wild zone, unlike the dominant space, is outside the male-dominated structure of language. Thus, explains Showalter:

the “wild” is always imaginary; from the male point of view, it may simply be the projection of the unconscious. In terms of cultural anthropology, women know what the male crescent is like, even if they have never seen it, because it becomes the subject of legend (like the wilderness). But men do not know what is in the wild. (30)

The ability to express the journey to the wild zone becomes hindered, mainly, due to a lack of “authenticity”—due to a hindrance in making such expression “stick,” to use William Hanks’s word. “Female authenticity” is achieved, suggests Showalter, in writing that crosses “to the other side of the mirror, like Alice in Wonderland” (31). Although Ardener’s diagram presents “MEN” as the dominant structure because his argument is that “all language is of the dominant order” (30), nevertheless Showalter explains that there are those who decipher the wild zone of female expression, “either

female or male, who [are] willing to make the effort to perceive beyond the screens of the dominant structure” (30). Why, we might ask, is it necessary, particularly, to have to make an *effort* to perceive “beyond the screens” of the dominant structure? In other words, whereas Lerner suggests that we simply need to decide to begin to meet “between the acts,” Showalter suggests that there is tension—a certain apprehension, discomfort, or anxiety—in attempting to “decipher” the energies that surge in the wild zone of “female territory.” Endeavoring to define expression that emerges from the wild zone and connecting it to the image of an “undercurrent,” Showalter draws our attention to Myra Jehlen’s description of “female territory” as “one long border,” where independence is defined as “open access to the sea” (32). Thus, whereas expression arising out of the zone of female territory is muted in the dominant structure, it possesses “authenticity” both along and beyond the border of wild consciousness—for the female principle, alive and agile in the space of the wild “zone,” requires no elevated “stage” for its “script,” which is, in effect, a *non-script*. Scriptless, then, expression arising out of the wild is muted in the dominant realm not because it *lacks* voice, but because, like the undulations of the waves upon the sea, it moves according to a different rhythm than the regular, patterned timing of the Symbolic order’s meter of language and expression. When a stormy sea encroaches upon a civilization, it has the power to transform the topography upon which the civilization rests. The principle reason, then, why “wild zone” thinking is muted in the dominant structure is that it poses a threat to the metronomic tempo expected by the established script-writers. Or, to use Lerner’s metaphor, between-the-acts gatherings draw attention away from the elevated stage.

In her reference to Alice in Wonderland, Showalter purposely chooses a character created by a man, Lewis Carroll/Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, in order to illustrate her point that there are those “either female or male, who [are] willing to make the effort to perceive beyond the screens of the dominant structure” (30). When Showalter talks about crossing “to the other side of the mirror,” she is not referring to the act commencing with the Lacanian “mirror stage” whereby the ego constructs an external mirage of wholeness and “fixes” itself “in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him” (Lacan 442). Instead, Showalter refers to the journey or adventure of crossing to the *other side* of the mirror—of stepping through it, as it were—an adventure that can be both turbulent and animating—and seeing its construct from the reverse side, which is not necessarily from an *inner* side, since the mirage is an external construct. In *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1872), Carroll describes the mirror as a “mist.” Talking to Kitty, Alice says:

“Why, it’s turning into a sort of mist now, I declare! It’ll be easy enough to get through—” She was up on the chimney piece while she said this, though she hardly knew how she had got there. And certainly the glass *was* beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist.

(143; emphasis in original)

Alice’s climbing onto the chimney piece is an act, that is, an “effort”—to use Showalter’s word and phrase—to “perceive beyond the screens of the dominant structure.” Carroll describes the act as effortless (“she hardly knew how she had got there”) because Alice is a character familiar with traversing along borders since her

curiosity compels her to look beyond her static world. Carroll links Alice's action with her speaking. *While* she speaks, she discovers that she is on the chimney piece. *While* she speaks, the glass melts into a mist. Expression, then, that possesses wild authenticity perceives established "reality"—the glass—as a continually shifting, illusory world of make-believe. "Let's pretend," says Alice to Kitty, and with those words—with that expression—"reality" easily becomes a mist to step through because the wild does not favor a sedimented view that established reality *is* reality. Through wild perception, the focus on the mirror-stage reflection—on the mirage of wholeness—dissolves into a mist, and so, with the loss of that focus, a new interest is excited. The "not" of Alice—for she is diminished in the "corner of the great arm-chair" and dwarfed by the great drawing-room, where she has to climb upon the chair to see the room's reflection in the glass (137, 141)—is *more than* "nonetheless" when she steps through the mist, even when she *appears* to be ignored by those whom she meets on the other side. In the wild, one cannot be a passive observer, for there, every "not" *is*.

Carroll's writings, Martin Gardner points out, are occupied with "nots." "Nots" actually provide a "rich source," he writes, when it comes to Carroll's characterizations and his conceptual thinking:

Treating a "null class" (a set with no members) as though it were an existing thing is another rich source of Carrollian logical nonsense. The March Hare offers Alice some nonexistent wine; Alice wonders where the flame of a candle is when the candle is not burning; the map in *The Hunting of the Snark* is a "perfect and absolute blank"; . . . and the White King compliments Alice on having keen enough eyesight to see nobody

at a great distance down the road. (143n5)

Carroll, through what is perceived of as nonsense, proffers the idea that there *is* sense in perceiving what is not there, for he validates—or authenticates—non-existence.

Although a candle may not be burning, still flames exist, and Carroll’s “nonsense” suggests that candles can and do burn when they do not; it simply requires perception to see the flame in the non-flame, to see the wine in the empty glass, to see the paths on the blank map, and to see being in “I-am-not-what-is.” However, such sight requires *effort*, as Showalter points out, because the “turbulent movements” that Lacan says are felt as an animating force are suppressed and silenced by the Symbolic order, which elevates reason and sense over the wisdom of non-sense.

In addition to pointing to Carroll’s attentiveness to the “null class,” Gardner also directs our attention to the influence of George MacDonald’s work on Carroll’s writings (144n5). In *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women* (1858), MacDonald’s narrator, Cosmo, describes the “strange” quality of a mirror. “[T]his room of mine,” he says as he looks into the mirror, “is the same, and yet not the same”:

It is not the mere representation of the room I live in, but it looks just as if I were reading about it in a story I like. All its commonness has disappeared; . . . and the very representing of it to me has clothed with interest that which was otherwise hard and bare; just as one sees with delight upon the stage the representation of a character from which one would escape in life as from something unendurably wearisome. . . . I should like to live in *that* room if I could only get into it.

(154-56; emphasis in original)

MacDonald, through the character of Cosmo, distinguishes between “mere representation,” or the Symbolic order, and a “clothed” representation. The “clothed” representation that Cosmo perceives is, like Kristeva’s semiotic, a representation that moves both inside and beyond the Symbolic, for it *looks* like the “mere” Symbolic order, but that which is normally overlooked in the Symbolic realm due to its “commonness” is looked-at-again with delight and desire, as it acquires significance and spirit. Perceived nonexistence—or the “I-am-not-what-is”—is not only authenticated with MacDonald, but it is also desired. In that desire, “I-am-not-what-is” is elevated so that Cosmo likens the room he views in the mirror with the stage. Reversing the definitions of what is supposed to be elevated—or “upon the stage”—and what is not, Cosmo asserts that he would rather seek representation “on stage” with the moving semiotic than in the wearisome Symbolic order—seen by Cosmo as commonplace and *off-stage*. A problem occurs, however, in the attempt to express the moving semiotic within the Symbolic. At the beginning of *Phantastes*, MacDonald explains that he will endeavor to “reproduce” a story that he knows from a fairy book, where, in the fairy book, the story

glowed and flashed the thoughts upon the soul, with such a power that the medium disappeared from the consciousness, and it was occupied only with the things themselves. My representation of it must resemble a translation from a rich and powerful language, capable of embodying the thoughts of a splendidly developed people, into . . . meager and half-articulate speech. (145-46)

Like Carroll, MacDonald perceives the flame of a candle when it is not burning and prefers to dwell on the “absent” flame. However, he is hindered in his expression, for

how does one express the intangible “flame”—that is, the “I-am-not-what-is”—to those who do not perceive it?

One way to express the “I-am-not-what-is” in the Symbolic order is to enter completely into that order and assert the “nonetheless” of the “I-am-not-what-is”—with adjustments. In other words, because the habitus is easily accessible in terms of defining its constructs, the “I-am-not-what-is” can play as if “I am.” To illustrate from an historical account, in her lucid and engaging depiction of the life of Queen Elizabeth I, Carolly Erickson presents the conflicts and ironies involved in the attempt to follow the prescribed rules of the habitus. Referring to Elizabeth’s training in womanly modesty, Erickson summarizes the tenets specified in the treatises written by the Spanish humanist, Juan Luis Vives. If it is allowed to feel, a woman’s heart, according to Vives, is in danger, and under such influence, her mind is subject to degeneracy: “Infatuation itself, as Vives saw it, was a form of unchastity; if a woman allowed herself to fall in love she had already tainted her purity. ‘A maid should not be proud because no man hath touched her body,’ he wrote, ‘if many men have pierced her mind’” (72). Yet a ruler, as Elizabeth was, should possess a strong will, an energetic, cultivated mind, and a firm identity, while also being skilled in both counseling and being counseled about foreign and military affairs and the activities of the local government, church, and royal household. In being both “maid” and ruler, Elizabeth acquired legendary characteristics—characteristics such as those attributed to King Arthur, a celebratory figure whose conquering “claims to New World kingdoms” fascinated Elizabeth (Erickson 322). Of Elizabeth’s last decade of her reign as monarch of England, Erickson writes:

For forty years she had governed alone, without a husband, . . . showing . . . an amazing capacity for stubbornness as well as for rule. Her unmarried state—which in fact she had several times been on the point of cheerfully abandoning—had become in her old age the centerpiece of her legend. By an irony of history, this woman of exceptional passions would be known as the Virgin Queen. (383)

Perceived as “untainted” according to the rules of the habitus, Queen Elizabeth could proceed as *King* Elizabeth, possessing not the heart of an infatuated maid—the sort of heart Vives warned against—nor the heart of a married woman and mother, but the heart of a king.

Because a king’s heart and mind can expand without degeneration and can acquire legendary significance within the Symbolic order, Elizabeth presented herself as a king, but with modifications. In the midst of England’s conflict with the Spanish Armada, Elizabeth gave her famous Tilbury speech to the men at the Camp Royal. “I am come amongst you as you see,” she said:

being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live or die amongst you all, and to lay down for my God and for my kingdom and for my people, my honor and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm.
(qtd. in Erickson 374-75)

In order to possess authenticity in the dominant, social order, Elizabeth presented herself as both a virtuous female subject and as a militant, honor-bearing male subject. She, we could say, entered the Symbolic order both before and after her coronation in an attitude of play—playing “I am” while asserting at the same time “I-am-not-what-is,” in declaring herself as “weak and feeble.” She, in effect, stepped into the “mist” of the mirror and, engaging with that “border” position, she played with the “doubling of language,” with “double negation” and with the “puzzle of identity.” In short, she reigned for forty-four years fully aware of the social construction of herself, describing herself in her accession speech as bearing a double identity—having “one body naturally considered” as well as a “body politic to govern” (qtd. in Mary Beth Rose 47).¹²

Gender, as it is understood “as a border concept” is discussed at length by Judith Butler, and she particularly refers to biological delineations as “narrow” in her 1996 essay, “The End of Sexual Difference?” (426-27). Referring to the Vatican’s denouncing of the term “gender”—due to the perception that the term acts as a watchword for homosexuality—in favor of the word “sex,” Butler writes: “If the Vatican seeks to replace the language of gender with the language of sex, it is because the Vatican wishes to rebiologize sexual difference, that is, to reestablish a biologically narrow notion of reproduction as women’s social fate” (“End” 426). According to Butler, a more comprehensive perception of sexual difference, however, involves the understanding that it “is neither fully given nor fully constructed, but partially both”:

[T]he terms that overlap or blur are perhaps less importantly masculine or feminine than the problematic of construction itself; what is constructed is of necessity prior to construction. . . . Is [sexual difference], therefore,

not a thing, not a fact, not a presupposition, but, rather, a demand for rearticulation that never quite vanishes—but also never quite appears?
(“End” 427)

Butler questions the idea of sexual difference as being, we could say, a part of the sedimented habitus because it is never “ultimately distinct.” It is a “vacillating border,” where rearticulation is a nonstop undertaking as new constructions both face and are based upon prior constructions (“End” 427). The overlapping and blurring of constructions, as Butler sees it, both undergirds and dismisses the non-presupposition of sexual difference. The borders, as it were, cannot sit still.

If, using Butler’s inquiry about the “demand for rearticulation,” we understand that the border at the male crescent of Ardener’s diagram is constantly vacillating, then we can also understand why a monarch like Queen Elizabeth I could conceive of herself as a legendary male figure—like King Arthur—ruling with the empowered divine right of kings while being a female “body naturally considered.” And if we move to the other border, where the wild approaches the dominant realm of “MEN” in Ardener’s diagram, can we not also conceive of the possibility of a male figure passing through the vacillating border of the wild and “rearticulating” his stance? Showalter acknowledges that there are those, “either female or male,” who are “willing to make the effort to perceive beyond the screens of the dominant structure” and engage with the wild. Hence, just as a female-subject can engage with the dominant structure by perceiving the Symbolic order as illusory and make-believe and by “playing” with its constructs, so can a male subject, if he is curious enough and maintains open ears, view the wild, normally conceived of as imaginary, as non-make-believe—that is, as authentic; as reality.

That it requires effort to perceive “beyond the screens” of the dominant structure is due, naturally, to the screens themselves. If we return to the metaphor of the elevated stage as representative of the dominant structure and think of footlights on the stage as a blinding screen to those acting upon the stage, then the emphasis upon the “call” of the wild becomes more apparent. To be able to “perceive” beyond the screens—to look outward—requires *ears* as well as eyes. The call of the wild draws those who hear its call to attempt to see beyond the blinding lights into the dark auditorium, and for those, to use Daly’s phrase, “who have continued the Journey,” to venture outside—at and beyond the borders of the entire theatrical structure. To hear the call, however, as Showalter points out, one does not have to be a woman, but one has to make an effort, and one has to be willing to risk “mutedness” in the dominant realm. The risk may well mean being misunderstood, or not recognized at all, for borderlands are tenuous spaces; however, the discovery of “better plots,” cast outside reason, involves, through the action of freeing up energy, the desired adventure of “play”—necessary for the imagining of new narratives.

Therefore, in order to discuss the emergence of the wild in literary texts, it is helpful to reconstruct Ardener’s diagram of the intersecting circles, where “MEN” representing the dominant group, might be re-labeled as “NON-THREATENING, LOGICAL EXPRESSION,” and where “Women” representing the muted group, may be re-labeled as “Play”:

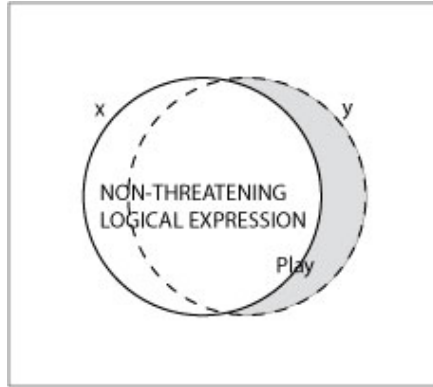


Figure 2. Rearticulating Wild Expression

“Play,” energized by its awareness of and association with the wild, involves desire. Play longs to hear the call of the wild, to embark upon and continue the outward journey, to meet between the acts, to pursue the arousal of “new responses or definitions,” to discover “better plots” cast outside of reason, and then to express those plots in prolonged, intricate, arabesque-like interweaving narratives that transcend dualisms and invite others into the “no-man’s-land,” as Showalter describes it (30), of the ever-moving, life-giving wild wisdom of the female principle.

Although the element of “play,” as it adventures into and describes intimations of the wild, emerges in literary works commonly read by adults, characteristically enough, the manifestation of “play” makes itself known in works that tend, generally, to be read by children. It is no accident that the example Showalter chooses when she describes “female authenticity” is the character of Alice, created by Lewis Carroll and found in two narratives that involve children as part of their reading audience. Writing that crosses “to the other side of the mirror” is writing that not only possesses the courage to seek the deep “Background of Ourselves,” to use Mary Daly’s phrase, but also desires to explore the landscapes, terrains, and waterways of the fantastic that animate not only

reversals in terms of “on-stage” thinking, but, more importantly, the irrational, the spaces outside of reason, the intricacies and complexity of “reality” as it is understood alongside magic and mystery, and the point-blank simplicity behind the non-suspension of belief.¹³ “Curiouser and curiouser!” says Alice in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), and curiosity is the driving force impelling Alice down the rabbit hole in *Wonderland* and through the looking-glass in *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*.¹⁴ Curiosity is essential to play, and because it leads explorers following its guidance into the unknown, works that inquire into other sides of mirrors—that is, into other realms outside of reason—appeal to children, who do not find it *surprising*, for instance, to be ordered about by mice and rabbits, but merely unpleasant. Thinking to herself, Alice says: “It was much pleasanter at home . . . when one wasn’t always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits. I almost wish I hadn’t gone down that rabbit-hole—and yet—and yet—it’s rather curious, you know, this sort of life!”¹⁵ The adventure into the wild, as well as the expression of it, is not always pleasant, and it involves the risk of being considered as insignificant or of being “muted” in the dominant realm; yet it is the “sort of life” that *is* life, and, as such, its wild transformations—although perhaps uncomfortable—reveal the “on-stage,” non-threatening changeovers as superficial and non-liberating, where the same powers dominate in each act, regardless of the modifications in costume. “On-stage” scripting thus tends to *describe* transformation without *practicing* transformation. Its alienating philosophies continue as the established doctrines without the acknowledgement of the “background” forces that permit the very staging of its productions.

When Mary Daly refers to the deep “Background of Ourselves,” which she discusses in *Gyn/Ecology*, she means a “Background” that continues to be suppressed by the superficial “foreground”—that is, the ridiculing mind-set that silences the true laughter of the energized, spiraling, cackling, free, dancing, playful female-Self (329, 414). To search for Daly’s Background is to search for the wild. Plumwood, on the other hand, refers to “background” as the type that emerges out of dualistic thinking, where nature, primarily, is conceived of as being in the background—not seen or heard even when it is directly in front of us, rather like background music that we know is playing but which we nonetheless disregard. However, Plumwood points out that our ignoring nature is more serious than merely being *unconscious* of nature. When we see nature as “background,” we are enmeshed in the ways of thinking of the “master consciousness,” which, she points out, is a thinking that is pornographic. The pornographic mind desires control, and in seeking control, discovers arousal. However cold that arousal may be, it is nonetheless a *feeling*—that is, an emotion—that must be suppressed. Therefore, the pornographic mind must kill what it is trying to deny.¹⁶ Although some feminist thinkers disagree, many others, like Plumwood and Griffin, see the phallogentric, pornographic mind’s need for control over women as extending to nature. Thus, strip mining and other destructive acts which are not concerned with the renewal of nature—that is, of giving back after one has taken—are viewed as acts of “rape” of the land. In attempting to kill what it is trying to deny, the master consciousness, possessing a “hyperseparated conception of the human,” also separates itself from nature, pushing it into the background—losing sense of the dire needfulness of maintaining a connection with that which provides life and sustenance.¹⁷

In *Earth Democracy* (2005), Vandana Shiva points out that our global culture legitimizes exclusive categories through thinking that embraces the “monoculture of the mind.” Multi-faceted, diverse market economies have been replaced by “abstract constructions created by the dominant powers,” where the “manipulation of nature and society for profits and power [has become] easy.” Because the monoculture of the mind threatens life “in its diversity, self-organization, and self-renewal,” Griffin’s argument that we are “dying by increments” is becoming more and more apparent each day.¹⁸ Wild thinking appears to be evading us. We therefore desperately need the “wild” to show us how to transform consciousness so that the “master consciousness,” which has created hierarchical divisions in social, ethical, and religious thought, can learn to re-think petrified dualistic formulations and wildly re-imagine the world. We must first embark into the wild by searching for expressions of its intimations as they emerge in texts so that we can begin to recognize its borderland presence. Such written narratives are metaphoric extensions of writers’ understandings of wild consciousness and thus illustrate, more memorably than theoretical deliberations, the wild’s mutable call and enigmatic presence. Once we begin to recognize its call and presence, we, like those who have gone before us, must also create our own wild narratives in order to advance non-hyperseparated thinking—in order to reveal our human connections to the borderland, where play and its childhood camaraderie with suspended disbelief expose questions long forgotten, if asked at all, about the forces that both drive and control us, and which offer alternative definitions for and responses to impaired, practiced, chronically unsound codes.

“Seasoned Spinsters,” says Daly, know “how to be/travel Alone,” and can find no “solace” in domestication. However, wild traversing is also not consolatory and does require guidance. “To aid us,” she writes, “in hearing/remembering the call of our wild, we can listen to the strange and improbable voice of the dictionary, which, in spite of itself, transmits this call.”¹⁹ In spite of itself—in spite of its long-established method of chasing customary patriarchal etymologies for terms rather than noting, for instance, their wild, nonsensical derivations and, oftentimes, bizarrely novel associations—the voice of the dictionary can be of great use, in particular, for a figurative voyage into the wild.²⁰ After pointing out that *wild*, according to the dictionary, means “ungoverned,” “visionary,” “prodigious,” and more, Daly presents her own synthesis of the varied meanings of the terms. *Wild* is associated with the deepest “whys,” which are “undreamt of in [patriarchal] philosophies, but which lie sleeping, sometimes half-awake” in wild minds. The definitions of *wild* are, according to Daly, the “whys of untamed wisdom.”²¹

“Curiouser and curiouser,” we might say, as we venture into wild consciousness. How, exactly, is it that wisdom can be untamed? According to the *OED*, wisdom may be “jocular” or “ironic,” but is never described as “untamed.” It is the “capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct” and is sometimes defined as “sound sense, esp. in practical affairs.” According to the *OED*, wisdom, rather than asking *why*, appears to know and provide answers. However, the “strange and improbable voice of the dictionary” is helpful in terms of pursuing the new responses to moral life that Doody tells us is the consuming interest of the novelist. Untamed wisdom, like the *OED*’s wisdom, also possesses the “capacity of judging rightly”—judging rightly, that is, off stage. Those on the elevated stage may not perceive the

“rightness” of such judgments, and may even describe them as lunatic. However, those on stage who have heard murmurs from the wild—who have opened themselves up to its intimations—have the capacity to turn from the “master model” and begin to re-imagine the world. Such re-imagining proceeds from the desire to play, or, more specifically, from the willing desire to suspend disbelief.

Thus, in any discourse about the wild, it is necessary to include those narratives that invite an audience of children. Although some literary critics maintain that the genre labeled “children’s literature” is merely an extension of adult desire, intimations of the wild can be located in texts that appeal to children because struggles against disbelief tend either to be remote or absent.²² Referring to Oscar Wilde’s fairy tales and their effects upon a child audience, Mary Elizabeth Burke-Kennedy tells us that “[f]or children, the suspension of disbelief is automatic, so there is no problem in the concept of a swallow falling in love with a reed, or a hare talking to a human boy, or a giant playing with a group of children.”²³ We might go so far as to say that with children, there is no “suspension” of disbelief, for if there is no disbelief in the first place, then no suspension of it is required. Any wild-conscious storyteller, then, who, metaphorically sea-bound, relies on the waves to guide an adventure through the borderland mist is not only drawn by the wild as the teller of the narrative but also draws other willing seafarers along. The desire to be *willing*—to be open to play—is central to being adept at recognizing wild wisdom and to being capable of re-imagining the world.

Tales that have been categorized as children’s fiction, however, are not the only narratives that express intimations of the wild and its transformative powers. Other texts, not necessarily classified as “fantastic” but generally read by adults, also portray

elements of wild wisdom; that is, they present illustrations of the engagement with the “freeing up” of energy that has been lying dormant. Such “adult” narratives expressing wild intimations, I have discovered, have tended to emerge out of the nineteenth century. Perhaps wild thinking appears to be evading us in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries due to the delusional phallogocentric consciousness that Griffin says is the cause behind our uninterrupted, progressional “dying.” Perhaps our apperceptions, tied to the “monoculture of the mind,” to use Shiva’s expression, have difficulty in imagining other realities outside of monocultural thinking. Although there is no dispute that Victorian morality and social reserve dominated nineteenth-century thought, nonetheless, other realms of difference emerged—realms involving magic, mystery, and the suspension of disbelief—in nineteenth-century literary texts that expressed wild intimations of the “underground” female principle.

Hence, rather like nineteenth-century borderland excursionists, Poe’s “Arabesque” narrators can be of assistance in discerning wild expression in its enablement of what Gardner has called the “null class”—that is, a set with no members. Instead of being immersed in “master consciousness,” Poe’s narrators in his “Arabesque” tales are, as L. Moffitt Cecil points out, “overwhelmed” or “jinn-struck.” “Never,” he says, “are they their own masters.” Dwellings, castles, islands, valleys and cities in “Poe’s world,” Cecil remarks, have a “magical, insubstantial air” (68). Unmastered identity and insubstantiality thus mark Poe’s fictional world as the “I-am-not-what-is,” but *without* a “wasteland” consciousness. In other words, in the consciousness expressed by T.S. Eliot in *The Waste Land*, one hears “Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop, / But there is no water” (lines 358-59), and April, because it stirs

“[d]ull roots with spring rain” in a “dead land,” is “the cruellest month” (lines 1-4). If Eliot had mentioned the *plotbene*, it would have been in reference to the demand by the lord for extra days of service in return for the meaningless obligation of having to give out meager portions of food from a dry harvest. If the memory of the gift-still-freely-given could exist in *The Waste Land*, it would be conceived of as “cruel,” or it would be related to a subject’s obligatory act performed like a robotic machine—a machine with an “automatic hand” that, with empty indifference, “puts a record on the gramophone” (lines 255-56).²⁴ So it is, too, with the “abstract constructions created by the dominant powers,” as Shiva points out, where the “manipulation of nature and society for profits and power [has become] easy” and, I would add, automatic. The “failure of love and relationship,” which, Robert Webster indicates, “is common to many texts by male modernist and postmodernist writers” and the postmodern normalizing effect of “incomprehension” that “celebrates endlessly the products of late twentieth-century capitalist society” (126-27) are impasses that rely upon controlling abstract constructions, which have been granted authenticity. What follows such normalizing effects, according to Fredric Jameson, is a “celebration of discontinuity” within depthlessness or surface representations and a hegemonic appropriation of “vital sources of production” by language which is “media-standardized” and “exhausted” (Jameson 56, 87). However, the unmastered identity of Poe’s narrators and the magical insubstantiality that mark Poe’s nineteenth-century fictional world are not *abstracted* conditions based on hegemonic incomprehension, standardized language systems, and managed, manipulated sources of production. Rather, Poe’s narrators are not “their own masters” because they recognize themselves as the “I-am-not-what-is” but seek,

nonetheless, those “vital sources” that have not been exhausted. In addition, his narrators begin, as it were, *in medias res*, not in order to celebrate discontinuity but to remind readers of the *continuous* nature of wild plots, where, in the “Arabesque” tales, conspicuous points of origins and terminations are obscured.²⁵ In a fictional, nineteenth-century world, like Poe’s, what is added is the wonder of the “I-am-nonetheless.” What is not eliminated in nineteenth-century wild texts is the sounding depths of “double language,” the attentiveness to “double negation,” and the omniferous vitality of the gift-still-freely-given—presented and believed in as reality.²⁶

In some cases, nineteenth-century wild consciousness involves a “doubleness” that speaks outside of reason in the most ordinary forms of communication. In *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), for instance, Lucy Maud Montgomery describes Anne as having a looking-glass friend, Katie Maurice. Montgomery, in *The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career* (1917) explains that “Anne’s Katie Maurice was mine.” In her childhood days, Montgomery would look into her double-reflection in a bookcase that had an oval glass in each door. One of her reflections was Katie Maurice and the other was Lucy Gray, whom, she explains, was not named after Wordsworth’s ballad. In fact, Montgomery writes that she did not remember naming Katie and Lucy. They simply were always known to her by those names:

As far back as consciousness runs, Katie Maurice and Lucy Gray lived in the fairy room behind the bookcase. . . . I would stand before the door and prattle to Katie for hours, giving and receiving confidences. . . . Lucy Gray was grown-up and a widow! . . . She was always sad, and always had dismal stories of her troubles to relate to me; nevertheless, I visited

her scrupulously in turn, lest her feelings should be hurt. . . . All this sounds like the veriest nonsense, but I cannot describe how real it was to me. I never passed through the room without a wave of my hand to Katie in the glass door at the other end. (*Alpine Path* 74)

Although one of her reflections is a widow and the other a little girl, Montgomery demonstrates the reality of the “I-am-not-what-is,” perceived through wild consciousness, and the corresponding *care* for hurt feelings, for shared confidences, and for attentiveness in the acknowledgement of the other through a cheerful wave of a hand when time for conversation is insufficient.

Parting from such friendships, perceived as treasures or gifts, leads to great and serious loss. In *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne explains that Katie sorrowfully cries when Anne has to leave the home where Katie lives in the glass of the bookcase. “Katie,” relates Anne, “was the comfort and consolation of my life”:

We used to pretend that the bookcase was enchanted and that if I only knew the spell I could open the door and step right into the room where Katie Maurice lived. . . . And then Katie Maurice would have taken me by the hand and led me out into a wonderful place, all flowers and sunshine and fairies. (107)

Of course, Anne is drily told to “put such nonsense out of your head” (107), for Montgomery herself describes her own experience with Katie and Lucy as sounding like “the veriest nonsense.” Yet Montgomery’s experience with the “I-am-not-what-is” is an experience “nonetheless,” and so, in a wild text, she provides authenticity for what she believes the Symbolic order apprehends about her own life: “very quiet and simple, you

perceive. Nothing at all exciting about it, nothing that savours of a ‘career’” (*Alpine Path* 47). Through the nineteenth-century “not” of Montgomery, expressed through the orphaned, nineteenth-century “not” of Anne, Katie, mute in the glass, nonetheless laughs, weeps, guides, and communicates—not in order to present the disconnectedness of a fragmented psyche; nor to suggest the “wasteland” that is assumed to follow from a fragmented, broken mirage of the Lacanian ego; nor to present a problem that needs to be defined and corrected—and perhaps avenged—in the social order, but to complicate the inert, established concept of “whole” identity and to assert the existence of the communication of the wild, as it gives the gift-still-freely-given: sustenance in recognition of efforts which overturn.

In nineteenth-century texts, then, the wild emerges due to a perception of borderland mists—where flames of candles burn when the candles appear untouched by fire, where April, however barren, is invested with a fairy grace, where not *an* other, but *other* others—such as the dual presences of Katie Maurice and Lucy Gray, as well as Poe’s sylphs, fairies, genii, and gnomes—provide multiple reflections and “better plots” while they live behind “a thin veil,” as Montgomery describes it, that can never quite be drawn open, except through the assistance of a mysterious wind that flutters it. Through that assistance, one can catch “a glimpse of the enchanting realm beyond,” writes Montgomery, “—only a glimpse—but those glimpses . . . always [make] life worth while” (*Alpine Path* 48).

Because glimpses into the wild cannot be commanded, an attentive, borderland readiness to its manifestations is necessary for the creation of wild plots. Yet even in their creation, the decay of signification that dominates in the Symbolic order—where

the authority of a speaker or speakers trumps the verity of an utterance, as William F. Hanks has observed—elevates the habitus so much so that wild expression goes either unnoticed or is discounted. As a subterranean power, the wild weaves through a plot, overturning the “topsoil” of NON-THREATENING LOGICAL EXPRESSION as it sounds the depths of non-sense and non-identity. Yet there is also a certain recognition within wild consciousness that concedes that some “landscapes” are too dry, hard, and sedimented to be touched by the rolling acuity of the wild “plough,” and so they remain dry, surface-oriented, and ignorant of wild movements. Unable to categorize wild “glimpses” and caked in its assumptions, misconceptions, and overvaluation of rationality, incurious landscapes cannot be affected by the wild and so remain untouched by its presence. Stuck within a social foundation that glorifies the “I am,” such narrative landscapes invite magnified reiterations of heavily traversed, crystallized accounts—accounts which shape themselves into legend.

Notes to Introduction

¹ Robert Louis Stevenson, “Windy Nights,” *A Child’s Garden of Verses* (1885), *The Collected Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Roger C. Lewis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2003) 27.

² Stevenson, “To Alison Cunningham, From her boy,” *A Child’s Garden of Verses*, 23. The poem, in its entirety, is as follows:

*For the long nights you lay awake
And watched for my unworthy sake:
For your most comfortable hand
That led me through the uneven land:
For all the story-books you read:
For all the pains you comforted:
For all you pitied, all you bore,
In sad and happy days of yore:—
My second Mother, my first Wife,
The angel of my infant life—
From the sick child, now well and old,
Take, nurse, the little book you hold!*

*And grant it, Heaven, that all who read
May find as dear a nurse at need,
And every child who lists my rhyme,
In the bright, fireside, nursery clime,
May hear it in as kind a voice
As made my childish days rejoice!*

R.L.S.

³ See, especially, David Darby, Evelyn W. Asher, and John M. Ellis, “German Theory and Criticism,” *The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman, 2nd ed. (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins UP, 2005) 454-58.

⁴ See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Eolian Harp,” *English Romantic Writers*, ed. David Perkins (1796; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967) 399-400.

⁵ See the questions posed by participants at a conference in appreciation of the work of Julia Kristeva in the published conversation entitled, “Dialogue with Julia Kristeva,” *Parallax* 4.3 (July 1998): 5-16.

⁶ John Langdon points out that a plough-boon might take place in the winter, for example. At “Wisbech Barton (Cambridgeshire) in 1419,” he explains, “eighteen customary tenants with eighteen ploughs or plough-teams (*carucae*) came to a winter plough-boon called a ‘benerth.’” See John Langdon, *Horses, Oxen and Technological Innovation: The Use of Draught Animals in English Farming from 1066-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986) 239n200.

⁷ See Roy Harris, introduction, *Course in General Linguistics*, by Ferdinand de Saussure, ed. Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye, and Albert Riedlinger, trans. Roy Harris (1916; Chicago: Open Court, 1983) ix-xvi.

⁸ One definition of “arabesque,” according to the *OED*, is “strangely mixed, fantastic.”

⁹ Susan Griffin, “Split Culture,” *Healing Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, ed. Judith Plant (1984; Philadelphia and Santa Cruz: New Society Publishers, 1989) 5-17.

¹⁰ In its verbal form, magic means “to transform” or “produce,” and it is also used in connection with *away*, or “to cause to disappear,” which makes little sense in terms of Bourdieu’s notion that magic is a ritual designed, mostly, for domesticating male partners. See the etymology of “magic, *v.*,” “magic, *n.*” and “magician, *n.*,” as well as definition 1.a. of “magic, *n.*” in the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Draft Revision Mar. 2009: Oxford University Press, 2009 <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>.

¹¹ In *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Gloria Anzaldúa refers to the process of writing, which involves the development of plots (or what she calls “animated stor[ies]”) as a “borderland” experience. The creative process often involves facing “all sorts of walls” or “floating” through periods of “boundless” waiting, so that the writer finds herself always in-between states of disquiet. Even when waiting, she is therefore not inert. “Living in a state of psychic unrest, in a Borderland,” says Anzaldúa, “is what makes poets write and artists create.” Without directly referring to it, Anzaldúa speaks about what Peter Brooks calls the nightmare of “living entombment” as it is experienced by a female writer/creator who is a mestiza—that is, a woman of “mixed American Spanish and American Indian descent,” as defined by the *OED*. As she writes, says Anzaldúa, her “soul makes itself through the creative act,” and so she feels as though she is “being ground with corn and water,” but she emerges, through the act of writing, as an “agent of transformation.” Knowing how to undergo the process of becoming the ground substance in the metate—an oblong stone vessel in which grain is crushed into powder—is a mode of learning that “transforms living in the Borderlands from a nightmare into a numinous experience. It is always a path/state to something else.” Such continual movement, which I am indicating is a characteristic of the wild, sometimes involves falling downward. However, as Anzaldúa explains it, “in descending to the depths I realize that down is up, and I rise up from and into the deep” (92, 95-96). Wild, “borderland” consciousness, then, involves thinking that is not developed through reason; that is, lacking rational “sense,” it is guided by “non-sense.” For Anzaldúa, the “language of the Borderlands” involves a presentation of images—“fleeting images of the soul in fantasy”—and putting those images on paper “keeps me

alive,” since “[n]othing happens in the ‘real’ world unless it first happens in the images in our heads” (20, 109). Living in the Borderlands—or, as I am saying, possessing wild consciousness—means finding those places of juncture where transformation is possible. As Anzaldúa poetically expresses it, “To live in the Borderlands means you / . . . must live *sin fronteras* / be a crossroads” (216-17). See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 2nd ed. (1987; San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999) and Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 1984) 222.

¹² Mary Beth Rose indicates that in her accession speech, Queen Elizabeth I also refers to herself as “God’s creature, ordained to obey His appointment.” Rose explains that Elizabeth’s initial speeches—including, naturally, her accession speech—mark or place her within “male symbolic systems” that grant the right to rule: “In her early speeches Elizabeth relies heavily on inscribing herself in male symbolic systems like divine right that do indeed represent her as supernaturally and uniquely empowered, with the corollary that her subjects’ role is to submit and obey her just as her role is to submit and obey God” (47). See chapter two, entitled “Gender and the Construction of Royal Authority in the Speeches of Elizabeth I,” in Mary Beth Rose, *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002) 26-54.

¹³ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 2.

¹⁴ Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, The Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition*, ed. Martin Gardner (1865; New York: W.W. Norton, 2000) 20.

¹⁵ Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, 39.

¹⁶ Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 48-49, 69-72.

¹⁷ Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 72.

¹⁸ Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005) 112.

¹⁹ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 342-43.

²⁰ Daly is expert at pointing out associations in terms that prompt a reader to take notice. For example, in *Gyn/Ecology*, she describes the journeying of women, described as Amazons, as “a-mazing” (xvii). Whereas the *OED* describes “beta” as the “second letter of the Greek alphabet,” David Abram, in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Vintage, 1996), explains that when the Greeks adapted the ancient Semitic *aleph-beth* for their own use, they contrived “beta” from “beth,” which meant “house” in the Hebrew script (250). In *Gyn/Ecology*, Daly describes her personal understanding of “beta.” In the process of writing *Beyond God the Father*, she explains, “I had to turn my soul away from what I called ‘beta,’ that is, the tedious, time-consuming, mind-consuming foreground junk that was pushing to pre-occupy me, such as worrying about schedules, paying bills, shopping, et cetera, ad nauseam” (xxi). For Daly, the entire text of *Gyn/Ecology* is a verb (xxx). The adjective, “ludic,” which the *OED* clarifies as being derived from the Latin *ludĕre*, which means “to play,” modifies, for Daly, the noun “cerebration.” According to Daly, *ludic cerebration*, arising “from the lived experiences of be-ing,” is, quite simply, ecstasy (*Gyn/Ecology* 23).

²¹ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 344.

²² Jacqueline Rose, for example, in her introductory essay to the 1992 edition of *The Case of Peter Pan, Or The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1984, 1992), points out that J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* “lays bare a basic

social and psychic structure—that so-called perversion resides in the house of innocence, alarming not because it is alien to innocence but because it is already there” (xii). Rose refers to George Boas, who, she writes, has described the “myth of the Noble Savage” and lists “the Child, Woman, the Folk, the Irrational and Neurotic and the Collective Unconscious, as the various places to which this myth has migrated. They are connected by a fantasy of origins.” The popular understanding of the genre of children’s fiction is that it is caught up in utopian desire—presenting some type of “ultimate beginning where everything is perfect” (138). According to Rose, such an understanding is faulty because conceptions of the child, expressed in writing—which is an expression of language—are used as the means by which we regulate our relationship to language. Such usages deny complexity. “Classifying ‘otherness’ in language,” she writes, “as infantile or child-like reduces it to a state which we have outgrown” (139).

²³ Mary Elizabeth Burke-Kennedy, “Oscar Wilde’s Fairy Tales on Stage in 2001,” *The Wilde Legacy*, ed. Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003) 98.

²⁴ T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, *The Criterion* (October 1922) and *The Dial* (November 1922), Project Gutenberg, 1998: 1-17, 28 February 2009 <<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext98/wslnd11.txt>>.

²⁵ L. Moffitt Cecil refers to Poe’s narrators in the “Arabesque” tales as “casually identified,” where they are situated somewhere in the background of the plot, as coincidental, and so increase an experience of the “patterned strangeness” that distinguish the tales’ sense of wonder. Cecil writes: “A characteristic narrative point of view is a second distinguishing feature of the Arabian tales, most of which are in the first

person, told by casually identified narrators. *Casually* emphasizes the probability that except for coincidence the narrator himself might not be upon the scene at all and that he will be identified to the reader only by name or type and by what little he chooses to reveal of himself in his recital.” See L. Moffitt Cecil, “Poe’s ‘Arabesque,’” *Comparative Literature* 18.1 (Winter 1966): 63-64, 70.

²⁶ Although he is criticizing Herman Melville’s weaknesses as a writer, Arthur Hobson Quinn provides an apt description of nineteenth-century wild thinking in the midst of his criticism of Melville. He writes that Melville’s “confused introductory chapters” of *Moby Dick* (1851) “illustrate again Melville’s besetting weaknesses, his lack of a sense of proportion and his inability to distinguish fact from fiction” (152). That “inability to distinguish fact from fiction” places Melville on the border of wild consciousness—for his writings, according to Quinn, fluctuate in their renditions of proportions—recognizing reality in the imaginary. Nineteenth-century wild thinking can also be identified in Emily Dickinson’s perception of rational facts. Referring to the controversial relationship between Dickinson’s poems and letters, Vivian R. Pollak and Marianne Noble say that “for some readers the idea of dwelling in possibility, or, as she also phrased it, ‘invent[ing] a Life,’ gets at her refusal to respect the lines that traditionally separated fact from fiction, history from prophecy, poetry from prose” (18). Due to her noncompliance in acknowledging those “lines,” Dickinson relates that her life and her father’s, at times, collided. Pollak and Noble quote from a letter that Dickinson had written to her brother in 1851, where she laments her brother’s presence due to the absence of laughter in the house: “We dont *have* many jokes tho’ *now*, it is pretty much all sobriety, and we do not have much poetry, father having made up his mind that its

pretty much all *real life*. Fathers real life and *mine* sometimes come into collision, but as yet, escape unhurt!" (28; emphases in original). Dickinson's comment about her life as differing from her father's "real life" suggests that her poetic consciousness was not confined solely to artful words on a page. See Arthur Hobson Quinn, *American Fiction: An Historical and Critical Survey*, Students' ed. (1936; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964) and Vivian R. Pollak and Marianne Noble, "Emily Dickinson, 1830-1886: A Brief Biography," *A Historical Guide to Emily Dickinson*, ed. Vivian R. Pollack (New York: Oxford UP, 2004) 13-63.

Chapter One:

The Jowls of Legend: "What a Terrible Big Mouth You Have!"

Mary Daly's comment in *Gyn/Ecology* that "those who have continued the Journey know that the Basic Tactic is to keep moving" (342) draws attention to the hearing of the call of the wild, where exploration is unnavigable, and where plans are shaped by unmethodical means. Guided by the call of the wild, a person cannot chart out far-ranging plans, but must move step by step, listening for guidance along the way. Writers who are guided by the wild, then, do not generally produce works that can be easily categorized. In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," for example, Elaine Showalter points out that "feminist critics have made us aware that [Virginia] Woolf belonged to a tradition other than modernism and that this tradition surfaces in her work precisely in those places where criticism has hitherto found obscurities, evasions, implausibilities, and imperfections" (33). The "obscurities, evasions, implausibilities, and imperfections" are part of the reason why expression from the wild zone is muted; it resists categorization. Showalter argues that because a woman's text, when voiced, can only be voiced in the dominant structure, it is both fathered *and* mothered: "[A] woman's text is not only mothered but parented: it . . . must deal with the problems and advantages of both lines of inheritance. . . . Only male writers can forget or mute half of their parentage. The dominant culture need not consider the muted, except to rail against 'the woman's part' in itself" (33). Thus, Showalter draws attention to the notion of interdependency that is particular, as she argues, to women's writing, but which also

involves expression from the wild zone as it moves in and out of the dominant structure—moving in the fashion of an undercurrent, embodying “the social, literary, and cultural heritages of both the muted and the dominant” (31).

Expression that is wild—that is, expression that reflects and communicates interdependencies—requires a writer who is both skilled and imaginative, for it is generally easier to illustrate contrast, or conflict, than it is to articulate “borderland” thinking—or thinking that *does* consider, without railing against it, the value of the muted *in relation to* those who tend either to “rail” against it or to disregard its importance. Such a writer is one who understands not only casting, but *re-casting*, in order to afford new and varied interpretations that extend beyond dominant themes. Such writers are ones who are celebrated by Jack Zipes in his collection of many and varied versions of the tale, *Little Red Riding Hood*. In *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, Zipes commends more recent literary versions of the tale that offer alternative interpretations of the story that interrogate, thwart, or attempt to re-figure the traditional views that have come to be associated with the tale. His comprehensive study of both the oral tradition associated with the story and its written versions is helpful in terms of distinguishing between wild consciousness that is “railed against” and dominant expression that has become, to use Showalter’s phrase, “the subject of legend” (30).

Referring to Ardener’s diagram of the intersecting circles, Showalter argues that “women know what the male crescent is like, even if they have never seen it, because it becomes the subject of legend. . . . But men do not know what is in the wild” (30). Arguing that the wild is “always imaginary”—or, from the male point of view, the

“projection of the unconscious”—Showalter emphasizes a distinction not only between what is known and not known, but between what is “wild” and what is “legend.” That distinction necessarily begs the question: What, then, determines “the subject of legend”? Or, to ask the question in another way, how does the subject of legend differ from the call of the wild? Showalter does not delve into the answers to those questions, except to point out that the male crescent that does not include women exists within the dominant realm of language, and so expression from the exclusively male space is recognized. A study of aspects from the story, *Little Red Riding Hood*, can help to clarify why the tale as we know it has become a part of western mythical and legendary culture, whereas its oral versions have been muted.

In both his prologue and epilogue to *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, Zipes points out that “a separate oral tradition” involving the story about Little Red Riding Hood, “controlled by peasants and most likely by women,” existed before Charles Perrault “adapted the story of the girl who went into the woods to visit her grandmother for an upper-class audience in France at the end of the 17th century” (7). Perrault borrowed from the oral tradition when he created his version of the tale in 1697, Zipes explains, and made significant changes. Those substantial changes so altered the existing oral versions that his version became “appropriated as his own . . . in the name of a particular sex and social class.”¹ “Fixing the ground rules and sexual regulations” for subsequent interpretive comprehension and “debate,” Perrault’s version, says Zipes, set up certain endorsed precepts that

were extended by the Brothers Grimm and largely accepted by most writers and storytellers in the Western world. My thesis is that Perrault

transformed a hopeful oral tale about the initiation of a young girl into a tragic one of violence in which the girl is blamed for her own violation.

Little Red Riding Hood is thus the tale of a double violence. (7-8)

The violence Little Red Riding Hood is forced to confront through the wolf's advances becomes a "double violence" in that Perrault's version of the tale subsumes or consumes the earlier oral versions and legitimizes an interpretation—that is, its "ground rules" are incorporated into the "embodied history" of the habitus—that victimizes the victim.

Although one might argue that the actual early oral versions "controlled by peasants and most likely by women" can never be recovered—since in order to know them, they must have been written down—nevertheless, the versions that Perrault drew from in the creation of his own tale have not attained the celebrated status of Perrault's tragic, violent version. Zipes refers to the earlier versions as possessing a "separate tradition" of their own in order to distinguish the "living entombment"—to use Peter Brooks's phrase—of the variants not influenced by Perrault's version and separated from common, prevalent knowledge from Perrault's dominating, all-encompassing adaptation. The elusive quality of the oral versions connects them with the wild and with wild thinking more so than Perrault's version since Perrault's story *is* so well known whereas the variants he drew from are not. The "separate" oral tradition is indeed separate, even though it influenced Perrault's thinking, in that it represents what Martin Gardner calls the "null class." In other words, we might, like Lewis Carroll's White King who commends Alice, compliment Jack Zipes and the "folklorists, ethnologists and historians" who have garnered together "evidence" of the oral tradition (Zipes 7) on "having keen enough eyesight to see nobody at a great distance down the road" (Gardner

143n5). Zipes assigns to the peasant/woman's storytelling culture an entire "separate oral tradition" and thus engages interest in otherwise "buried," muted forms of the tale. Influenced by the oral tradition, Perrault nevertheless omitted those elements that made the tale "hopeful," and he also, through the loss of such elements, "buried" or "entombed" details that admitted happenstances involving paths of initiation and alternative choices. Yet the wild, as it moves in its undulating, subterranean rhythms, overturns buried plots—providing illusions of the oral—such as Paul Delarue's "The Story of Grandmother"—even as they are inscribed in writing on a page.

To go a bit further, we might consider wild consciousness as emerging on the page, as if it were orally transmitted, in the context of one of Emily Dickinson's poems, "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" "Nobody," who is the speaker in the poem, makes a quick assumption that the reader is answering in the affirmative as being a "Nobody," too, and so seems to realize, all of a sudden, through inquiry, that two "Nobodies" happen to exist: "Then there's a pair of us? / Don't tell! they'd advertise – you know!" Dickinson's narrator engages a reader's interest in associating with a "Nobody" by creating a hushed conversation, where reader and narrator are bound together in secrecy, agreeing together to remain unacknowledged—to remain "buried," as it were. So it is with the pre-Perraultian oral versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, which emerged through the storytelling of women and peasants who did not seek to publish the tales they told at firesides and while tackling "household chores or harvesting tasks" (Tatar 37). Dickinson's narrator speaks from the page, asking questions rather like an oral storyteller who engages with an audience before relating—and during the relation of—a tale. "Don't tell!" a storyteller might say to the listening audience, "for I am about to

unravel a mysterious tale only for your ears.” Dickinson then likens the voices of those who like to “advertise” their names—who like to be known—to frogs croaking in June:

How dreary – to be – Somebody!

How public – like a Frog –

To tell one’s name – the livelong June –

To an admiring Bog! (*Complete Poems* 133)

Telling one’s name over and over monotonously is equivalent to being “Somebody,” which Dickinson’s narrator associates with the “public”—that is, the social or Symbolic order. The narrator, “Nobody,” speaks, as does the “Frog,” but there is all the difference in the speaking. The “Frog,” like those who “advertise,” seeks and gains admiration throughout the “livelong June,” or the “summer” of life, by naming itself—by possessing a name and relating it again and again. A “Nobody” naturally finds such repetitious naming of one’s self as “dreary,” for there is nothing new or captivating to be “discussed” in the “Bog.” The “Bog,” or the “embodied history” of the habitus, approves of and admires the famed or “advertised” “Somebodies” since, in the Symbolic realm of language, so much attention is given to that which is named and honored. In not being “named,” the wild may be mute in the *Bog*, but it nonetheless speaks elsewhere—somewhere where rhythms and responses are appreciated not because of the importance of the *teller*, but because of the shared rhythms themselves, where a teller recognizes the needful reliance on a rhythm that may change in mid-course—depending upon the emergence of other “nobodies” who might alter the plan of a tale. “Are you – Nobody – Too?” asks Dickinson’s narrator. Then, like the “Sylphs . . . Fairies . . . Genii, and . . . Gnomes” who, in Poe’s “The Domain of Arnheim,” help to introduce a new,

“weird symmetry” that communicates through a different, better social interconnection, the “pair” of “Nobodies” in Dickinson’s poem can create a new and better sort of social exchange—*outside* of the realm of the “Bog,” and thus engage interest in the language of secrets—a language that celebrates curiosity and conceals as it reveals, lies as it speaks the truth. As Dickinson relates in another poem, the truth, even if it is not a rational, accepted truth of the habitus, should be spoken—should be told—but not as regularly expected, nor should it be repeated, moralistically, as if repetition brings enlightenment. Its ability to be comprehended and acknowledged lies in secret—on and in a path that is circuitous. “Tell all the Truth,” the narrator advises, “but tell it slant – / Success in Circuit lies” (*Complete Poems* 506). Perrault’s version of *Little Red Riding Hood* does not follow the circuitous path.

Unlike the stories from the oral tradition, Perrault’s version significantly modifies the ending of the Little Red Riding Hood story as Perrault was intent on providing an admonitory moral addressed to young children, especially girls, rather than addressing it, for example, to adult males who target young children as victims of their attacks. Hence, in Perrault’s version, Little Red Riding Hood does not escape being devoured by the wolf. At the end of the tale, the moral reads: “One sees here that young children, / Especially young girls, / Pretty, well brought-up, and gentle, / Should never listen to anyone who happens by, / And if this occurs, it is not so strange / When the wolf should eat them” (93). Through the “durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations” that Bourdieu calls the habitus, Perrault’s cautionary moral is woven into the variant created by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in 1812. As in Perrault’s version, both the grandmother and Little Red Cap, as she is called in the Grimm’s

version, are swallowed by the wolf, but a hunter extricates them from the wolf's belly. Once rescued, the young girl thinks to herself: "Never again in your life will you stray by yourself into the woods when your mother has forbidden it" (137). Such cautionary elements had existed in the oral tradition of the tale that emerged out of the late Middle Ages, but with a difference. A storyteller, Zipes points out, might catch up a child at the words "the better to eat you with!" as part of the "give and take between narrator and listeners. But the child was not devoured by the teller, who was more interested in showing care for children, nor does it seem that the little girl was killed in any of the folk-tale versions. She shrewdly outwits the wolf and saves herself. No help from granny, hunter, or father!" (23). Nonetheless, the variants that survive in western culture are those of Perrault and the Grimm brothers, where either the wolf or a male hunter are the mastering, conquering champions.

Although alive in an independent oral tradition, the folk tales that portray Little Red Riding Hood as perceptive and quick-witted are little known by the majority of parents who read the tale of Little Red Riding Hood to their children. "Thanks to the research of Paul Delarue" in the nineteenth century, Zipes points out, a version reflecting the oral tradition, written by Delarue, exists in print, and is entitled "The Story of Grandmother" (recorded in *Niève* around 1885). In the oral storytelling versions, as in Delarue's written re-telling, the wolf is a werewolf—a figure feared in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where, like witches, men were accused of being werewolves and were charged and tried for "having devoured children and having committed other sinful acts" (19-21). Thus, both violence and sexuality have always been associated with the tale, but Zipes contends that Perrault's perspective of sexuality, based on a fear of

women, is the view that continues in the present age, which “reflects general male attitudes about women, portrayed as eager to be seduced or raped” (348). Our “culture industry” makes profits, he notes, “by gambling with our subliminal sexual phantasies and reinforcing male notions of rape” (356). In her discussion of nineteenth-century retellings of the tale, Maria Tatar points out that Little Red Riding Hood does not take the direct path to her grandmother’s house and “dallies in the woods, thereby becoming responsible for her grandmother’s death” (38). If a young girl strays from the path and encounters violence, she is thus the one to blame. If she is to protect herself, according to James Thurber’s 1939 American variant of the tale, she, like her devourer, must resort to violence. “Even in a nightcap,” Thurber writes, “a wolf does not look any more like your grandmother than the Metro-Goldwyn lion looks like Calvin Coolidge. So the little girl took an automatic out of her basket and shot the wolf dead” (229). In his concluding sentence to *The Trials and Tribulations*, Zipes seeks other creative variants that may change the western conception of violence. He writes that “the hope in the best of the more recent re-framings of the Red Riding Hood story, as Angela Carter and Sally Miller Gearhart demonstrate, is that women do not have to reproduce the violence of men to change the rhetoric of violence” (381). In other words, Carter and Gearhart have attempted to “re-frame[e]” the Perrault/Grimm versions that have been “embodied” as history, and so Zipes finds their adaptations as the “best.” However, although Carter and Gearhart have *attempted* to search for “better plots,” their variants still do not contemplate the wild. In other words, Carter and Gearhart do not cast their “re-framings” outside the prevailing “reason” of the culture industry.

The ability to create better plots involves more than simply turning violence upon its head by yielding to its desire, which is, ultimately, what the versions by Carter and Gearhart accomplish, for in both of their stories, although the figure of Little Red Riding Hood embraces her sexuality and, rather than fearing the wolf, unites with him, the fulfillment of *his* desires ends up being paramount in both tales. In Carter's story, the nameless adolescent, known only as "she," will "appease" him with her "immaculate flesh" and "will pick out the lice from his pelt and perhaps she will put the lice into her mouth and eat them, as he will bid her" (291). In Gearhart's story, Leopold the Wolf and Roja unite in "ties of kinship" to perform acts of euthanasia for the acquaintances of Roja's girlfriend, Ermendina, as Leopold has done for Roja's grandmother, so that Leopold can be supplied with blood to paint on his jowls for his "charade" in front of his cruel, bloodthirsty pack, for Leopold is a closet vegetarian (342). Carter's werewolf and Leopold, even though he is a peaceable vegetarian, remain in control and call the shots—as does Perrault's wolf and the hunter in the variant by the Grimm brothers—for the actualization of *their* desires still takes precedence, even if the Red Riding Hood figures appear to accept their own sexuality. Both wolves still slaughter others, and Carter's "she" and Gearhart's Roja—dallying in the woods—lose their grandmothers, and are excluded from their bedsides when they die, under the guilt-free, dominating powers of the wolf.

Even though Carter's Red Riding Hood performs a striptease in front of the werewolf—a narrative element that is included in the stories of the oral tradition—and even though Gearhart's Roja "frolicked her way to Ermendina's to embark on a life of increasingly intense love and lust" (342), both Red Riding Hood figures emerge in the

stories within Showalter's "crescent" of legend. Carter and Gearhart emphasize sexual desire and introduce different conceptions of gender to the tale, but neither writer gives her Red Riding Hood figure the shrewd mind that she possesses in the oral storytelling versions. In Gearhart's story, Roja may not collaborate in her own rape, but she assists in the mercy killing of people she does not even know in order to perpetuate the violence required by the wolf pack. Although Zipes commends the variants by Carter and Gearhart, and although they do illustrate the *search* for better plots, what is still missing from their versions, is, in fact, the wild.

The part of the tale that requires more attention in order to discover where the wild emerges is the part that describes the paths in the woods. Due to the well-established influence of Perrault and the Grimm brothers, the wild is perceived as being connected with the wolf. In Perrault's version, Little Red Riding Hood only speaks with the wolf because she does not know "that it is dangerous to stop and listen to a wolf" (91). In the version by the Grimm brothers, Little Red Cap's mother warns her not to "tarry on your way, and don't stray from the path" (135). In Thurber's version, a big wolf waits "in a dark forest for a little girl to come along" (229), and in Carter's story, the "cunning" wolf possesses the eyes of "forest assassins" (282). Having abandoned the pastoral setting of his youth on the tundra, Leopold, in Gearhart's tale, is familiar with the woods since he spends "extensive time foraging for food and learning to grind herbs and berries between his large canine teeth" (335). And in "The Story of Grandmother," recorded by Delarue and based on oral versions of folklore, the werewolf, upon asking about the little girl's destination at the crossway, knows immediately the two paths that lead to the little girl's grandmother's house, and asks her

which one she plans to take (21). In practically all versions of the tale, it is assumed that the wolf is familiar with the woods, which is natural enough, but that assumption also connects the wolf to the wild. Although, literally speaking, wolves prowl through the wilds of the woods, familiar with its paths, slopes, and rivulets, the *figurative*, or allegorical, wolves and werewolves of the Little Red Riding Hood tale choose to take the most direct path to grandmother's house. Unlike a wild animal that would camouflage itself within the brush and under the leaves of trees and bushes, sneaking and winding around the outskirts of a settlement, the wolf of the tale steps directly out to confront the little girl and then takes a path—and a direct one at that—in order to accomplish his mission: the devouring of the grandmother and domination over—sexual or otherwise—the girl. In the tales, the wolf has an agenda and is driven to accomplish that agenda in a planned, organized, unambiguous manner, with attention on him and his desire as the ultimate focus for his directed steps. He foresees no obstacle that might upset his plans; he is not wary or stealthy. In short, the wolf is not wild.

The wolf, not being wild, represents Showalter's "crescent" of legend because he has a clear, strong, howling voice, is both unafraid and guilt-free in terms of his agenda, and can rise and remain in culture as the mythical hero who, by transferring blame to Little Red Riding Hood, can be exonerated and thus masquerade as and be remembered as a "wild," dark force that captures the imagination and exults in that attention. Even in the version by the Grimm brothers, where the wolf is killed by the hunter, the wolf remains legendary because Little Red Cap will "[n]ever again in [her] life" stray by herself in the woods. Whereas Daly's call of the wild opens different doors or portals for women's expression, the wolf in the written tradition of the Red Riding Hood tales

shuts them closed—or mutes them—so that his feats and appetites are either feared or respected—or both feared *and* respected. The dominant wolf masquerades as a wild figure, but he has a public voice—like Emily Dickinson’s “Frog”—and a loud one at that, and does not identify—as, ironically, the literal animal does—with shadows or stealth. If the wolf could be said to appreciate stealth at all, it would be in his ability to arrive at grandmother’s house first; however, such an accomplishment is not based on stealth, but on speed, and speed is not interested in winding, circuitous, uneven paths. Carter’s variant of the tale emphasizes the legendary aspects of the wolf’s voice. She writes: “Hark! his long, wavering howl . . . an aria of fear made audible” (282).

Whereas wolves in the wild howl in a communal chorus, the wolf in the tales of Little Red Riding Hood performs solo. The wolf’s “aria” is one which silences other songs—even those of his own pack.

The figure who best represents the workings of the wild in the Little Red Riding Hood tales is Little Red Riding Hood herself. Although she has an agenda—she is traveling to her grandmother’s house to bring her food in a basket—she dallies. Ever since Perrault’s version, her dallying has been the cause for her blame—a condition that strikes Tatar as odd. Referring as well to other nineteenth-century cautionary tales, Tatar remarks that the “cardinal sin of youth is disobedience, and it is a sin that habitually demands the death penalty. What is particularly odd about these stories is that the pedagogical program of each tale clashes so starkly with the tale’s content: survival and good fortune are promoted through images of death and disaster” (9). Although Little Red Riding Hood does not survive in Perrault’s version, those who read the tale are cautioned by the moral to “stay on the proper path” or else meet with disaster. Dallying

in the woods, in unknown spaces, or on winding paths, is against the rules of the dominant structure. We can even go so far as to say that dallying presents a threat to the dominant realm. But why should dallying—why should the enjoyment of “gathering nuts, running after butterflies, and making bouquets of small flowers which she found,” as Perrault describes Little Red Riding Hood’s adventure on the “longer path” (92), be so condemned—so fraught with images of subsequent disaster and death? If Little Red Riding Hood’s divergence from the main, shorter path is *not* a threat, why are the tales that survive *not* the tales of the pre-Perraultian oral tradition? Why has western culture eliminated the cunning shrewdness of Little Red Riding Hood and replaced it with the “cunning” ferociousness, to use Angela Carter’s word-illustration (282) of the wolf? On the surface, the tale is cautionary in order to teach children obedience, ostensibly to protect them from harm. But why not teach a young child how to protect herself through wise observance and through her wits? Perhaps the answer to that question is that such instruction is too complicated. The short, direct path says: “This is the rule; keep to it.” The winding path becomes too ambiguous, for flowers, butterflies and nuts possess their own stores of knowledge—knowledge concerning growth, fertilization, and sustenance for survival—that teach alternative ways of being than that which is taught on the shorter, direct paths. In short, Little Red Riding Hood’s divergence from the proper path might make her a bit too clever, a bit too independent, and a bit too unconcerned with the ears, eyes, and teeth of the wolf—those dominant elements that both command and crave attention.

In “Little Red Cap,” the variant written by the Grimm brothers, Little Red Cap’s grandmother is “sick and weak,” and the basket of cake and wine is meant to “strengthen

her” (135). After being rescued by the hunter, her grandmother does take the time to eat the cake and drink the wine, but her sustenance and ensuing strength is due to her miraculous “rebirth” out of the stomach of the wolf due to the expertise of the male hunter. In the Grimm brother’s version, the hunter appears to be a mythic Zeus, who, with the aid of the ax or hammer of Hephaestus, had split his head in order to “conceive” Athena, even though he lacked a womb. (Of course, the story of Zeus’s “birthing” of Athena does not give credit to Metis, Athena’s mother, whom Zeus had swallowed when she was pregnant with Athena). The hunter commands the attention of a god in the story by the Grimm brothers, for in “Little Red Cap,” life does not exist and cannot be sustained without aggressive, violent male intervention. In fact, even Little Red Cap’s divergence from the path and her wandering in the woods is directed by the wolf. “Listen, Little Red Cap,” he says to her, “have you seen the pretty flowers which are in the woods? Why don’t you look around you? I believe that you haven’t even noticed how lovely the birds are singing” (136). So, Little Red Cap “plunged into the woods and looked for flowers. And each time she plucked one, she believed she saw another one even prettier and ran after it further into the woods” (136). In the meantime, of course, the wolf swallows up the grandmother and dons her clothing, and Little Red Cap arrives at the house later, seemingly too late to provide the cake and wine that her grandmother needs. What is not generally thought about, however, is how it is that Little Red Cap, after having been drawn further and further into the woods, is able to find her way out in order to arrive at her grandmother’s house. The Grimm brothers simply explain that only after Little Red Cap collects as many flowers as she can carry does “she continue on her way to her grandmother” (136).

Little Red Cap's error, in terms of the dominant ideology, is not that she diverges from the path so much as that she takes too much time in her flower collecting. So, when she chides herself by saying, "Never again in your life will you stray by yourself into the woods," she shapes her resolve not upon a fear of losing her way in the woods, but upon the idea that the time spent in the woods had been "wasted" since disaster found its way to her grandmother before she could avert it. Having been stolen by the wolf, her outward identity becomes more important at the end of the tale than her inward identity. Although her outward identity is rescued by the hunter, what is grievously lost is her inward desire—that is, the desire to give the gift-still-freely-given. When the wolf suggests that she "look around" her, Little Red Cap notices "how the sun had broken through the trees and everything around her was filled with beautiful flowers. So she thought to herself: Well, if I were to bring grandmother a bunch of flowers, she would like that" (136). Her subsequent wandering from the path is thus not based solely on the wolf's suggestion. She makes her own decision due to the desire to capture a moment of beauty and give it to another.

Because of the hunter's rescue at the end of the tale by the Grimms, the grandmother is able to receive the initial gift of the wine and cake, but the flowers disappear from the story as soon as Little Red Cap arrives at her grandmother's house. The gift of the flowers, reflecting the beauty of a moment when the sun had broken through the trees, is lost in favor of the practical gift of food. The "truth" found on the circuitous path, to refer back to Dickinson's poem, "Tell all the Truth," is silenced, and so the wild—which, like the reed-song in *The Wind in the Willows* that defines itself as a "*Helper and healer*"—cannot heal or restore. The gift-still-freely-given is eliminated

from the plot constructed by the Grimm brothers, and what remains in their plot is the *obligatory* plough-boon—the adult gift of food sent by Little Red Cap’s mother. What remains is what both Dickinson—in “I’m Nobody! Who are You”—and Lewis Hyde—in *The Gift*—refer to as advertising. For Dickinson’s narrator, advertising is associated with being public—a “Somebody” repeating one’s name in the “Bog”—and so shared interconnections between “Nobodies” must be kept secret in order to avoid being made public, or consumed, by those who “advertise.” Lewis Hyde describes one who advertises in western consumer culture as a “usurer” who “seeks out the bonds of affection and the liveliness of the imagination to move his own product for his own profit.” Advertising becomes a “permanent part” of “children’s culture,” he explains, when children “switch their affections” to products. So, Hyde asks, “what is the fate of affection and imagination if, whenever we are drawn in their direction, we must pass a stranger collecting tolls? . . . Once goodwill has been separated from its vehicles, matter will increase without spirit. Objects will begin to appear that carry no social or spiritual feeling, though they are the product of human hands” (238). What is given in the basket of cake and wine in “Little Red Cap” is something that can be named—like Dickinson’s Frog that announces its name “the livelong June.” It exists in the Symbolic order and is consumed by Little Red Cap’s grandmother, but the “toll” collected in its transference is the public “culture’s” gaining of allegiance to its profit-seeking agenda, where the hunter’s “shearing knife” is uplifted symbolically while it cuts to the quick the “bonds of affection and the liveliness of the imagination” that had inspired Little Red Cap to give the beauty of a moment to her grandmother. The brief, wild moment of sharing the gift-

still-freely-given vanishes and is replaced with a resolve to agree with the “usury” of the advertiser—to become an approving receiver of the public voicings of the “Bog.”

In contrast, a text that celebrates the-gift-still-freely-given and so celebrates the desire to take time for wild roving—rather than perceiving it, as does Little Red Cap at the end of the Grimm brothers’ tale, as a waste of time that leads to disaster—is Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *The Children’s Hour*. Longfellow begins by describing a liminal time: “Between the dark and the daylight, / When the night is beginning to lower,” and then describes three daughters literally “descending” the hall stair, but also “descending” upon the father-narrator in a surprise “raid.” The narrator metaphorically describes himself as a castle, and when the girls “surround” him, he is unable to escape. Their “arms” are not military arms, yet they advance over his “arms”—that is, the “arms and back of my chair,” which prove to be defenseless, for the besieging daughters “seem to be everywhere.” Their arms do not destroy, but rather “entwine” about their father, so that he cannot get away, nor does he want to: “I have you fast in my fortress, / And will not let you depart, / But put you down into the dungeon / In the round-tower of my heart.” Instead of silencing, burying, or omitting the gifts that increase the “bonds of affection and the liveliness of the imagination,” to use Hyde’s phrase, Longfellow’s narrator welcomes them and does not perceive them as a threat, nor does he want to glorify himself, for he describes his “castle” as the “Mouse-Tower on the Rhine.”

Glenna Lang suggests that Longfellow, on a European excursion, may have seen the castle known as the Mouse-Tower when he travelled through Germany. “According to German lore,” she explains, “a wicked bishop of the tenth century who cruelly mistreated his subjects retreated to this tower in an attempt to escape being devoured by

mice” (30). Although the “wicked bishop” ran from the mice, Longfellow’s narrator welcomes the three “mice,” who, in their siege, are able to “scale the wall” of “an old mustache as I am.” Although mice are generally perceived of as not noteworthy, except in the negative sense as being an undesired nuisance or a threat to health and stored provisions,² in many folk and fairy tales, they—like young, neglected, and many times poor girls—possess greater powers than their outward “worthlessness” suggests.³ Beryl Rowland explains that mice “infesting the fields,” in the beliefs of various cultures, were considered “the souls of stillborn children and of children deceased in early infancy who were condemned to wander the earth. The mice who ate up the cruel archbishop of Mainz . . . were simply the souls of the poor whom he had burned alive” (128-29). Thus, by beginning his rhyme during a liminal time—“Between the dark and the daylight / When the night is beginning to lower”—Longfellow calls to mind the mysterious powers that are awakened during a time—an hour—when borderland consciousness allows belief in the mysterious to prevail.

In the sense that the girls, as mice, represent the “souls of the poor,” who do not devour Longfellow’s narrator but reside as signifiers of ties or “bonds of affection” in “the round-tower of [his] heart,” Longfellow’s text celebrates the wild in the same way that many folk tales do—for implicit in the narrator’s description of the “siege” is a belief in the sort of magic that moves and entwines, and in so doing, transforms. Lewis Hyde points out that a gift must move; it must be given away, or else it “ceases to be a gift. The spirit of a gift is kept alive by its constant donation” (xiv). Folktales, he explains, because they are “told in a more interior language,” help to instruct us about worth in what is commonly perceived of as insignificant or as a waste: “In folk tales the

gift is often something seemingly worthless—ashes or coals or leaves or straw—but when the puzzled recipient carries it to his doorstep, he finds it has turned to gold. Such tales declare that the motion of the gift from the world of the donor to the doorsill of the recipient is sufficient to transmute it from dross to gold” (34). In Longfellow’s rhyme, the gift of the “merry . . . raid from the hall” is perceived of as “gold,” for the narrator says that he will cherish the gift from his daughters “forever, / Yes, forever and a day, / Till the walls shall crumble to ruin, / And moulder in dust away!” He has, as it were, been caught up with and captivated by the plots of the children, and so finds and celebrates times of besiegement. In “Little Red Cap,” however, the Grimm brothers eliminate the wild gift of Little Red Cap’s flowers and her desire to share part of her roving experience with her grandmother. When she reaches her grandmother’s doorsill, the flowers are withdrawn from the plot, for the Grimm brothers neglect that “trivial” element in order to emphasize, instead, the hunter’s rescue.

In denying Little Red Cap’s desire to give and to keep the gift moving through shared “bonds of affection” that increase “the liveliness of the imagination,” the Grimm brothers mute the voice of the wild. Due to Little Red Cap’s resolve to waste time no longer on mysterious paths and in liminal spaces, the gift of the child—albeit not the gift of the adult mother—is forever lost, and so the growth of the relationship between grandmother and granddaughter is diminished. Perhaps, we may surmise, Little Red Cap’s grandmother will grow cultivated flowers in a garden to cut and bring inside in order to brighten her house, but the flowers from the woods, which may have possessed more miraculous healing powers than the hunter’s miraculous shearing knife, are forever barred from their lives and homes. Neither Little Red Cap nor her grandmother will

venture from their houses, no matter how discernible the call of the wild may be. When Little Red Cap makes the decision to collect the flowers, she embarks upon the journey that Daly refers to when she writes that “those who have continued the Journey know that the Basic Tactic is to keep moving.” However, by the tale’s end, the journey has ended, both Little Red Cap and her grandmother are shut up like the wife of Peter, Peter Pumpkin Eater, and the “Basic Tactic,” ascertained through wild journeying, remains unlearned.⁴

In the folk-tale versions about Little Red Riding Hood, however, Daly’s notion of the Basic Tactic is incorporated into the narratives. Daly writes that “there is not one tactic for each specific situation [as we follow] the call of our undomesticated, wild being” (342-43). Listening for and to the call of the wild involves the ability to make decisions as a situation arises. One then moves from that point to the next, using observational skills and one’s wits in order to determine future steps—knowing, too, that other forces beyond one’s self may provide assistance if one can recognize the guiding prompts. In “The Story of Grandmother,” the written version representing the oral tradition of the tale, the young girl escapes being devoured by the werewolf by entreating him to allow her to go outside so that she can relieve herself. The werewolf allows it but tells her to “make it quick.” Before she steps outside, however, the werewolf ties “a woolen rope to her foot. . . . When the little girl was outside, she tied the end of the rope to a plum tree in the courtyard. The werewolf became impatient and said: ‘Are you making a load out there? Are you making a load?’ When he realized that no one was answering him, he jumped out of bed and saw that the little girl had escaped” (qtd. in Zipes, *Trials* 23). The crass associations of the oral versions would not have

appealed to Perrault, who was writing for an upper-class audience affiliated with the French court. However, young children and adolescents listening to a storyteller would enjoy the scatological humor, and young children, familiar with adults asking them questions about bodily needs, would not yet have grown unaccustomed to the werewolf's question. Younger children, already familiar with or growing familiar with the experience of telling adults about bodily urges, and coming to the understanding that adults cannot tell when or if they need to relieve themselves, discover that they possess knowledge that their elders can only guess at. "The Story of Grandmother" draws upon the cleverness of children—and, in the story, of a young *girl* in particular—to encourage an astuteness that they acquire early in life and to approve of their using their perspicacity when they recognize danger.

Emphasizing the different focus of Perrault and the Grimm brothers, Tatar points out that

[n]either Perrault nor the Brothers Grimm shows us the protagonist of 'Little Red Riding Hood' relieving herself outdoors or stripping before the wolf, but each works hard to build tension in the scene that unfolds in the bedroom right before the wolf pounces on his *unwary* victim. More importantly, both Perrault and the Brothers Grimm saw to it that the victim was not without blame. (37-38; emphasis added)

The scene that unfolds before the wolves of Perrault and the Grimm brothers pounce on the little girl is the familiar scene where she exclaims, for example, in the case of Perrault, "What big ears you have, grandmother!" (93), and in the variant by the Grimm brothers, "Oh, grandmother, what a terrible big mouth you have!" (137). In Perrault's

version, Little Red Riding Hood exclaims about the wolf's arms, legs, ears, eyes, and teeth. The Grimm brothers have Little Red Cap blurt out interjections about his ears, eyes, hands, and mouth. Through such exclamations, the young girl is perceived by readers, as Tatar illustrates it, as "unwary." She is to blame for wandering too long on the path to her grandmother's house and arriving after the wolf has donned her grandmother's clothes. She is not only incautious, but appears, as well, to be downright stupid. As Thurber's variant attests, "even in a nightcap a wolf does not look any more like your grandmother than the Metro-Goldwyn lion looks like Calvin Coolidge." As readers, we assume that this is a case when we are supposed to continue to suspend disbelief; however, "The Story of Grandmother" uses the interjectional scene not to portray the girl's incautiousness or stupidity, but to augment her discernment and competence.

As Tatar points out, both Perrault's and the Grimm brothers' variants eliminate the striptease that is a narrative element in "The Story of Grandmother." "Is it any wonder," she asks, that stories that occupied time during "repetitive household chores or harvesting tasks" would be "filled with bawdy episodes" (37)? However, beyond fulfilling the role of providing racy entertainment, the striptease in "The Story of Grandmother" provides the means through which the young girl can demonstrate her shrewdness. When a grandchild visits her grandmother, it is not uncommon for a grandmother to help her granddaughter undress before bed. If one visualizes a storyteller portraying the events in the tale, one might imagine the storyteller raising her or his eyebrows when the werewolf tells his newly acquired granddaughter to throw her apron into the fire. Grandmothers, of course, have been infamous for both wearing and

teaching young girls to wear aprons in order to protect their clothing underneath. However, “each time she asked where she should put all her other clothes, the bodice, the dress, the petticoat, and the long stockings, the werewolf responded: ‘Throw them into the fire, my child, you won’t be needing them any more’” (qtd. in Zipes, *Trials* 21-22). Listeners of the tale would know and understand that grandmothers do not burn clothing, unless there is some strong reason for doing so, such as their having been contaminated by disease. Thus, listeners would know that the young girl is not unaware of the dangerous situation she walked into when she stepped through her grandmother’s door—especially since the werewolf’s words, “you won’t be needing them anymore,” express, clearly, that she is going to be devoured. Although the striptease is designed to be arousing, one can also imagine the girl searching for her grandmother, perhaps hidden under the bed, or shoved and trapped behind a cupboard. With his attention on the girl’s body, the wolf may not notice that she is not looking at *him*, but is, instead, searching both for the possibility that her grandmother may still be alive, albeit wounded or unconscious, and for a way of escape.

Eventually, however, as the story progresses, the girl has to face the werewolf, recognizing that she is meant to suffer the same unfortunate end as her grandmother. Still attempting to devise a means of escape, however, the girl delays as much as she can by flattering the werewolf and hoping to divert him from his ultimate goal. She comments about his excessive hairiness and about his large nails, his massive shoulders, immense ears, substantial nostrils, and finally—she waits until the last for this one—his big mouth. The key words, of course, are “large” and “big”—words designed to delight and distract the werewolf. In “The Story of Grandmother,” the young girl plays the role

of the storyteller. She is Scheherazade, wielding the technique of the snakelike arabesque of the plot, transforming and re-casting the situation so that its conclusion proceeds in her favor. She is a Trickstress familiar with borderland paths, more accustomed to looking not inward—at four confining walls and at the face and throat of the werewolf—but outward, upon the path of needles that weaves its way through the wilderness.

In “The Story of Grandmother,” when the girl initially meets the werewolf at the crossway, he asks her about the path she plans to take—“the path of needles or the path of pins.” The little girl tells him that she is taking the path of needles. “All right, then I’ll take the path of pins,” responds the werewolf (qtd. in Zipes, *Trials* 21). In “Red Riding Hood: An Interpretation from Anthropology,” Mary Douglas, relying on the work of Yvonne Verdier—a feminist anthropologist who, in the twentieth century, interviewed rustic peasants, particularly the “oldest old women” (1), in the village of Minot, Burgundy—points out that, in the oral tradition of the story in France, “different versions put different answers into [the girl’s] mouth. The answer she gives does not matter; the important thing is the mention of the two paths.” Douglas explains that a young peasant girl, after puberty, would stay for the winter season in another village with a dressmaker, and that season “was like a period of ritual seclusion, a light hearted time of initiation into girlhood.” A French listener would know that a reference to pins and needles in a story is suggestive not only of an initiation into sexual knowledge, but of “the sequence of roles that the female child will go through in her life.” Pins represent temporary fastenings, or temporary alliances—of young girls receiving, for example, pins as gifts from admirers. A needle, which has an opening through which a

thread is pulled, represents an adult woman, initiated into sexual awareness and experience. Needles, says Douglas, “are employed with skill and perseverance; they make permanent ties.” Thus, a girl who stays with a dressmaker learns layered concepts—literal as well as figurative meanings—as she becomes sophisticated in her sewing. The reference to pins and needles and the choice the girl makes, Douglas points out, “is in all the versions before Perrault and the Grimms tidied them up” (4).

In terms of the tale’s sexual connotations, then, when the young girl escapes from the werewolf, she demonstrates a sophisticated knowledge of her previously entrapped situation. The season at the dressmaker’s for young French girls would be a time of instruction, where young girls would spend time with one another and with adult women learning about “how to look their best, how to deal with admirers, [and how to] become wise about sex and avoid conception” (Douglas 4-5). The time represented by pins and temporary attachments is meant to be a lighthearted time, as Douglas remarks, and we can interpret those days as ones not to be marked by pregnancies, absent fathers, or hasty, unplanned marriages. Representing permanent relationships, the time represented by the needle would involve marriages, pregnancies, births, miscarriages, and menopause—“celebrated by christenings, marriages and funerals in which women played a central role” (Douglas 7). Although Douglas agrees with Verdier’s view that the werewolf plays an “incidental and unimportant” role in the French oral versions of the tale since it is about the “ritualised passage of the female generations” (4-5), the role of the wolf is nevertheless prominent, as Zipes argues, in twentieth- and twenty-first-century western culture, since the Little Red Riding Hood figure has become, due to the

influence of Perrault and the Grimms, the object of the male gaze—“the image of male desire” (Zipes, *Trials* 379).

In the oral versions, the young girl’s escape demonstrates her choice not to be tied, after having been directed to burn her clothing, by a woolen rope—representing a non-permanent attachment—to the werewolf’s desire. That the rope is woolen is suggestive of the influence of the girl’s grandmother, and of her grandmother’s female ancestors, for a woolen rope alludes to the skill of a spinner familiar with a distaff and thus familiar with the spinning of thread as well as of tales. The tale that the young girl spins is that she has to relieve herself. When she unties the rope, however, she does not merely leave it, but ties it to “a plum tree in the courtyard” (qtd. in Zipes, *Trials* 23), suggesting a different ending to the plot conceived by the werewolf. A plum tree in a courtyard suggests a cultivated plum—one perhaps espaliered on a garden fence or against a courtyard wall. The cultivated plum, having been developed from the wild plum, no longer possesses thorns; however, wild plum trees, such as the European Plum, or Blackthorn, grow in thick hedges that are difficult to penetrate since their thorny branches are twisted and expand in different directions, springing off from their spreading roots and intertwining around themselves. The *OED* describes the term, “plum-leaved,” as having its origins in 1770 in the Reverend William Hanbury’s *Complete Body Planting & Gardening*, where Hanbury depicts the “Plum-leaved Thorn” as bearing “very long, strong spines.” By tying the end of the woolen rope around the cultivated plum tree, the young girl, herself a wild plum or blackthorn, re-writes the end of the werewolf’s plot by choosing a more suitable “Body Planting” for his appetite. The young girl, familiar with the path of pins and the path of needles and figuratively

possessing the intertwining, strong-spined thorns of the “wild plum,” knows how to “unpin” herself from the dangerous, short-term situation of the werewolf’s ensnarement in order to weave herself into the wild terrain of her female ancestors, who know how to spin the yarns that provide better plots. She is not a “sugar plum,” helpless against a fence or wall in a garden courtyard, waiting to be devoured. The werewolf has chosen the wrong species, she appears to imply, if he believes she exists merely to be picked as a tasty morsel to appease his hunger and ravenous gaze. She may have burned her clothing at his direction and belief that she “won’t be needing them anymore,” but she knows that she possesses the expertise and dexterity to create fresh, more cleverly-stitched attire.

Seeing the werewolf’s role as “incidental and unimportant,” as does Verdier and Douglas, assists in an understanding of the wild as it functions separately from the accounts related through legend, for the wild possesses its own provinces and its own inclinations, not occupied either upon being the “image of male desire,” to use Zipes’s phrase, through the male gaze, nor upon gazing back at the hair, nails, shoulders, ears, nostrils, or mouth of phallogocentric culture. Angela Carter’s female adolescent in “The Company of Wolves” laughs at the werewolf “full in the face, [ripping] off his shirt for him,” but her actions, although sexual in nature, do not represent wild consciousness since she merely reverses, or inverts, the traditional male gaze. Carter’s story still portrays the young girl as the image of male desire: it is not the girl’s but the werewolf’s birthday—also Christmas Day—and she will do “as he will bid her, as she would do in a savage marriage ceremony” (291). Carter’s story celebrates the girl’s courage and laughter in the face of brutish sovereignty—similar to Charles Dickens’s view of her

fearless but, as he sees it, tragic journey. Also connecting her story with Christmas, Dickens, in “A Christmas Tree,” envisions on a Christmas tree in his mind’s eye a miniature Little Red Riding Hood as venturing through the forest of the tree’s branches. Reminiscing about his childhood memories of ornaments alive with stories, Dickens writes:

Little Red Riding-Hood comes to me one Christmas Eve to give me information of the cruelty and treachery of that dissembling Wolf who ate her grandmother, without making any impression on his appetite, and then ate her, after making that ferocious joke about his teeth. She was my first love. I felt that if I could have married Little Red Riding-Hood, I should have known perfect bliss. But it was not to be; and there was nothing for it but to look out the Wolf in the Noah’s Ark there, and put him late in the procession on the table, as a monster who was to be degraded. (7)

In Dickens’s recollection of the story from his childhood days, it is not Little Red Riding Hood who is laughing, but the wolf, who, his childlike heart feels, must not be the foremost in any procession but should be quite forgotten, if possible, in the rearmost region. Like Verrier and Douglas, he wants the wolf to be “incidental and unimportant,” but he feels helpless in terms of re-writing the plot established, in his apparent cognizance of the tale, by Perrault. Perhaps someone like himself could have intervened and somehow evaded the “cruelty and treachery” of the wolf, his young heart feels, but “it was not to be.”

Perhaps Dickens's childlike musings cannot—as the Scheherazade-like girl in “The Story of Grandmother” can—devise better plots because the young Dickens wishes to be like the hunter in the tale by the Grimm brothers, rescuing Little Red Cap from the wolf's voracious hunger. However, the desire of the young Dickens to marry Little Red Riding Hood suggests nothing about the need for attention to *his* bidding, as is portrayed in Carter's story. Instead, Dickens imagines Little Red Riding Hood as suffering an injustice, and he, able to control his appetite for his own recognition, simply seeks bliss in a union with the forest/Christmas-tree journeyer. Like Longfellow's narrator in *The Children's Hour*, Dickens would like to spend time experiencing and sharing that sort of magic that moves and entwines. In other words, the young Dickens seems to understand something about the path of needles.

In the oral tradition of the tale, when the werewolf asks the young girl which path she plans to take, she tells him either the “path of needles” or the “path of pins.” Depending on how she answers, the werewolf responds that he will take the opposite path. In “The Story of Grandmother,” she chooses to take the path of needles, so the werewolf takes the path of pins; however, in the verbal retellings, a storyteller could choose to reverse the paths taken. Nevertheless, no matter which path is chosen, the path that the werewolf takes will always bring him to the grandmother's house before the young girl arrives. Both paths, which, according to Douglas, represent female journeying, are traversed by the werewolf. Yet, according to Verdier, his exposure to the paths is nonetheless “incidental and unimportant” in the portrayal of the young girl's venture. Why is it, we may ask, that the werewolf, who traverses the wild paths, is unimportant when it comes to wild journeying? The answer is apparent, of course, for

the werewolf does not know how to delay and does not observe. Unlike the young Dickens, who searches through the “forest” of the Christmas tree and cannot help but be drawn in by the stories of the miniature figures—dwelling on their placements and, in the case of Little Red Riding Hood, *predicaments* in the trees as if they had roamed there themselves—the werewolf cannot experience the path he is on due to his rush towards his mentally planned-out goal, where his satisfaction takes precedence over all other encounters. In his hurry, he cannot hear the call of the wild, which, perhaps, may direct him to discover ways to ease his hunger in places he cannot fathom—so directed is he in his self-assigned appointment. It is no wonder then, that at the end of the oral version of the tale, the werewolf finds himself attached to a particular tree, which bears a fruit, the plum, that in its adjectival form means not only “plump” according to the *OED*, but “soft, yielding, . . . [like a] soft, downy bed.” Describing a thick-bodied freshwater fish—a tench—Sir Thomas North, who in 1570 translated *The Moral Philosophie of Doni*, an Italian collection of eastern fables, had used the adjectival form of “plum.” “This Tenche,” he translated, “was so plumme and fatte that shee might well serue him for a good meale.”⁵ The “meale” that the werewolf never consumes in “The Story of Grandmother” is replaced with a cultivated tree bearing soft, luscious, plump fruit, which would easily yield to the grasp of the werewolf. The “plum” he desires, however, is out of his reach, for he is an unimportant, temporary attachment in the consciousness of a mind that understands and desires the weaving, winding, *interesting* paths of fresh experience and adventure.

The mind of young Dickens, also curious about wild, forest-venturing beings and forming attachments with them, represents the sort of mind that bears wild

consciousness, for his curiosity is outwardly driven, possessing an understanding that not all that is sought after may be captured, and that the customary view of what signifies glory is less attractive than the stories discovered elsewhere—stories, in fact, that instill, at each new turn, breath, the evidence of life. In “A Christmas Tree,” he writes that, in the upper branches of his recollected Christmas tree, he sees a “fairy light,” and on cold, dark, winter mornings, he hears Dinarzade asking her sister to “finish the history of the Young King of the Black Islands.’ Scheherazade replies, ‘If my lord the Sultan will suffer me to live another day, sister, I will not only finish that, but tell you a more wonderful story yet.’ Then the gracious Sultan goes out, giving no orders for the execution, and we all three breathe again” (8). For Dickens as the young listener and observer, the stories do not end—the plots are still being fabricated—and the outermost, most “uncommon and enchanted” (7) spaces that put distance between him and the Sultan or between him and the wolf are the places where he feels most alive—most able, and with relief, to breathe. The “fancies of childhood,” he writes at the beginning of the reminiscence, “set me thinking.” They provide a consciousness—a wild consciousness—in that they cause him to consider “how all the trees that grow and all the things that come into existence on the earth, have their wild adornments at that well-remembered time” (3). The time closest to his physical life as an adult, represented by the lower boughs of the tree, is “dark to me as yet,” but unknown mysteries, below the branches, “cast no gloomy shadow” (16-17). The unknown, for Dickens, is not “dark” in an adverse or antagonistic sense; its song has simply not yet been heard, and its dance has yet to be discovered and learned. But to a wild consciousness intimate with both the lighthearted path of pins and the intertwining threads of the path of needles, dancing into

the dark—*away from* the legendary jowls representing the ravenous, unsatisfied desire to restrict and shorten the narratives of other lives in favor of the one, strong glorified life—is the preferred way of moving forward on a journey intent on discovering better plots.

The wolf’s mouth—or jowls—provides a fitting metaphor for the “crescent” of legend that finds expression in the dominant realm, for the open, devouring mouth signifies hunger—an ache that demands attention until it is satisfied. A figure from nineteenth-century America who demonstrates the non-wild, open-mouthed desire for the one, glorified life and thus provides an apt illustration of the expression of what we know of as legend is the outlaw, Jesse James. Jesse James, born in Clay County, Missouri in 1847 became a legend before he died at the age of thirty-four in 1882. He has been, through the years, associated with Robin Hood, a legendary figure who robbed from the rich in order to give to the poor. In his novel written about the last years in the life of Jesse James, Ron Hansen describes James in legendary proportions:

He could intimidate like King Henry the Eighth; . . . If he made an entrance, heads turned in his direction; if he strode down an aisle store clerks backed away; if he neared animals they retreated. Rooms seemed hotter when he was in them, rains fell straighter, clocks slowed, sounds were amplified: his enemies would not have been much surprised if he produced horned owls from beer bottles or made candles out of his fingers. . . . He regretted neither his robberies nor the seventeen murders that he laid claim to, but he would brood about his slanders and slights, his callow need for attention, his overweening vaingloriousness, and he

was excessively genteel and polite in order to disguise what he thought was vulgar, primitive, and depraved in his origins. . . . [H]e waded into prairie wheat and stared at the horizon. (5-6)

What Hansen does is to depict James not through a “factual” account, but in a manner that reminds us of James’s legendary status. In our understanding of legendary figures, dimensionality enlarges. Thus, time—or the clock—slows, the temperature increases, what is audible is augmented. In other words, when a legendary figure approaches our consciousness, the surrounding landscape alters so that we are drawn—if not forced—to pay attention to the legendary presence. Like Little Red Riding Hood, we cannot help but notice the large nails, substantial nostrils and big mouth of the wolf—translated in the case of Jesse James into holstered guns and a missing nub on a finger, an upturned, “puckish, low-born nose” (Hansen 4), and brazen journalistic commentaries written by both James and John Edwards describing the James brothers as “dashing figures” embodying the “Robin Hood tradition in American folklore” (Settle 171). A legendary figure both commands and exults in attention.

Attempting to understand the reason or reasons why James became a legendary figure, T.J. Stiles points out that from the end of the Civil War until James’s death in 1882, not a few, but *hundreds* of criminals, their exploits, and the posted proclamations for their captures abounded. He writes:

Those hundred of other outlaws, along with hundreds more who failed to attract gubernatorial attention, committed murders, broke out of jails, robbed stages, banks, and trains, even killed a U.S. marshal and burned a county courthouse—but every one has been forgotten, except for the

James brothers and their confederates. The obvious question is, Why? Why should one set of criminals be so much more memorable than another? (4)

Stiles's argument is that James's popularity was compelled by politics—"politics based on wartime allegiances" (5)—and he became an "emblem" representing conflicts that continued after the literal termination of the Civil War. Those conflicts, he says, "were as real and raw to his contemporaries as a bad burn. He made old wounds ache again; he reminded the public precisely where the blows had fallen, where the social fabric had been torn. He not only represented forces larger than himself, he made them concrete, understandable, undeniable" (4). The voice of legend, then, howls forth an aria in large proportions that is in tune with what the ears of the dominant realm desire to hear.

The ability for James and Edwards to represent "concrete, understandable" forces can be better understood through Judith Butler's analysis of what she calls the "performative"—an utterance or act that cannot be removed from the context in which it asserts itself. In her characteristic manner, Butler begins by asking questions: "Does a subject appear as the author of its discursive effects to the extent that the citational practice by which he/she is conditioned . . . remains unmarked? Indeed, could it be that the production of the subject as originator of his/her effects is precisely a consequence of this dissimulated citationality?" Her answer draws upon the notion of dissimulation, where conventions are "cover[ed] over" and so "accumulat[e]" with a force that is invested behind and in the utterance. Thus, when a performative "succeeds," it is

because that action echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative*

set of practices. It is not simply that that speech act takes place within a practice, but that the act itself is a ritualized practice. What this means, then, is that a performative “works” to the extent that *it draws on and covers over* the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized. In this sense, no term or statement can function performatively without the accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force.

(“Burning Acts” 221; emphases in original)

The “accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force” behind the writings of James and Edwards that “mobilized” James’s legendary voice is what Stiles calls the “raw . . . bad burn,” the ache of “old wounds,” and the tear in the “social fabric.” Embodying the views of Missouri’s ex-Confederates in the aftermath of the Civil War and its reconstruction, the *perceived* wound, acting as the context upon which James and Edwards constructed their utterances, gave the “force of authority” to the murderous exploits of Jesse and Frank James. As Stiles explains it, James and the newspaper editor, John Newman Edwards, devised, through published writing, a “glorified version of what all the rebels felt they had endured in war and Reconstruction. The mythical Jesse James they created refused to apologize for fighting for a just cause; he refused to lay down his arms and self-respect, and was being persecuted as a result” (217).

What is not acknowledged, however, when the “prior and authoritative set of practices” substantiates actions and utterances that enlarge dimensionality in its creation of legendary figures is the viewpoint that perceives the “ritualized practice” as fragmented and “torn.” In other words, when Stiles says that James “reminded the public . . . where the social fabric had been torn,” the assumption, obviously, is that the

“social fabric” had once been whole. James’s “reminder” to the public is thus that the *mirage* of the Symbolic order—that is, in this case, the South prior to its reconstruction—is not a mirage and should somehow be repaired. Yet when the “ritualized practice” that Butler refers to is taken out of its specific embodied context, it can be interpreted differently, and so its “success” can be questioned and “travel[ed] through,” to use a phrase of Pamela J. Annas’s. Thus, a consciousness that entertains wild thinking that projects thought outside of the “ritualized practice” of the phallic order would be able to view the “untorn” social fabric *as* torn to begin with and not ascribe “force” to its “historicity.” In other words, the wild, knowing how to make-believe, acknowledges torn “fabric” upon torn “fabric” upon torn “fabric” and associates with the scattered pieces while, at the same time, remaining unbound to established “ritualized practices.” In speaking about women writing, for example, Pamela Annas explains that women “need to travel *through*” a “limited” and “crippling” focus in order to discover “(somewhat mystically, I admit) one’s own meanings in the holes in patriarchal discourse” (“Style as Politics” 370; emphasis in original). In *A Disturbance in Mirrors* (1988), Annas provides an example of an inability to “travel through” by referring to Sylvia Plath’s poem, “The Colossus,” where, Annas explains, “the speaker’s father, representative of a gigantic male other, so dominated her world that her horizon was bounded by his scattered pieces” (140). Plath’s “gigantic male other” can be likened to Butler’s theoretical conception of the “accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force.” The “dissimulation”—that is, the disguise—that Annas brings to the forefront in Plath’s poem is that of the gigantic Colossus as a powerful form of a whole body “masking” its “scattered pieces” by means of its enormity. The scattered

pieces still possess the power to bind the speaker's horizon because each disintegrated part is, on its own, imperiously immense.

Bandits like Jesse James, then, by glorifying and enlarging their perceived injustices—their “wounds,” “burns,” and tears”—make other wounds, burns, and tears appear as insignificant in their heroic quest to recover some “lost” conception of unity. Their murderous acts and utterances take on heroic status when they are successfully linked to what Butler calls a “prior and authoritative set of practices.” So, when James argued, with the journalistic backing of Edwards, that he “was being persecuted,” he disguised his “heroics of action” under a “heroics of endurance.”⁶ The “heroics of endurance” possesses a long-running “historicity of force,” especially since, as Mary Beth Rose argues in *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* (2002), the “human capacity and desire to survive” is ingrained within such heroics (xxii). Grounding himself in socially approved heroics, James could strive for legendary status by referring to sense of “self-respect” that was larger than himself.

The refusal to lay down both arms and self-respect comes out of another ancient legend—that of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. In September of 1872, Edwards composed an editorial in the *Kansas City Times* titled “The Chivalry of Crime.” In it, he likened guerrilla-bandits like the James brothers, whose principles were more in accord with another time and country, to Arthurian knights. The nineteenth century, he wrote, “is not the social soil for men who might have sat with ARTHUR at the Round Table, ridden at tourney with Sir LAUNCELOT or worn the colors of GUINEVERE” (qtd. in Stiles 224). Secessionists, Stiles points out, frequently imagined themselves as courtly knights, and Edwards's association of the bandits with the chivalric code encouraged the

notion of their acts of terror as, in Edwards's words, "chivalric; poetic; superb" (qtd. in Stiles 224). The "poetic superbness" that Edwards found so praiseworthy in the fearlessness of the bushwhackers would have emerged, most likely, from his knowledge of the prose epic, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, written by Sir Thomas Malory in the mid-fifteenth century, and from Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, which was published between 1856 and 1885.⁷ The term "chivalry" means "cavalry," and in his 1962 introduction to *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Robert Graves attempts, with humor and with as much clarity as possible, to describe the paradoxes inherent in the code of the "cavalry." The English phrase, "cavalier fashion," he explains, "recalls the heartless arrogance which hard-riding gentlemen often showed the lower classes, and which is implicit in *Le Morte d'Arthur*" (xiv). It is ironic that Arthurian legend has been associated with biblical allegories and instruction, for, as Graves points out, a code glorifying personal honor is not suited to the New Testament concepts of humility or of turning the other cheek. In addition, in terms of the Hebraic writings, the ancient Israelite, he clarifies, "was realistic about yielding to superior force in allowing himself to be led away captive; not so the true knight" (xvii). Instead, the knight does not yield based on a principle of personal honor. As an example, Graves explains that in a bloody struggle with Sir Accolon, King Arthur loses so much blood that he almost dies. Arthur promises "by the feythe of my body" to fight until the end without surrender, for he reasons that "I had liver to dye with honour than to lyve with shame" (qtd. in Graves xvii). He survives only due to the intervention of the Lady of the Lake, who disarms Sir Accolon through magic (xviii).

As "hard-riding gentlemen," both legendary figures—King Arthur and Jesse James—do not yield to defeat, making promises to themselves based on personal

principles. Arthur swears by “the feythe of my body,” whereas James swears by the proficiency of the “experienced robber.” In a famous note attributed to James, the outlaw writes that he and his cohorts—whom he clarifies are not “thieves” but “bold robbers”—kill “only in self-defense. . . . But a man who is a d——d enough fool to refuse to open a safe or a vault when he is covered with a pistol ought to die.”⁸ There is no use for a man to try to do anything when an experienced robber gets the go on him. If he gives the alarm, or resists, or refuses to unlock, he gets killed” (qtd. in Stiles 225). The phrase “cavalier fashion” takes on additional meaning when considered in context with the “heartless arrogance” of the guerrilla-bandits who tended to be expert horsemen—especially James—and who viewed resisting bank clerks as lower-class beings, deserving of death if they refused the authoritative command of the “bold robbers.” A robber, according to the published bandit, is different from a thief, for “Alexander the Great was a bold robber, and Julius Caesar, and Napoleon Bonaparte” (qtd. in Stiles 224). Thus, the outlaw likens himself to rulers and emperors, and, like King Arthur, expects those he “rules over” to obey and yield to his commands. And, like Arthur, who does not yield to Sir Accolon in order to avoid experiencing the personal shame associated with surrender, James becomes legendary by refusing to lay down his arms and self-respect.

When Stiles asks the question, “Why should one set of criminals be so much more memorable than another?,” he attributes the James’s gang’s popularity to the political inclinations of the ex-Confederates and to the emotional “bad burn” and aching of “old wounds” that James rationalized as a just cause for the committing of numerous murders. However, many of the murders were not organized around political

dispositions. The James brothers and their fluctuating gangs murdered neighbors and other Missourians from surrounding counties indiscriminately. Stiles points out that soon after a celebration heralding the end of the Civil War, James rode with the guerrilla, Archie Clement, and about a hundred other bushwhackers. At dawn on a day in May of 1865, they rode into Kingsville, the town nearest to the farm where Clement grew up, where men and women he knew since a boy still lived and worked. Stiles describes the massacre:

Kicking their way into homes and stores, they shot down eight startled men and boys stumbling out of bed, and set fire to five houses. Jesse, a friend later wrote, fired four bullets into the trembling postmaster, Leroy Duncan, who died soon after. Leaving the corpses and smoldering ruins behind, the guerrillas rode north into Lafayette County, where they rapidly murdered fifteen more civilians. (151)

James admired Clement, calling him “one of the noblest boys . . . of this age” (qtd. in Stiles 150), and inspired by Clement’s “nobility,” James continued to murder as Clement murdered, without questioning his actions. Although not directly meaning to, Stiles describes the very *non-wildness* of James’s murderous actions when he writes:

Jesse was no stranger in a foreign land—he was at home among old neighbors and friends. Yet he helped to tear apart his community without reflection or self-doubt. . . . Seized by his hatred and ideological convictions, he could not see himself for what he was. . . . Instead, he reveled in the power his murders earned him. . . . [H]is mind was prepared for the work, honed by his beliefs, his experiences, and his

family—and repetition soon made it routine. (105)

We might say that James, at home and familiar with the “path of pins” and short-term attachments, is, like the wolf, non-wild, directed, ravenous, and uncreative. His code of “chivalry”—or of the hard-riding cavalry—does not allow him to advance away from the repetitious, non-winding, non-venturesome, short path that directs him to “Grandma’s house”—that is, to his neighbors’ houses—where he may devour and consume. Unafraid and guilt-free in terms of his agenda, he is able to rise and remain in the memory of western culture as the mythical hero who, by transferring blame to the aching of “old wounds,” can be exonerated and thus masquerade as and be remembered as a “wild,” dark force that captures the imagination and exults in that attention.

The transferring of blame, in psychoanalysis, is called projection. In “Hate, Greed and Aggression,” her study dealing with the reasons why malevolent acts have been and continue to be manifested in culture, Joan Riviere argues that, since “babyhood,” our need to “project our dangerous and painful states of anger out of us into someone else and identify someone else with them, and ourselves only with our good states, is one of the main stimuli towards recognizing other people’s existence at all.” Painting a dismal picture of our interest in other people, Riviere argues that we are dependent upon others due to our need of them, and that need is for only two purposes: “One is the obvious one of getting satisfactions from them, both for our self-preservative and pleasure needs. The other purpose for which we need them is to hate them, so that we may expel and discharge our own badness, with its dangers, out of ourselves on to them” (“Hate” 42). Dependence, then, is connected with hate and aggression, and if it is so that there are only the two purposes behind our need of others that Riviere puts forth,

we may begin to comprehend why legendary figures like Jesse James are admired and elevated to legendary proportions. Such figures relieve the anxieties felt in our own dependencies upon others. While James projects his “badness” upon those he murders, when we become caught up in the legend that has and continues to shape James, we project our anxiety about our own dependencies onto him. We, as it were, ascribe to the “historicity of force.”

When Butler refers to the “historicity of force,” she is addressing, specifically, hateful or “burning acts” and “injurious speech.” Legend, if we think of it in terms of Riviere’s psychoanalysis of hate, greed, and aggression, as well as in terms of Butler’s theoretical conceptions of “dissimulated citationality,” fulfills a desire to perceive oneself as whole and as connected to a social history that is authoritative due to its “ritualized practices.” The perception of James as a “wild” figure occurs because we see our own need to “expel and discharge our own badness,” to use Riviere’s phrase, as a “wild” act. Yet such “discharging” or projection is not out of the ordinary, which is how we normally conceive an act that is “wild.” Projection is actually common, according to Riviere. “That,” she says, “is why jealousy is so often felt where it is unfounded” (“Hate” 42-43). Because, for instance, the state of marriage requires dependency on the part of both partners, its acknowledged dependent condition “will give rise to accessions of fear and hate, which . . . set up a vicious circle of greed, frustration and disintegration again” (“Hate” 45). What is unusual, uncommon, and difficult to procure is the desire to seek and find “the *advantages of dependence* . . . being used to the full” (“Hate” 44; emphasis in original). What we call “true love,” explains Riviere, is a “condition in which the two factors [a confidence in one’s own worth and “the feeling of love or

sexual desire”] coalesce and become indistinguishable,” so that one desires to “satisfy and fulfil the needs even of another beside himself.” However, even if and when one desires to seek the advantages of dependence, it still remains, says Riviere, that “pleasure in safe and constructive forms of aggression must be obtained somewhere to a sufficient degree.” Love, in fact, is a wild force, for, as Riviere explains, love is continually overrun, thwarted, or contradicted by “destructive impulses and [by] the dangers of loss, loneliness and helplessness” (“Hate” 44-45). In addition, love actually desires “indistinguishability”—something that a figure striving for legendary status fights against. But the wild, illustrated as a wind in the reeds in Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows*, is a “*Helper and healer*,” and, like love, becomes indistinguishable as its musical strains transmute themselves into reed-talk. One only catches “intimations” of the wild, for if it were secure, safe, tame, and easily accessible, it would become part of those forms of aggression and destructive impulses that seek to recognize “other people’s existence” only in order to project “badness” onto them. If one does not see any advantages at all in interdependence, the wild goes completely unnoticed—its call muted, its helpfulness discarded.

The legendary figure is, indeed, a very needy figure—needing others to obtain “satisfactions” and to project and expel aggressive impulses in order to appear “good”—that is, strong, intellectual, sexually dynamic, moral, wealthy, and recognized.⁹ A legendary figure is set apart from others and so *appears* “wild,” when, in fact, such a figure merely conforms to the “ritualized practice” of the “historicity of force.” The masquerade that defines a non-wild, legendary figure as a “wild” figure is, in part, what assists in preserving legendary narratives in culture, while that which is in fact a wild

force remains unnoticed, or muted. The masquerade, or mask, is actually what shapes the legend, rather than it being the other way around. In other words, we can question and wonder why James became a legendary figure while hundreds of other criminals did not, without completely understanding or being satisfied with any given answer. However, a better way to think of it is to realize that Jesse James did not become a legend; rather, the legend, for a time, became Jesse James. In the dominant realm, the legend exists, and different figures arise in various times in order to fill the required mold. Just as James does not venture from Missouri, so does legend remain homebound, for legend does not impart knowledge of the Basic Tactic behind listening to the call of the wild, which is to keep moving.

In order to illustrate the exigency that the dominant structure places on repetitive, non-alternative ways of thinking and behaving, Stiles summarizes an essay written by George Orwell, titled “Shooting an Elephant.” As a policeman in Burma, Orwell describes how he was compelled to shoot an elephant that had aggressively run riot. By the time he encountered the elephant, its rampage had subsided, and it was no longer a dangerous threat. However, as a crowd gathered, recapitulates Stiles, “and watched him stand there with his rifle, he felt compelled to fire. ‘I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys,’ he wrote. ‘He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. . . . A sahib has got to act like a sahib’” (104).¹⁰ Stiles quotes from Orwell’s essay in order to point out that at a young age, James was so much of bushwhacker/tyrant that his face did not need to grow into the mask, for “by the time he put it on, in the third year of the war, it was already close to a perfect match” (105). The notion of legend—that is, the constraining mask—rather like

Plato's Forms, exists and is shaped already in the consciousness of a culture. When the wolf, or Jesse James, or King Arthur grow to fit the mold—or are compelled, like Orwell, into it—then the legend takes over, we could say, and the individual's "freedom," to use Orwell's word, or his capability to hear the call of the wild perishes. Receding into the background, the wild becomes muted, or lost, and is replaced by a particular form that is repetitive and, essentially, anchored or stationary.

In a rather humorous fashion, Robert Graves illustrates the problem with the "code"—or, we might say, the mask—that shapes the Arthurian legend. Knights, he points out, must avenge slain kinsmen. To illustrate, Graves describes the typical Arthurian blood feud. It begins, he writes,

with King Lot's death at the hands of King Pellinore. Sir Gawain . . . kills King Pellinore. In reply, King Pellinore's son, Sir Lamerok, seduces Queen Margawse. Sir Gawain and his brother kill Sir Lamerok. Sir Lamerok's cousin, Sir Pynel, tries to poison Sir Gawain but another knight eats the apple by mistake. . . . (xv)

Thus runs the history of legend, and it does not end with *le morte d'Arthur*, for the "mask" shapes the repetitious story of avenging the slain. An ancient Welsh legend tells of Arthur's rising from his grave to rescue his land from oppression. When someone finds the trumpet Arthur lost in his last battle and blows it, according to the Scots, he will emerge upon hearing the call to arms (Graves xvi). And if Arthur and his knights return, as the legends prophesy, how, then, will they live? Most likely as their stories say they did. "When away from their own rich earldoms and dukedoms," says Graves, the knights "lived off the land, commandeering whatever they might need" (xv)—which

sounds quite like the way Jesse James and his gangs made their livings, halting trains and stages on their journeys and “commandeering whatever they might need” from their passengers.

Besides the metaphor of the inflexible mask that Orwell provides, we might consider another image that helps to illustrate the loss of “freedom” that the mask of legend compels its wearers to abandon. Dickens, once again, provides a trope from another Christmas story that is suited to an understanding of how legendary figures depart from the wild. In his description of Ebenezer Scrooge at the beginning of *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens likens Scrooge—whose face, we might say, is, like Jesse James’s, “close to a perfect match” to the inside of the constraining mask—to flint. Just as Hansen compares James’s presence to changing temperature and to straight-falling rain, so does Dickens describe his created character as being associated with sudden shifts in weather. However, instead of rooms growing hotter, the atmosphere grows colder when Scrooge approaches, and no external force has an influence on him. “No warmth could warm,” writes Dickens, “no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty” (7). Although he has had a friend in Marley—just as James had his brother and cohorts and just as King Arthur had his knights—Scrooge is “as solitary as an oyster” and is “[h]ard and sharp as flint, from which no steel ever struck out generous fire” (7). Scrooge, we know, begins and ends as a character and not, like Jesse James or King Arthur, as a historical being who has become legendary. However, the word “scrooge” has taken on legendary meanings, for any person who is called a scrooge is a person who, in Dickens’s words, is a “tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, . . .

squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!” (7) and one who lacks the generosity and charity inherent in someone who possesses the Christmas spirit. The aspects of Scrooge’s character that have taken on legendary characteristics are thus his flint-like qualities. No one, for example, thinks of a scrooge as the person Scrooge becomes, as a man whose heart laughs and is celebrated by others for knowing “how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge” (55). In fact, the non-legendary aspects of his character tend to be disparaged. Describing, for example, the portrayal of John Adams by Paul Giamatti in an HBO Miniseries, “He United the States of America” (2008), Jill Lepore likens Giamatti’s rendition of Adams to Scrooge. Adams is “the Ebenezer Scrooge of the American Revolution,” says Lepore, “slouchy, grouchy, and crusty, but mushy on the inside” (90). The use of the term “mushy” mutes the wild aspect of Scrooge that Dickens wrote into his character, for it trivializes the vitality behind Scrooge’s wild abandon in a plot that makes him the benefactor of the gift-still-freely-given.

The “freedom” of possessing a heart that can laugh—or, to use Daly’s description, of possessing that “spontaneous exuberance” that playful female-Selves express when their voices intermingle in a “cacophony of cackles” (*Gyn/Ecology* 414)—is suppressed in legendary tales. Arthur and his knights enjoy themselves, certainly, but their inner lives are expropriated without compensation in service of the ruling chivalric code. Graves’s description of the loss of detail in the lives of the knights could apply just as well to another legend—that of Robin Hood and his Merry Men. In Malory’s depictions, explains Graves, “[w]e are given no relief of domestic or political scenes while the knights joust, fight, love, hunt, make merry, and perfunctorily attend mass.

Many of them seem to spend their entire lives on guard at some bridge or lurking in an enchanted castle from which to charge out upon the unwary” (xiv). And so it is with Robin Hood and his Merry Men. In Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, for instance, when the jester and the swineherd approach the center of the forest by way of Locksley’s (Robin Hood’s) guidance, “the watch instantly gave the alarm, and the sleepers as suddenly started up and bent their bows. Six arrows placed on the string were pointed towards the quarter from which the travellers approached” until Locksley is recognized and then “all signs and fears of a rough reception at once subsided” (206). As outlaws, Robin Hood and his Merry Men may laugh, but, like King Arthur and his knights, they spend their lives “on guard,” as Scrooge does for most of *A Christmas Carol*—where the concept of a “scrooge” became legendary—before his transformation on Christmas Day.

Dickens’s description of Scrooge as “[h]ard and sharp as flint, from which no steel ever struck out generous fire” is a befitting delineation of the compelling force of legend, for it emphasizes the immutable code that drives legendary tales and banishes the wild. Flint that does not strike steel is not altered by the steel, nor is the steel altered by the flint. No generative reaction emerges from flint that remains anchored, or stationary. Like Arthur’s knights who remain on guard at some bridge or enchanted castle, and like Robin Hood and his Merry Men, who steadfastly dwell in only one forest—the well-known Sherwood Forest—legendary figures and their tales profess to be about wild adventuring, when, instead, they are cautious, suspicious, and un-free. *Seeming* to be outside the dominant structure—the term “outlaw,” of course, refers to a “person who lives without regard for the law”—the figures of legend are actually *not* outside of the system.¹¹ King Arthur, Robin Hood, Jesse James, and the unconverted

Scrooge set up monarchies of their own but do not exist outside of the law. Their personal codes or laws are apparently constructed in order to break or disapprove of the existing laws, and so, in that effort, they become tied to the existing laws. In the tales of the Arthurian knights, Graves points out, “[e]xtramarital unions abound,” and King Arthur sleeps with King Lot’s queen, whom some writers claim is his aunt and others, his sister (xviii). But rather than being a *departure* from moral laws, such actions are a part of the chivalric code, for “[i]t would dishonour a knight to repudiate an extramarital union” (xv). The departure from established moral laws *becomes* a law—dishonour being the punishment for breaking it—and so the mask hardens. Robin Hood and his Merry Men remain stationary in Sherwood Forest, fearful of approaching strangers who may arrive unnoticed, and because they are tied to the cause of the bandit established by their law-maker, Robin Hood, they emerge from the forest only under his command. Jesse James, due to his murderous rampages, cannot surrender without having to face the consequences of the established laws, and so he publishes letters to be read by law-abiding citizens that claim that *he* is the one being persecuted. Therefore he is chained to the opinions of the public, who must continually be convinced of his purported innocence. And Scrooge, who eschews behests based on ethics that deem a generous spirit as both requested and needed, creates a life for himself that is determinedly *not* generous in reaction to the expected response. Legendary figures strike out, assuredly, but they are compelled by the “mask” to isolate themselves from the “path of needles” and thus perpetually remain traversing the same, short-term, codified “path of pins”—incapable of creating any sparks that might release them from their sentinelled bridges and enchanted castles.

When Dickens refers to the “generous fire” that the flint of Scrooge does not generate, he is alluding to a fire that consumes, but which produces as it consumes. The physical warmth of a fire becomes, through Dickens’s pen, the warmth of the spirit—absent in the unconverted Scrooge. “The cold within him froze his old features,” writes Dickens, “nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. . . . He carried his own low temperature always about with him” (7). In Scrooge’s case, cold, hard flint that produces no spark is capable of consuming, just as fire is consumptive, but with a difference: the hard flint-like nature consumes without producing. To be as “[h]ard and sharp as flint” is to be consumed as one consumes. Scrooge’s nose is sculpted to a point, his cheek is shriveled, and his lips are thin. His features outwardly deteriorate through his inner, personal code of the “cavalry,” where the “heartless arrogance” that he shows to the lower classes gnaws away at his heart and countenance without producing anything to replace that which is expunged. His personal code of honor consumes him, as it does Marley before him. Without Marley’s intercession from the grave, the consuming code, we know, will continue, just as the avenging of slain kinsmen in Arthurian legend proceeds from one knight’s actions to another’s. Although non-wild and repetitive, the forces behind legendary stories display a power that is ravenous and that transfers the consumptive desire, like an addiction, to its devotees.

Thus, admirers of the Arthurian legend, as well as other legends, crave relics. William Caxton, who published Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*, writes in his preface that “in the castel of Dover ye may se Gauwayns skulle and Cradoks mantel, at Wynchester, the Rounde Table, in other places Launcelottes swerde and many other thynges” (qtd. in

Graves xvi). Only seven days after the death of Jesse James, William Settle points out, thousands of curious visitors came to see the rented house where he was slain. The owner of the house, “seeing an opportunity for gain, charged an admission fee of ten cents, a modest amount, in view of the fact that the fence and stables were almost demolished by relic hunters who carried away splinters of wood from the structures as souvenirs” (127). When a figure becomes a legend—or, to put it another way, when the legend forms the figure—then the insatiable hunger, or jowls, of the legend consume the mental energies of those drawn in by its persuasion. The attention lavished on the legendary figure of Jesse James at his death by souvenir hunters is a far cry from the disinterestedness he, his brother Frank, Clell Miller, and Cole Younger received when they robbed a bank in 1871, eleven years before the death of Jesse. When the four horsemen arrived, the entire population of the town was gathered outside the Methodist church in order to listen to the words of the celebrated orator, Henry Clay Dean. The only person not at the event was the cashier at the bank, who obediently handed over the money in the safe. When the bandits rode into the churchyard, no one paid any attention to them. Finally, writes Stiles, “one of the bandits could stand no more, and interrupted the thundering Dean. They had just robbed the bank, he announced. . . . The disbelieving audience turned back to the famous speaker with great irritation. . . . Not until the frightened cashier was discovered did the people of Corydon understand what had happened” (213-14). As Stiles later points out, “[m]ythology requires effort. Achilles and King Arthur may have begun as men of flesh and blood, but Homer and Sir Thomas Malory labored hard to make them the figures we remember” (240-41). However, once flesh and blood becomes legendary, the power behind the legend takes

over in a consuming fashion. Relic hunters fritter away entire stables, splinter by splinter—without creating or producing anew. And so legends become anchored to places where something once was, without the benefit of being woven into—or intertwined with—better, “wilder” plots.

Although the term “scrooge” endures as a description of a miserly, cold, unfeeling person, what tends to be forgotten is Scrooge’s transformation. Although many recall Scrooge’s comment that the poor and destitute should die and “decrease the surplus population” (9), few recall that when, on the streets on Christmas Day, he sees the portly gentleman he had spoken those words to, Scrooge says to the portly gentleman, upon his acceptance of a large amount of money for the poor, “I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!” (53). The transformed Scrooge thanks those who allow him to give—a benefit that Little Red Cap is not granted when the giving of the gift of her flowers to her grandmother is suppressed from the tale by the Grimm brothers. What Dickens does in *A Christmas Carol* is attempt to introduce the call of the wild into a tale where the plot encompasses the concept of spirit. What he does, as it were, is to make apparent the intangible flame in order to allow us to perceive the “nonetheless” residing somewhere in a body—in a candlestick—that imagines itself as “unlit.” However, when a figure instead becomes legendary, expressions of the wild become muted, and what endures in place of the flame is the adamantine flint, or the bare candlestick—stuck in its repetitious cycle of reiterating its code of honor and self-respect. The indestructible figure of a Christmas scrooge does not possess hands that tremble, nor does such a figure dance and whoop and care not for appearances due to a wild joy that leads him out into the streets to encounter individuals, who, at each turn,

through their mere presences, teach him new ways of thinking. When he first notices the portly gentleman on the streets on Christmas Day, Scrooge apperceives a pang in his heart when he thinks “how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it” (53). Once guided solely by his personal code, Scrooge, upon his transformation, begins to hear other guiding forces, which teach him, essentially, to keep moving. When others laugh to see him so altered, he cares not, for he knows the death of his old self—that is, the slaying of his closest “kinsman”—does not need to be avenged. Instead, “[h]is own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him” (55).

The capability to keep moving—to be curious about learning alternative ways of viewing situations at each new turn—is nonexistent in the mind of another nineteenth-century character intent upon following the codes of various legends. Mark Twain, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, stretches the chivalric codes to their utmost through the mind of Tom Sawyer, who interprets them by adding his own skewed, ultimately cruel, embellishments. Twain devotes nine chapters of *Huckleberry Finn* to what we are to believe are Tom’s foolish ideas about the behaviors that create legends. His elaborate plans exhaust a reader since the reader knows that the ultimate goal of physically freeing Jim, a runaway slave and friend of Huck’s, from the locked hut down by the ash-hopper can be accomplished without the added “benefit” of legendary tactics. In fact, soon after Huck and Tom discover that Jim is locked in the hut, Huck provides a method for freeing him. He tells Tom that he can take his canoe and “fetch my raft over from the island. Then the first dark night that comes, steal the key out of the old man’s britches, after he goes to bed, and shove off down the river on the raft, with Jim, hiding

daytimes and running nights, the way me and Jim used to do before” (281). However, Tom rejects Huck’s plan because “there ain’t nothing *to* it.” Tom’s reasoning is that Huck’s plan is too “mild,” and his main objection is that “it wouldn’t make no more talk than breaking into a soap factory” (281; emphasis in original). If one wants to commit legendary acts, what’s most critical is gaining the attention required to make one’s acts achieve mythical status.

Part of the problem with gaining enough attention to become legendary is that too many people—like those listening to Henry Clay Dean in 1871, irritated at being disturbed by bank robbers—are disinterested in those attempting to make names for themselves. For most of the nine chapters devoted to Tom’s stratagems, Tom’s only audience is Huck. The adults are too busy, too unobservant, or too incurious to notice Tom and Huck’s obvious activities in and about the hut down by the ash-hopper. Although legendary maneuvers are supposed to involve stealth and secrecy, according to Tom, ultimately there comes a time when one’s presence and activities must be announced and acknowledged. Thus, Tom writes the “nonnamous” letters in order to provide “[w]arnings to the people that something is up” (320). The first says: “Beware. Trouble is brewing. Keep a sharp lookout” and is signed by an “UNKNOWN FRIEND.” The next is a drawing in blood of a skull and crossbones, and the third is a drawing of a coffin. As the narrator of the story, Huck writes: “I never see a family in such a sweat. They couldn’t a been worse scared if the place had a been full of ghosts laying for them behind everything and under the beds and shivering through the air” (322). The final “nonnamous” note brings fifteen farmers to Aunt Sally’s house and causes such a commotion about the farm and nearby river that Tom and Huck have to race away from

bullets whizzing around them, which is exactly what Tom wants. “We was all as glad as we could be,” writes Huck, “but Tom was the gladdest of all, because he had a bullet in the calf of his leg” (329). The photographs of Jesse James’s corpse “showed two scars from bad wounds on the right side of the chest,” where bullets on two separate occasions pierced his lungs, “and the newspaper accounts pointed out that the tip of the middle finger of the left hand was missing and that there were scars from other wounds on the body. These wounds had long been part of the James legend” (Settle 118). Wounds—especially bad ones—bring notoriety.

Through his illustrations of Huck’s prowess and cleverness on the raft with Jim, Twain paints Huck as an intelligent character possessing both wits and conscience. But when in the presence of Tom, Huck—rather like the Merry Men in the presence of Robin Hood—defers to Tom’s authority. Huck is astonished that a “nobleman” like Tom would consent to help him free a runaway slave. Tom Sawyer, he says, “was in earnest” in his promise to assist him:

Here was a boy that was respectable, and well brung up, and had a character to lose, and folks at home that had characters. And he was bright and not leather-headed, and knowing and not ignorant, and not mean but kind. And yet here he was, without any more pride, or rightness, or feeling, than to stoop to this business, and make himself a shame, and his family a shame, before everybody. (281-82)

Tom is anything but kind, and he lacks the imagination, the intelligence, and the decent, thoughtful sense of judgment that Huck possesses. Yet Huck admires Tom since he believes that Tom comes from “respectable” origins and would not—as King Arthur

would not—normally submit to any endeavor that might bring shame upon his name. But, like King Arthur’s knights who fight bloody feuds and unscrupulously murder others through poison or other means, Tom has no qualms about suggesting that Jim saw his leg off as part of the method of escape from the hut. No matter how much he tries to think of a way, he has to come to the conclusion, finally, that “their ain’t necessity enough for it,” even though “some of the best authorities has done it. They couldn’t get the chain off, so they just cut their hand off, and shoved. And a leg would be better still” (288-89). When, instead, he decides that they need to create a rope-ladder from sheets and send it to Jim in a pie, Huck points out the obvious—that “Jim ain’t got no use for a rope-ladder.” Tom’s reply is the expected response coming from a perspective intent on establishing an enduring, legendary story: “That’s what they all do, and *he’s* got to, too. Huck, you don’t ever seem to want to do anything that’s regular; you want to be starting something fresh all the time. . . . I never heard of such a thing” (289; emphasis in original). The mask of legend requires habitual conformation to the code until one becomes hardened to its molded expectations, and like flint that knows no steel, also quashes any fresh sparks that might produce new thought.

Twain, of course, parodies the characteristic traits of enduring, legendary stories and their accepted, expected violence in *Huckleberry Finn*, but, while doing so, he also invites a comparative interpretation. He places Tom and Huck alongside each other and “emulates” Tom’s knowledge through the “ignorant,” non-respectable Huck in order to make us aware of Huck’s human qualities—of his inner strength, prowess, and compassion—and, I would say, of his willingness to hear the call of the wild. For the nine chapters where Tom plots his legendary feats, we discover later that Tom has

known all along that Jim is a free man—freed through the will of Old Miss Watson—which makes Tom’s antics and his desire to create a name for himself—since they postpone Jim’s reunion with his family and his ability to embark on the adventure of a new life—even more cruel. What is central to Tom’s consciousness is *his* adventure. If he knew that Jim was a free man all along, his Aunt Sally asks him, “what on earth did *you* want to set him free for, seeing he was already free?” “Well, that *is* a question, I must say,” answers Tom, “and *just* like women! Why, I wanted the *adventure* of it, and I’d a waded neck-deep in blood to—goodness alive, . . . !” (346; emphases in original). Twain emphasizes Tom’s ignorance and his lack of concern not only for Jim, but for Huck, for Aunt Sally, for Aunt Polly, etcetera in order to illustrate the destructiveness and blindness that the pursuance of the one, strong glorified life of the legendary figure incites. On the other hand, he paints Huck as a thief, as one attempting to “steal out of slavery” an enslaved friend and companion (272). But Huck is no knight, bandit, or “robber” attempting to create a name for himself. Instead, he learns to follow the guidance of the river and of “Providence.” As he narrates it, “I went right along, not fixing up any particular plan but just trusting to Providence to put the right words in my mouth when the time come. For I’d noticed that Providence always did put the right words in my mouth, if I left it alone” (265). The words that Huck speaks have not become legendary. We do not associate him with any particular phrase like we do with the unconverted Scrooge’s emphatic comment that the poor should die and “decrease the surplus population.” Instead, Huck emerges as a rebel on a raft, but not as a hard, flint-like, wounded rebel like Jesse James. Instead, the words Huck speaks are the words of a wild thief—not of a “bold robber”—emerging from the pain associated with fresh burns

and wounds, but not of old, festering wounds. On the contrary, Huck's words speak about alternative modes of existence beyond the "mask," about living outside of "sivilisation," and about the wild lies that find expression outside of the mask and work their way into the "better plots" that understand interdependencies and rely upon the small sparks that create unexpected connections in the wilds of Time.

Notes to Chapter One

¹ The determination of the variants of the Little Red Riding Hood story, Zipes makes clear, has to be assessed through a consideration of Perrault's version. The versions that have followed Perrault's have been dependent upon his version, so much so that "it became practically impossible for either oral storytellers or writers not to take into account his version, and thus storytellers and writers became the conveyors of both the oral and literary tradition of this particular tale." It is thus "from Perrault's version that we can look backward and forward in history. From all the evidence gathered by folklorists, ethnologists, and historians, we know that there was indeed a separate oral tradition, controlled by peasants and most likely by women, before Perrault adapted the story [as his own]." See Jack Zipes, "Prologue: Framing Little Red Riding Hood," *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, ed. Jack Zipes, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1993) 7.

² The mouse, like the snake, both "chthonic" animals, Beryl Rowland points out, has been "associated with death as well as with fertility. . . . The association with death was strengthened by the realization that the mouse was connected with the bubonic plague." See Beryl Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces: A Guide to Animal Symbolism* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1973) 128.

³ In one of Aesop's fables, "The Lion and the Mouse," for example, a mouse frees a lion from the hunters' trap by gnawing away at the ropes that bind the lion, even though the lion, on an earlier occasion, had laughed at the mouse's promise "to do you a turn some of these days." In Perrault's version of the Cinderella tale, six mice are transformed into six horses that convey her to the ball given by the King's son. Beryl

Rowland points out that mice have been symbols of fertility and have been associated with goddesses, who both cause and deflect death and devastation. For example, in Germany, he explains,

[s]ouls of the departed were believed to spend their first night with St. Gertrude. She performed duties peculiar to mouse gods: she not only averted plagues of mice but punished sinners by sending mice to devastate their fields. Her center was at Nivelles, where a cult of a Teutonic goddess . . . flourished in pre-Christian times, and she is still depicted with mice on her distaff and mice swarming around her feet.

See “The Lion and the Mouse,” *Aesop’s Fables: Online Collection*, ed. John R. Long, Star Systems, 1997-2009, 5 March 2009 <<http://www.aesopfables.com>>; Charles Perrault, *Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slipper, The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. Iona Opie and Peter Opie (1729; New York: Oxford UP, 1974) 163; and Beryl Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces*, 128-29.

⁴ A nursery rhyme, “Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater” appeared in a 1901 edition of *Mother Goose*, illustrated by William Wallace Denslow. The rhyme is as follows:

Peter, Peter, pumpkin-eater,
Had a wife, and couldn’t keep her;
He put her in a pumpkin-shell,
And there he kept her very well.

See the Project Gutenberg’s EBook of William Wallace Denslow’s *Mother Goose* (New York: McClure, Phillips & Company, 1901) at <<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/18546>>.

⁵ See “plum, *adj.*” in the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Draft Revision Mar. 2009: Oxford University Press, 2009. <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>.

⁶ I am borrowing these phrases from Mary Beth Rose, who distinguishes the two types of heroics. Rose points out that “[e]arly modern Western culture reveals an ongoing preoccupation with both the male heroics of action and the heroics of endurance, . . . [where] the heroics of endurance is not so clearly gendered as the heroics of action.” Cultural conceptions of the female assist in shaping the heroics of endurance. However, when men

inhabit female positions, their doing so is valued differently from women’s occupying similar structural positions. . . . [W]hen [for example] Marlowe’s Tamburlaine abducts and rapes his wife-to-be, audience or readers might see her as victim and object; but when Tamburlaine represents himself as a raped woman, Marlowe presents this self-characterization as an instance of Tamburlaine’s commanding, persuasive magnetism. Similarly, when Ben Johnson’s *Volpone* chooses to occupy silent and passive positions, the audience is meant to view him not as subordinate, marginalized, and subdued, but as witty, strategic, outrageous, and shrewd.

See Mary Beth Rose, *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002) xv-xvi.

⁷ Mark Twain, as well, was highly familiar with Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*. Stephen Railton points out that George Washington Cable “advised [Twain] to buy [it] on December 6, 1884. . . . It was probably only a week or two after the purchase in

Rochester that Twain entered into his notebook the inspired idea from which *Connecticut Yankee* grew.” Eric J. Sundquist argues that in works such as *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889), Twain expresses an “obsessive ridicule of the South’s destructive indulgence in fabricated codes of chivalry.” Andrew Dix explains that Twain viewed Sir Walter Scott “as a presiding influence in the South,” and Thomas D. Zlatic emphasizes that Twain perceived Scott’s influence as a destructive one; however, Zlatic also points out that Twain was “fascinated” both with Scott’s and Malory’s works:

Though Twain frequently railed against the Middle Ages and heaped vituperations on its nineteenth-century prophet, Walter Scott (ironically, the writer who had mesmerized him as a young man), he nonetheless had a deep fascination with the period, returning to it in four books and a number of shorter works. Malory remained a lifelong favorite writer, one from whom Twain read aloud in bed.

Twain’s “obsessive ridicule” of the South’s “indulgence” in chivalric codes and his fascination with those codes emphasize the problem behind what Judith Butler calls the “historicity of force.” Twain most likely returned to the codes of chivalry again and again in order to criticize them repeatedly because they continued to be reiterated in the literary and cultural forms of nineteenth-century America. See Stephen Railton, “The Twain-Cable Combination,” *A Companion to Mark Twain*, ed. Peter Messent and Louis J. Budd (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 177; Eric J. Sundquist, Introduction, *Mark Twain: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994) 5; Andrew Dix, “Twain and the Mississippi,” *A Companion to*

Mark Twain, 303; and Thomas D. Zlatich, “I don’t know A from B: Mark Twain and Orality,” *A Companion to Mark Twain*, 217.

⁸ T.J. Stiles explains that “no direct proof exists that Jesse was the author” of the note published by Edwards in the *Kansas City Times* on October 16, 1872. Besides referring to William A. Settle’s scholarship concerning the link between James’s letters and Edwards, Stiles also directs us to comments published in the *Kansas City Journal* in April of 1882 and to separate comments by Charley and Bob Ford published in the *St. Louis Republican* in 1882. Stiles writes that the anonymous letter

appeared right in the middle of a series of notes [Jesse] wrote for publication in Edwards’s newspapers, beginning in 1870 and continuing for years to come. Time would show that it was he, of all the outlaws, who was most obsessed with his public image, who sought to push himself into the news. “He read the newspapers constantly,” one relative later noted, “and frequently wrote letters. He would dash off a letter without pausing once.” And more than one of his confederates would observe that he planned robberies with an eye on the public reaction.

See T.J. Stiles, *Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War* (New York: Vintage, 2002) 224-26.

⁹ I am borrowing, once again, from Joan Riviere’s analysis concerning self-preservation as it gives rise to fear and aggression. Loss, or the fear of loss, affects one’s own sense of security. Thus, perceived losses by a male subject are feared because “possession” marks “chosen insurances” equivalent to

proofs of his own value to himself, and so of his own security, in the

world of his own mind, to say nothing of the outside world. His value to himself may be represented by strength, intellect, sexual potency, moral virtues, wealth—any of a legion of symbols of goodness, which vary with each individual but in each case represent that individual's chosen insurances, as it were, his resources in himself to counterbalance and safeguard him against the dangers of evil forces within him.

See Joan Riviere, "Hate, Greed and Aggression," *Love, Hate and Reparation: Melanie Klein and Joan Riviere*, Psycho-Analytical Epitomes, No. 2 (1936; London: Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1962) 43.

¹⁰ Stiles quotes Orwell from Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" in *The Orwell Reader* (San Francisco: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1956): 3-9.

¹¹ See "outlaw, *n.* and *adj.*" in the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Draft Revision, Mar. 2009. Oxford University Press, 2009. <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>.

Chapter Two:
Wild Nights: Scheherazade's Disappearing Appearance

Mark Twain's character, Huckleberry Finn, bears a name that suggests a kinship with other characters possessing wild consciousness, such as, for instance, Little Red Riding Hood. A huckleberry is an edible fruit, and Huck's surname suggests in the mind the image of a fish or other finned creature. The *OED* defines a fin as an attached organ on a fish or cetacean—which includes dolphins, porpoises and whales—that “serves for propelling and steering in the water.” Huck maneuvers on the river on rafts and in canoes, and he is familiar with the larger river vessels and the probable causes for their mishaps and delays. The young girl in “The Story of Grandmother” takes the woolen rope from her foot, ties it, instead, to a plum tree, and escapes from the werewolf. She thus suggests a different ending to the plot conceived by the werewolf, where he may quell his hunger by following the rope and discovering luscious plums on a tree, instead of devouring his intended meal, who slips away like a fish uncaught. Huck, in like manner, redirects possible pursuers and is very slippery in his circumventions. In addition, Twain may have had yet another idea in his mind in terms of his choice of a name for Huck, for, since 1835, according to the *OED*, a huckleberry also referred to a person in a derogatory sense—that is, it meant “a person of little consequence.” In the mind of the wolf—as in the mind of Jesse James or of King Arthur's avenging knights—those intended for elimination have to be mentally relegated into being or becoming figures “of little consequence.” Indeed, in comparison to Tom Sawyer, Huck envisions

himself as such a derogatory being, and both he and Jim—the two prevailing figures on the raft—are, according to the worldview encompassing the novel, inconsequential. Yet just as the versions of the Little Red Riding Hood story by Perrault and the Brothers Grimm deny praiseworthy significance to the girl's actions yet use her name as the title for their tales, so does Twain use Huck's name for his title—giving weight to the views of the sort of person who is generally disregarded.

Huck is a figure possessing wild consciousness not merely because he physically lives close to nature and on a river on a raft, but because he understands the Basic Tactic of wild living and its expression, which is to keep moving. Inherent in that tactic is an understanding of interdependencies, where interrelations are discovered and form not based on familial ties, for example, but on mutual needs and on trust. Like Scheherazade's, Huck's expressions of himself are drawn from a consciousness of the wild, where life is the central, insistent motivation for expression that knows and understands the power of the ever-moving, creative, expanding lie.

The tales of the *Arabian Nights* are an invaluable aid in terms of pursuing wild consciousness, for not only do the arabesque nature of the plots of the tales draw a reader or listener down paths of wild journeying, but the oldest versions of the tales themselves, enshrouded in mystery, lack origins, and the written translations emerge in their textual history as the “maneuverings” of both storytellers and translators, all working in, upon, and through each other and through time and history, in order to present variations that engage readers from diverse cultures.¹ In the *Alf Layla wa-Layla*, which in Arabic means “One Thousand Nights and a Night,” Scheherazade plans and executes one of the greatest continuing fictional lies conceived by a storyteller—where one night of

storytelling becomes many and where a reader is carried along from tale to tale, as if acquiring the listening ears of King Shahryar, in order to experience the power of transformation that tale-telling can effect upon adamant, flint-like thought—stuck in its repetitious cycle of reiterating its code of honor and self-respect.²

Like Scheherazade's arabesque storytelling, the oral and written versions of the *Nights* "range" far and wide. Eva Sallis, in *Sheherazade Through the Looking Glass: The Metamorphosis of the Thousand and One Nights* (1999), draws our attention to the tales as embodying a lengthy, unfixed history involving an expanse of unsettled textual metamorphoses.³ She explains that the Arabic text

exists in several different versions, was written down at an indeterminate time, was orally transmitted or created over many centuries and bears the mark of many authors and scribes, many ages, many cities and the fictionalised traces of many peoples, ranging from a nomadic pre-Islamic world to the mercantile sophisticated world of the great trade and cultural centres. (2)

Threading their way through cities, ages, and the histories of "many peoples," the tales possess many authors, unidentified, who both altered and embellished the stories in their oral versions before one of the earliest known written Arabic texts was created.⁴ In *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (1995), Robert Irwin points out that much of the history of the *Nights* still remains unknown. He writes that

there was certainly a version of the story collection circulating in the tenth century, . . . but we know very little about what may or may not have been in the story collection. Moreover, the tenth-century story

collection drew on older collections of stories, and further stories were being added to the original corpus until as late as the nineteenth century.

. . . [N]obody knows when the *Nights* began—or when they will end. (4)

Although in 1984 Muhsin Mahdi “published a critical edition of an Arabic manuscript of the *Nights* from the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris” that was translated into a readable version by Husain Haddawy in 1990, only thirty-five and a half stories are included in those translations which present “the oldest surviving version of the opening stories of the *Nights*” (Irwin 7). The most comprehensive translation of the *Nights* is Richard Burton’s 1885 edition of the “main corpus” of the tales—including around 468 stories (Irwin 2, 29). Comparing Burton’s work with that of a previous translation appearing in monthly installments from 1838 to 1841 by Edward William Lane, Irwin indicates that “Burton had provided a full edition of the tales, even to the point of including in the supplementary volumes variants of tales he had already translated. His judgement of the respective merits and failings of individual tales was on the whole good,” and his conception of the “likely history of the formation of the corpus of the *Nights*” was more enlightened than Lane’s instructive, too literal “selective procedures” (24-25, 36).⁵ Burton’s “translation” is actually another *variant* of the moving, metamorphosing story collection.

Explaining that Jorge Luis Borges felt that Burton’s translation was the best English translation of the *Nights*, Irwin indicates that “Borges provocatively argued that a translation which is limpid or neutral makes no contribution to literature” (32). Borges praises Burton’s “energy and vagueness, the love of tempests and magic” (qtd. in Irwin 32). Yet more important than making a “contribution to literature” through a non-

neutral style is Burton's adeptness at being an author without being an author. In "The Arabian Nights and the Question of Authorship" (2005), Ibrahim Muhawi directs us to Burton's translation if we are interested in exploring "the ambiguous space between author and translator." Instead of searching for original authors and narratives, Muhawi argues that it is more rewarding to observe "authorship through translation." He writes that "[t]o the extent that translators have an originating function, giving linguistic and literary shape to a work in the target language, they too are authors. . . . Burton's 'translation,' for example, is arguably not just a translation but a new work altogether—[one which] never existed before" (326). As a translator, Muhawi expresses interest in the "question of authorship," for, more often than not, translators disappear in a reader's engagement with a text. In terms of the *Nights*, Muhawi points out that many readers, including Michel Foucault, make the assumption that Scheherazade is the author of the tales. Arguing against Foucault's drawing attention to the distinctive, liberating expression that exists in "today's writing," Muhawi asserts that had Foucault

taken the trouble to consider what is actually going on inside the *Nights*, he would have noticed it is "modern" in the sense in which he uses the word, for the whole work consists of a set of expanding strategies for making the "author" disappear. Once the frame tale is established, Shahrazad disappears in the cycles of tales she narrates, which within these cycles, the narrator of the frame story disappears in the embedded tales. (335)

Perhaps part of the "magic" that Borges celebrates in the *Nights* has to do with its fluid disappearing acts. That sort of "magic" is inherent in oral storytelling, where storytellers

disappear into history while various versions of tales are embellished and live on—needing no particular author or text to confirm their worth and requiring no one particular version to set standards by which subsequent variants are drawn—such as what has unfortunately been the case in western culture with Perrault’s version of *Little Red Riding Hood*. “In traditional oral narratives,” Muhawi points out, “which come into being orally partly from memory and partly from invention, there is no such thing as a fixed text” (333). The lack of fixity is equivalent to a lack of inertia, for Muhawi’s point about “expanding strategies” not only includes the “disappearing act” of the author, but also the transformative act of text, character, and reader.

When a tale cannot be specifically “pinned down” to one author or to one version—when, that is, it possesses the qualities of an oral variant—it possesses the ability to be transformed, yet not transformed—altered, but in its *altering*, not limited to an author’s attempts to set up one “established” version. Irwin suggests that evolving tales are engaged in “an endless play of transformation,” where not only is it “almost impossible to tell when a story was first told and when it was written down,” but also “impossible too to say what the last telling and final version of a story will be. . . . The student of story collections finds himself adrift on an ocean of stories, an ocean which is boundless, deep and ceaselessly in motion” (64-65). Of course, Irwin is speaking specifically about the story collection of the *Nights*, which possesses what Irwin calls a “global setting” since the tales emerge in various cultures at various times—without one “single originating place or time” (77). “It is also true,” writes Irwin, that certain plots “will frequently occur to fiction-makers. Thus, essentially the same story may be created quite independently in different parts of the world” (78). Irwin points out that

there is a term for this phenomenon—“polygenesis”—but someone like Jorge Luis Borges might be compelled to call it “magic.” Even if the oldest manuscript of a story is found, for example, in “India or China, this does not necessarily mean,” explains Irwin, “that the story began life in the East” (78). A story may have “beg[u]n life” in the unknown, authorless, and still live—in motion, “adrift on an ocean of stories”—as a subject-in-process, being “birthed,” mysteriously, in diverse cultures without one originating source. Such is the case with the *Nights*, where versions of the same tale appear, for instance, in stories written in “eleventh-century Sanskrit, . . . twelfth-century Latin, . . . Middle English verse,” fourteenth-century Persian and Italian, and in twentieth-century novels—without apparent connections or transitions (Irwin 64). One cannot experience the *Nights* without being affected, in some way, by the wild.

Through its subterranean movements, the wild, lifting and overturning the “topsoil” of inert thought, provides the stimulus for fresh ideas. Not limited by space, or by conceptions *about* space, the wild emerges in tales that spring up due to some dearth in a culture or cultures. In a treatise about history, the *Muquaddima*, Irwin relates that the “fourteenth-century thinker Ibn Khaldun suggested that entertainers flourished when a civilization decayed” (130). Khaldun’s entertainers include snake-charmers, contortionists, jugglers and storytellers, who, writes Khaldun, “give the illusion that objects are transformed” (qtd. in Irwin 131). Decay, then, inspires the desire for the wondrous, where the possibility that the illusion of the transformed will be sustained, and in being sustained will make the game a part of conscious perception. The *Nights*—stories that both subtly and energetically play with the overturning of the expected—is such a sustaining form of entertainment that illustrates and elicits transformation where

decay and deterioration have abolished interplay among subscribers to the habitus. Muhawi points out that “[g]ames give pleasure, and there is a sense in which the *Nights* seems to resemble a game, with the seemingly endless—and for readers pleasurable—proliferation of stories that makes the *Arabian Nights* what it is: a process of narration that has gone out of control and does not know when to stop” (336). Both Irwin and Muhawi note the “expanding strategies” of the *Nights*, where, as Irwin says, it is “impossible . . . to say what the last telling” will be. As the tales continue to emerge in various forms in diverse cultures, the ability of the *Nights* to play, as it were, with its own lack of origins and terminations suggests that the belief in and need for transformation is ever-present, not bound by space or time. There is “scarcely a tale in the whole of the *Nights*,” writes Irwin, “which does not have its precursors, derivatives or analogous versions. Tales evolve into other tales and they replicate, elaborate, invert, abridge, link and comment on their own structure in an endless play of transformation” (64-65). And as the tales play, so are listeners drawn into the playing and become caught up, “adrift on an ocean of stories,” and so become susceptible—vulnerable—to the possibility of their own transformation.

Although the tales of the *Nights* draw us in from one story into another and into yet another and so on, and so appear to be “embedded” one within the other and “framed” by the initial story about Scheherazade and King Shahryar, Irwin’s description of listeners and readers as being “adrift on an ocean of stories” is, actually, a more discerning depiction of the “expanding strategies” of the intervolving tales. In *The Last Battle* (1956), the last book of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C.S. Lewis provides an apt metaphor for thinking differently about “framing” and “embedded-ness.” After having

entered a stable in the land of Narnia, the young Lucy finds that within the stable a whole world opens up, so that the world within the stable is larger than the land of Narnia outside. After having run “further up and further in” (167) within the newly discovered realm of the stable, Lucy finds herself in a garden with an old friend, a faun named Tumnus, and with Narnia stretched out far below them:

Lucy looked hard at the garden and saw that it was not really a garden at all, but a whole world, with its own rivers and woods and sea and mountains. But they were not strange: she knew them all.

“I see,” she said. “This is still Narnia, and more real and more beautiful than the Narnia down below, just as *it* was more real and more beautiful than the Narnia outside the Stable door! I see . . . world within world. Narnia within Narnia. . . .”

“Yes,” said Mr. Tumnus, “like an onion: except that as you go in and in, each circle is larger than the last.” (170-71; emphasis in original)

The garden *within* the stable is larger than the stable, and the stable *within* Narnia is larger than Narnia. As the “onion” is peeled, each inner portion is larger than the outer portion. If we apply the “onion” metaphor to the *Nights*, we may then recognize that the “framing” tale of Scheherazade and King Shahryar can be “peeled away” to reveal expanding tales *within*—that is, *larger than*—the tales that “frame” them. “Good stories,” Irwin asserts, “pay little attention to cultural or linguistic frontiers” (65). Thus, the tales of the *Nights* are greater, more expansive, more derivatively unrestricted than the earliest known Arabic text, and although Scheherazade’s narrative predicament “frames” the stories she tells, the stories she tells are larger—more immersed in time and

history—than her predicament. We find ourselves “adrift,” for the storytellers refuse to stay still; the stories will not remain “embedded” in little boxes that we can retrieve at will. Instead, storyteller merges with story as each tale grows more and more fantastic than its predecessor. The “frame,” as it were, is fluid—like waves on an ocean—and pulls us “further up and further in” to what we discover is, ultimately, ourselves.

In *The Last Battle*, as Lucy looks into the garden, she discovers that, “however far away” something might be, “once she had fixed her eyes steadily on it, [it] became quite clear and close as if she were looking through a telescope. She could see the whole Southern desert and beyond it the great city of Tashbaan: to Eastward she could see Cair Paravel on the edge of the sea and the very window of the room that had once been her own” (171). What is “far away” becomes not only close, but personal. The unique rivers, woods and mountains of the newly discovered garden are “not strange: she knew them all.” What Lewis does is emphasize how difference is non-difference—how the “not” of the insignificant stable encompasses the entire world in which it stands, how the “not” of the young girl, Lucy, is everywhere at once. The insignificant is significant in its insignificance—just as the storytellers of the *Nights* are significant through their mysterious anonymity.

The medieval Arab storyteller, as Irwin explains it, “enjoyed (if that is the word) a very low status,” competing with jugglers, snake-charmers and other entertainers, and thus “individual storytellers were rarely noticed by the historians and compilers of biographical dictionaries.” It is interesting to note, too, that in “medieval Fez, storytellers were normally found working close to the city’s gates” (108). Hence, the

Arab storytellers who helped shape the *Nights* related their tales at “borderland” spaces, remaining unnoticed by chroniclers of history and biography. Storytellers continue to maintain a “low status” or tend to be forgotten in works that employ them. For example, in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, Nelly, the storyteller, is an unequal peer and servant to the well-remembered Catherine and Heathcliff. Nelly’s morality, writes Vereen Bell, is “patently superficial and therefore inadequate. . . . Heathcliff and Catherine are left to move outside the moral realm. Nelly cannot pull them down to her level; her imagination does not soar.” Nonetheless, Nelly “gives them life, and once they breathe they generate their own strength” (160). Nelly, paradoxically, lacks imagination, according to Bell, yet creates life beyond herself in the telling of her tale to Lockwood. As Nelly disappears into her “morality” and servanthood, Catherine and Heathcliff, says Bell, “transcend not only human values but the confines of life itself” (160). Like the translator, the storyteller exists at a “level” that assigns insignificance to the teller and significance to the told, so much so that a critic such as Bell can claim that the storyteller’s imagination “does not soar.” Yet such disparaging claims are what alert us to the presence of the wild, for the wild, unlike figures shaped by legend, weaves in and out of history, remaining mysteriously at a “low status” in its undulations that possess the power, through time, to transform. As a character, Nelly may be criticized as lacking imagination, yet the effect of her narration is to suggest possibilities of open gateways leading to other conceptions of “human values.” The social structures that divide and establish difference appear decayed and out of place when the wild, surfacing at the “gate” of consciousness, reveals the magnitude and far-reaching influence of that which is nondescript.

Referring specifically to the autobiographical writings of women and other marginalized peoples in western history, Sidonie Smith indicates that such writers “spoke mutedly, circumspectly, and still could not be sure that their ‘lives’ would be read or readable.” Nonetheless, they wrote, taking advantage of cultural disturbances, for, as Smith points out, the “instabilities of the times can be energizing as well as enervating.” According to Smith, marginalized autobiographers—storytellers of the self—found and continue to find ways to “maneuver” within their “unauthorized positions” and so venture into “unconscious or conscious interrogations of the master discourse, interrogations that position them to take advantage of . . . instability” (18). In the *Nights*, such interrogations are subtly hidden behind the fantastic tales that Scheherazade relates. Her tales can be interpreted as autobiography, for they are concerned with the right of the “I” of Scheherazade to be afforded life, but they extend beyond autobiography in that they speak for many “I”s throughout time and space whose “low status” discredits their stories. Like Nelly in *Wuthering Heights* who is not the author of Brontë’s novel, Scheherazade is a character and not the author of the *Nights*; yet her role as both character and storyteller puts her in a position to interrogate the Symbolic order of many cultures, for transformation is difficult and tends to be found wanting not only in the ninth and tenth centuries when we know the story collection of the *Nights* was circulating, but also in our present-day, postmodern, global culture.

For instance, in an article published in 2007, “Risky Business: Feminism Now and Then,” Felicity Nussbaum points out that in the literary conversations of academic discourse, “the hard-won literary historical work of many feminist critics is frequently slighted rather than cited. Women’s intellectual labor in the academy continues to be

silently absorbed or ignored but in either case often left uncredited. Parallel bodies of criticism divided by gender continue to evolve” (81). Nussbaum suggests that we place Scheherazade “in dialogue” with our “postmodern times” in order to recognize the still necessary “central business of contesting patriarchy” since the “conflictual nature” persists in separated, “parallel” discourses (85), where women’s voices are “absorbed” or “ignored.” In order to place Scheherazade “in dialogue” with the present, however, it is necessary to recognize not only Nussbaum’s point about the need for “contesting patriarchy,” but to recognize the artful strategies required for a movement beyond the “contesting” to needful transformation. When Scheherazade is thrown into the crisis initiated by King Shahryar, what she recognizes is that continued parallel confrontations effect little change. One’s voice will always be “absorbed” and “ignored,” no matter how justified one’s plea is, as long as the cultural habitus retains an authority that deems the marginalized as inconsequential. As both a character and a storyteller, Scheherazade, energized by crisis, speaks as both an *inconsequential* figure as a woman destined for slaughter within the fluid “frame” story and as an ahistorical storyteller—transcending time and place. Her voice surfaces at the “gate” of consciousness, revealing the magnitude and far-reaching influence of that which is considered nondescript. Her most creative “expanding strategy” is not to demand justice for her cause as a persecuted woman and citizen, but to disappear behind the stories of her created characters who are stripped of justice by misdirected, abstracted cultural perceptions. She only appears because she disappears. She is not slaughtered because she rejoices at being slaughtered. She is unafraid of her last hours on earth because she perceives her last hours as infinite. The fictions she creates are representative of the

fictions that she perceives make up her world within King Shahryar's kingdom, and by perceiving her world *as* a fiction, she recognizes that the stories that make up that fiction can be adjusted and expanded to include the larger worlds within the smaller ones—"like an onion," as Lewis's Tumnus describes it, "except that as you go in and in, each circle is larger than the last." What is unique about Scheherazade is that although she *appears* to be a gentle lamb led to the slaughter as her father perceives it, she is anything but. She possesses a consciousness that is wild, and so the crisis of foreboding death becomes, for her, an opportunity to begin her transformational wreathing art of fabrication. When her father, the Wazir, returns with the news that King Shahryar will take her as a bride to be killed the next day, as has been the course of action of the king according to a personal oath—for each day he would take a certain woman, "abate her maidenhead at night and slay her next morning, to make sure of his honor" (13)—Scheherazade rejoices "with exceeding joy and gat ready all she required" (22). What she has already prepared, first and foremost, is a plot—and it is a "better plot" than that which King Shahryar has formulated for his kingdom.

The problem that *The Thousand Nights and a Night* emphasizes is the predicament that arises due to a cultural lie. Scheherazade's solution for combating such a lie is, ultimately, to provide better lies—lies that involve an understanding of interdependencies. The problem with Shahryar's kingdom is that it is in crisis, wasting away due to the king's own personal code of honor. Due to what he sees as his wife's and his brother's wife's infidelity, he determines that "life is naught but one great wrong" (10). Such a concept about life—a lie—establishes the beginnings of the breakdown of his kingdom. (Of course, the king is blind to the patriarchal double-

standard that prevails in his thinking. He has many concubines, but his own inconstancies do not cause him to arrive at the conclusion that “life is naught but one great wrong”). As lies grow upon one another, so does another lie grow upon the king’s first conception, for he then believes that “there never was nor is there one chaste woman upon the face of the earth” (13). This exaggerated lie leads to his oath, “to make sure of his honor,” to slay a new wife each day, and so the people of his kingdom are forced to adhere to the authoritative, established lie. The adamant practice of slaying a woman each morning continues for three years, “till folk raised an outcry against him and cursed him, praying Allah utterly to destroy him and his rule. And women made an uproar and mothers wept and parents fled with their daughters till there remained not in the city a young person fit for carnal copulation” (14). The king, adhering strictly to his code of honor, does not acknowledge that his kingdom is diminishing, and readers are meant to recognize, without doubt, that the king is cruel and unwise. In addition, although he is someone to be feared, he is devastatingly non-wild in his deliberate, planned, ravenous actions.

Because they fear for their lives, the king’s subjects are forced into obeisance, for they do not pay homage to him willingly. Before presenting his petitions to the king, for example, the Wazir—Scheherazade’s father and the man committed to the physical slayings of the women—“bless[es] him and kiss[es] the ground before him” (21), and understanding from the king’s response that he will *not* receive a pardon for his daughter when he explains that she has determined to ask to become the king’s wife, he says to the king: “Allah guide thee to glory and lengthen thy life, O King of the Age” (22). When he informs Scheherazade of the royal command, the Wazir exclaims: “Allah make

not thy father desolate by thy loss!” (22), and we know that, since the lengthening of the king’s life is equal to his own loss and desolation, the Wazir’s wish of long life to the king cannot, of course, be a true wish. It is a fabrication, just as the kissing of the ground before the king—while at one time it may have been an expression of reverence—is an empty, mechanical, hardened lie.

Scheherazade’s willingness to risk death and to become the wife of the merciless king is based on an understanding that the king’s destructive, violent actions are a result of codified, non-imaginative thinking. What is required, then, Scheherazade apprehends, is a plot *not* designed to eliminate the king—not a plot, that is, that would answer the people’s prayer for Allah “utterly to destroy him and his rule.” If King Shahryar were to be killed, another king, the story seems to suggest, such as his brother, who is also convinced that “there never was nor is there one chaste woman upon the face of the earth,” would simply replace King Shahryar and his tyrannical rule. Indeed, Scheherazade bases her decision on her knowledge of the many histories of many kingdoms, for she had

perused the books, annals, and legends of preceding kings, and the stories, examples, and instances of bygone men and things. . . . [I]t was said that she had collected a thousand books of histories relating to antique races and departed rulers. She had perused the works of the poets and knew them by heart, she had studied philosophy and the sciences, arts, and accomplishments. And she was pleasant and polite, wise and witty, well read and well bred. (14)

Her knowledge of past history as well as the wisdom gained from studying the words of poets inform Scheherazade's fearless declaration to wed the tyrant, not because she wishes to die, of course, as her father imagines, but because she desires to alter the non-advancing plot that has run into a destructive stalemate in her culture. Before she informs him that she plans to marry the king, she asks her father: "[H]ow long shall this slaughter of women endure? Shall I tell thee what is in my mind in order to save both sides from destruction?" (14). Scheherazade is thus intent not on attempting to destroy one ruler but on creating a new plot that might replace the false "code of honor" that is destructive to "both sides."

The simple, central problem has to do with the existence of inequitable "sides" in the first place. The dominant, ruling "side" is blind to the disintegrating culture occasioned by the unbroken code. The oppressed, muted side possesses two choices: flight or slaughter, both of which are strained by the ubiquitous cultural conception that certain lives are subject to being considered as insignificant. Therefore, when Scheherazade develops a plan that would "save both sides from destruction," she has to devise plots that mix and intertwine lives, where kings, for example, become laborers and rejected citizens and where women are given powers that, when used for good, are unanticipatedly silenced, and when used cruelly, are explained as coming from a higher, dominant, authoritative source. The chief destructive factor in the stories she presents becomes the "code," or the "oath," that will not be broken, and both women and men—rulers included—are forced into submission under its dominance. Because fear defines the way in which the code is obeyed, the stories she tells stress the removal of choice, both in figures who are compassionate and in the figures who are tyrannical, in order to

emphasize the impotency of any being—powerful or no—who must adhere to the oath. Her goal, ultimately, is to convince the king to abandon his oath, and to do that, she must attempt to show to a fixed, adamant, detached mind not only that histories upon histories of similar social and political codes and oaths have been destructive, but that those in power initiating them, by losing their sense of dependence upon the other, inconsequential “side,” have destroyed themselves, their children, their children’s children, their children’s children’s children, ad infinitum. Scheherazade’s task is a monumental one, yet she faces it joyfully, and she includes her sister in her plot, for she knows that, as a storyteller, she requires a proper listener.

In fact, Scheherazade is able to request a listener such as her sister because, as Melinda M. Rosenthal points out, Scheherazade herself “enters the story as a listener” (123). She enters the *Nights* having studied “philosophy and the sciences, arts, and accomplishments” of “antique races and departed rulers” and has so “listened” to the voices that have established the rules and beliefs of cultures through time. Rosenthal also indicates that the first words of the *Nights* are “And afterwards,” and so “[w]e are starting out *in medias res*—not with regard to the book, but in relation to existence itself” (122). The text, Scheherazade, and we ourselves awaken in the midst of accumulated conceptions, and it is only by listening to that “accumulation” that a wild-informed storyteller can discern how to speak *through* it in order to voice the unknown. What is required, too, by the storyteller possessing wild consciousness is the skill of knowing how to leap into the *known* unknown.

What I mean by the known unknown can be better understood through the Arabic practice of *firasa*. Irwin explains that *firasa* “was a science or skill on the edge of the

occult,” and the term is derived from *faras*, which means “horse.” Fraudulent horse-dealers’ schemes, Irwin points out, required the skill, on the part of the reputable merchants, to “see through” their deceptions (191). The person capable of using the skill of *firasa* could determine, for example, as it appears in certain tales in the *Nights*, that “a certain pearl is rotten inside” or that the king “is the son of a baker.” However, although such determinations would seem marvelous in the telling of the tales, Irwin points out that, many times, such “detective” work “was only a matter of close observation. . . . Outward appearances betray inner truths, and it is one of the commonplaces of the *Nights* that ‘a man’s destiny is written upon his forehead’” (192). Defining *firaza* in terms of the physiognomics that it was associated with, Carlo Ginzburg explains that “[a]ncient Arabic physiognomics was rooted on *firasa*, a complex notion which generally meant the capacity to leap from the known to the unknown by inference on the basis of clues” (qtd. in Irwin 191-92).⁶ The “clues” that inform Scheherazade are derived from her perusal of a “thousand books of histories relating to antique races and departed rulers.” What she sees clearly written upon the forehead of King Shahryar is the known, accumulated history of oath-adherence, supported by the kingdom’s recital of it through its philosophies, sciences, and arts. What Scheherazade sees is well known, yet what is unknown by King Shahryar is its destructive effects. The “leap” that Scheherazade takes in order to “see through” what is written on the king’s forehead is a leap into wild terrain, for she must make the known-unknown *known* to the king, and such knowledge is not acquired easily nor quickly, for that which is conceived of as “reality” is not readily *re-conceived*. Because she knows the king will not know how to listen since he is so mechanically trammled in what she calls his “bloodthirsty custom”

(22)—a custom derived from former customs that, through historical time and ongoing in the present-day, continue to “slight” rather than “cite,” or “absorb” and “ignore,” as Nussbaum points out, seemingly unauthorized voices—Scheherazade bestows upon her sister the unknown and unpracticed role, within the chambers of the king, of listener. Dunyazade plays a key role in the transformative effects of the tales of the *Nights*, for she demonstrates the art of the listener, which involves knowledge about how to feel and express emotion in order to have the courage and generosity of spirit to say, *Please, let me hear your voice speak out. I wish to hear more.*

When Scheherazade includes her sister in her plot and instructs her in its details, Dunyazade responds to Scheherazade’s request for her presence in the king’s chamber in a manner that is alien to the king’s experience of knowing how to respond to and acknowledge others. She replies: “With love and gladness” (22). Her reply suggests that she trusts her sister and is confident about their endeavor to weave new plots in the king’s mind. Most of all, she is fearless, which indicates that she and Scheherazade possess knowledge that many do not, for if Scheherazade fails in her endeavor, Dunyazade would be the next in line to be slaughtered. Dunyazade infers that through her storytelling, Scheherazade will end up portraying that, although the king appears to be fearless, his tyranny is sustained by fear and by a perception of his own unworthiness, which cause him to lose his freedom of choice. Explaining the psychological problem that exists in those who condemn or cannot tolerate others, Joan Riviere indicates that

[w]hat we cannot tolerate in ourselves we are not likely to tolerate in others. In so condemning others we can obtain gratification, too, both directly from discharging our aggressive impulses, and from the

reassurance obtained that we ourselves conform to and uphold the standards of rightness and perfection. Righteous indignation can be one of the cruellest and most vindictive of aggressive pleasures. . . . [In addition] the need for power springs directly from an incapacity to tolerate either sacrifices for others or dependence on others. Because of this underlying incapacity any attempt to achieve an apparently constructive aim by excessive omnipotence is always false—based on a fallacy—and succeeds, if it is a “success,” only by trickery or violence. (“Hate” 38, 40)

King Shahryar’s projection of his own hatred of himself onto women lacks any sense of personal or imperial guilt since the king has determined that he righteously follows the “standards” implicit in the practice of both observing and abiding by oaths. Yet what he perceives as “constructive” to his kingdom is, as Riviere explains it, “based on a fallacy.” His tyrannical rule is “successful,” as he regards it, for three years because it is dependent upon violence. What the king does not recognize is that in his refusal to be dependent upon others, he nevertheless is dependent upon *something*—in this case, a violent decree—and his blindness to that dependence does not alert him to the fact that his indignation and his bloodthirsty desire to be separated from the other “side” has enfettered him. Scheherazade and Dunyazade apprehend, however, that the “side” that destroys must be saved from destruction as well as the “side” destroyed in order for an understanding of interdependence to shape new ways of thinking and heal the land.

Once Scheherazade arranges it so that her sister is granted permission to be with her on her “last night,” she begins *her* elaborate lie in order to counteract the fallacy of

the established social code. At midnight, Dunyazade, as instructed, says to Scheherazade: “Allah upon thee, O my sister, recite to us some new story, delightful and delectable, wherewith to while away the waking hours of our latter night” (22). When Dunyazade addresses her sister with the expression, “Allah upon thee,” we know that it is not an empty expression when applied to Scheherazade. Dunyazade’s wish, of course, is that Scheherazade’s stories will be inspired by divine powers in order to evoke the needed changes in the king’s conceptions. On the other hand, Scheherazade’s response presents a fabrication in her reference to the king. To her sister, she replies: “With joy and goodly gree, . . . if this pious and auspicious King permit me” (22). The adjectives she uses to describe the king are meaningless in connection with his brutal and unrelenting sexual, mental, and murderous abuses of the young virgin brides he slaughters each morning. For every bride the Wazir produces each day, the king “went into her at eventide. And when morning dawned he bade his Minister strike off her head, and the Wazir did accordingly, for fear of the Sultan” (14). Although he is faithful to his personal oath, the king is incontestably not *pious*, nor is he *auspicious*, for the success and prosperity of his kingdom is in decay—his remaining subjects desiring curses and death upon their king—for, marked and defined by its butchery, it is a costly kingdom to reside in. In addition, the king’s inner spirit promises little in terms of displaying human emotion and compassion. Indeed, outside of the presence of the king, Scheherazade describes his custom as “bloodthirsty”—not a quality generally perceived of as “pious” or “auspicious.”

Scheherazade’s beginning lie is not perceived as a lie by the king, for his ignorance and his demand for obeisance causes him to expect language that flatters and

seemingly expresses respect for him and his royal station. He thus is easily drawn into the subject of her first story, which describes a fisherman who follows a rigid custom each day in terms of casting his nets. When an unexpected copper jar is pulled from his nets on his last casting, he unseals it and finds himself facing a terrifying Jinni, who has been imprisoned within the jar for eighteen hundred years. Due to a personal oath the Jinni has made while imprisoned within the jar in the depths of the sea, the one who frees him—the fisherman—must die. Naturally, the fisherman asks: “Wherefore shouldst thou kill me, and what thing have I done to deserve death, I who freed thee from the jar, and saved thee from the depths of the sea, and brought thee up on dry land?” (25). Speaking out for the cause of the women subject to the king’s butchery, Scheherazade’s words question, on another level beyond that of the story, the king’s right to destroy those who bear children, including those who have given *him*, through his ancestry, life. She also foreshadows her eventual goal—that of saving him from his own “depths” of depravity. Although when she bore him, the king’s mother brought him forth “upon dry land,” Scheherazade’s strategy is to return him to the “sea”—that is, to a time before birth, before his ancestry was known, in order to suggest through her stories that, through the workings of fate, he may have been born not a king, nor perhaps even a man. Although the fisherman in the story begs the Jinni not to take his life, the Jinni is relentless, so the fisherman tricks him—by disbelieving in the Jinni’s abilities to change his form and size—into returning to the jar. The fisherman escapes death by capping the jar and imprisoning the Jinni once again.

Using the story as one of her metaphors for the tyranny of the king’s code, Scheherazade both questions and hints at the short-sightedness behind the king’s fear of

appearances. Her satirical commentary surfaces in the tale of “The Fisherman and the Jinni” in the form of the ease in which the Jinni is tricked. All the fisherman has to do is to suggest that the Jinni is incapable of transforming his large body into a form that can reside in the jar. Or, to put it another way, all the king had to witness was the infidelity of two wives—his own and his brother’s—in order to determine in his mind that all women are faithless and therefore deserving of death. Rather than viewing his wife’s infidelity as a means of exposing his own inadequacies and infidelities, the king determines to punish all young women in order to “prove” his “honor.” If he slaughters them, they cannot expose him as incapable or as undesirable. Had he not murdered his wife, if, for instance, his wife had born a child that was not his, the king would have been “shamed.” Riviere, again, provides a relevant psychoanalytical explication of the type of aggression displayed by the king in her discussion about the humiliation that results from jealousy. Jealously, she explains, is

a reaction of hate and aggression to a loss or threat of a loss. . . . But one special feature in jealousy is the sense of humiliation which invariably accompanies it, owing to the injury it entails to one’s self-confidence and sense of security. The loss of self-confidence is not always consciously felt by a jealous person. If you reflect, you will see that the more furious and aggressive he is the less humiliated he feels. . . . [I]f he is not loved, or thinks he is not, it unconsciously signifies to him that he is *not lovable*. . . . The depression and feeling of helpless exposure to danger which this thought of being unlovable rouses in him . . . are unendurable. . . . Projection is at once set in motion . . . and hate can be let loose.

(“Hate” 41-42; emphasis in original)

In order to thwart feelings of humiliation and in order to *appear* both non-helpless and righteous in his loyalty to oaths, the king reaches a pinnacle in the human ability to become “more furious and aggressive” in the attempt to assuage his inner turmoil of feeling disgraced, and he is able to do so due to his powerful position. “One way of reaching security,” explains Riviere, “is by aiming at omnipotent power in order to control all potentially painful conditions, and have access to all useful, desirable things, both within oneself and without. In phantasy, omnipotence shall bring security” (“Hate” 39). However, the search for security through omnipotence only occasions more loss, for having “access” at will to “all useful, desirable things”—such as, in the case of the king’s thinking, a new virgin bride every night—does not ease the unendurable feeling of knowing one is not lovable or loved. Yet the “depression and feeling of helpless exposure to *danger* which this thought of being unlovable rouses in him”—that is, the *fear* of feelings of humiliation—blinds one so bound up in that fear that he can never feel secure.

The fear of shame and humiliation is what drives larger-than-life figures—such as King Arthur and his knights—to perpetuate a chivalric code that informs both legend and a persistence of its written and voiced reiteration in the dominant, Symbolic order. However, Scheherazade, possessing wild consciousness, is able to perceive the omnipotently driven phantasies that are at the heart of such codes. Through her satire of the Jinni’s easy duping, Scheherazade—a figure not bound by fear—delineates the exceptional ease in which injudicious “codes of honor” are created. All a woman has to do, for example, is question a male’s inadequacy or incapacities, and that disbelief in or

rejection of his professed skills and accomplishments has great power to place him in manacles of insecurity and fear. However, rather than acknowledging that fear and addressing it, as Val Plumwood has explained, the “master identity” both inherits and perpetuates the inferiority of and exclusion of the other “side” of an established dualistic assumption (Plumwood, *Feminism* 44-47). It should not be so easy for the fisherman to dupe the Jinni, nor should it be so easy to instill an adamant, “unendurable” fear in the dominant powers that be, yet the “code of honor” provides an uncomplicated avenue for entry. As the fisherman tells the Jinni, “Allah hath now thrown thee into my hands, and I am cunninger than thou” (28).

One readily interprets that Scheherazade has placed herself in the role of the fisherman, attempting to free the Jinni—that is, the terrible king—from his miserable state of mind without directly or outwardly telling him that his mind is deep in ruination—not only in that he outwardly professes to value the destruction of others, but in that he is in a state of self-annihilation. If one’s mind, like the king’s, is so developed and trained by dualisms—some of the dualisms that Plumwood points out are “human/animal, mind/body, reason/nature, freedom/necessity” (*Feminism* 45)—then one becomes blind to the possibilities of integrating such compartmentalized conceptions. For those *not* blind to such possibilities—such as Scheherazade or Dunyazade—what is necessary is the confidence, courage, and ability to voice those possibilities, and so Scheherazade’s fisherman unequivocally affirms his keen perceptiveness.

“Affirmation,” says Plumwood, “is essential to counter the logic of the master subject, who inferiorises women both individually and culturally, backgrounds and devalues their work, and defines them as peripheries to the master’s centre. There must be some sort of

compensating recognition to correct this devaluation, but it must be a critical and qualified one” (*Feminism* 63). The “compensating recognition” that Scheherazade exhibits is “critical” in the sense that she has vast knowledge of the codes of honor that have defined her culture’s history and present state and is skillful in her judgment of them. She is qualified in that she has also studied the poets and poetic language, so she is able to appear as muted with a “pleasant and polite” voice while speaking loudly and in volumes within, behind, and through metaphor and fabrication. When her sister asks her to recite a story, Scheherazade says, “With joy and goodly gree,” meaning “with joy and goodly mastery and superiority over the situation”—an affirmative response to the death that looms before her, counterbalancing and offsetting its fear. Once she begins, her Basic Tactic is to keep moving, causing one story to meld into another, developing stories within stories and creating layers of thought—not layers that sit one on top of another, but layers which intermingle and intertwine so much that a listener begins to lose track of which king did what in which story and which listeners within which tale are present.

By employing the Basic Tactic of moving without being restrained by fear or by some authoritative command, Scheherazade attempts to bring her listeners into the wild as she listens for its call—each storyline she devises progressing step by step, melding and merging one into the other. In such a way, Scheherazade engages in a tactic that cannot compare with the king’s understanding of the social order. In other words, whereas the king, in an attempt to compensate for loss, seeks the “phantasy,” as Riviere explains it, that “omnipotence shall bring security,” Scheherazade interweaves and intertwines tales in order to convey the very feeling of being lost—of being not in

control and not able, at will, to “have access to all useful, desirable things.” The tales “peel away” onion-like, with each inner tale growing larger than its outer “frame” tale and so suggest the impossibility of controlling a narrative—especially the narratives of our own and others’ lives. Irwin, in his discussion about Jorge Luis Borges’s preoccupation with the “function of the ‘frame’ in literature,” summarizes the effect that Borges found resulted from such tellings. Borges argued, writes Irwin, that

the fascination of framing stems from the possibility that the reader, as he reads a story framed within another story, may become himself aware that he too may be framed, that is, part of a story that someone else is telling. The reader as he reads may suspect that he is as much a fiction as the characters in the *Nights* who tell stories but are themselves inventions of Sheherazade. (284)

Thus, Scheherazade draws us into the wild in an attempt to present the “reality” we know—the habitus we adhere to—as a fiction. And if the Symbolic order is a fiction, it can be then conceived that it is part of a larger unknown fiction—a wild fiction that knows about greater stories that “frame” from within interesting tales, for example, about each of the women whom King Shahryar has killed. The tales about such women may have been muted by the king, but their burial is a “burial alive,” as it were, for they resurface through wild tellings, in the voices, for example, of cunning fishermen convincing unwise Jinnis to return to jars in order to toss them back into the larger, wider, foundationless ocean of non-habituated thought. The effect of Scheherazade’s storytelling, of course, is to so engage the mind of the king that when morning arrives, he postpones the slaughter of his latest wife, for in listening to her stories, he is not

merely being entertained, but is also being instructed in how to learn how to feel—a prerequisite to developing “goodly gree,” or trustworthy judgment.

When the fisherman re-imprisons the Jinni again due to his relentless determination to take the fisherman’s life, the Jinni begs to be released again, promising to bring the fisherman “weal.” However, the fisherman replies:

Vainly I placed myself under thy protection, and I humbled myself to thee with weeping, while thou soughtest only to slay me, who had done thee no injury deserving this at thy hands. Nay, so far from injuring thee by any evil act, I worked thee naught but weal in releasing thee from that jail of thine. . . . [K]now that when I have cast thee back into this sea, I will warn whosoever may fish thee up of what hath befallen me with thee, and I will advise him to toss thee back again. So shalt thou abide here under these waters till The End of Time shall make an end of thee. (28)

In interpreting the fisherman’s speech as an indirect speech by Scheherazade to the king, we can hear the warning call of the wild, which, while it beckons listeners on one level, also abandons non-listeners as it quickens in its arabesque flight and disappears—the moment for creative inspiration and expression, as well as alternative, improvised thinking, lost forever. What Scheherazade is telling the king, indirectly, is that just as each woman he marries each day has one last chance to live, so, too, does he have one last chance to listen, both mentally and inwardly, before he is to remain deaf and blind forever—known in the history books, annals, and legends as yet one more cruel king rehearsing the same, non-creative narrative that, like the werewolf’s discovery of the

plum tree in “The Story of Grandmother,” results in one more non-encounter with the wild.

Warnings from the wild occur at moments of realization, and such moments must be seized, other ideas abandoned, if the life the wild offers is to be claimed. Emily Dickinson, rather like Scheherazade’s fisherman, presents such necessary realization in an image she used in a letter to Elizabeth Holland about her mother’s stroke in 1875. Referring to her mother’s paralysis, Dickinson wrote to Holland: “I tell her we all shall fly soon, not to let it grieve her, and what indeed is Earth but a Nest, from whose rim we are all falling?” (qtd. in Lundin 209). In Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice falls down a rabbit-hole before she discovers that she’s no longer in the English countryside where she had been sitting by her sister on the bank. Her fall is not quick. In fact, she falls quite slowly, having “plenty of time as she went down to look about her, and to wonder what was going to happen next. . . . Down, down, down. Would the fall *never* come to an end? . . . ‘I wonder how many miles I’ve fallen by this time?’ she said aloud. . . . ‘I wonder if I shall fall *through* the earth!’” (13; emphases in original). Both Dickinson and Carroll use falling as a trope to describe our relationship to the earth through time, suggesting that we are in a continual state of free-fall and are not in control of our ability either to land or to fly. Struggling to control our falling is equivalent to being blind to the wild. When Alice is falling, she does not struggle but instead asks questions and begins to *wonder*, for “[t]here was nothing else to do” (14). As she falls, she notices that the sides of the rabbit-hole “were filled with cupboards and book-shelves: here and there she saw maps and pictures hung upon pegs” (13). She is literally falling through a hollow passage in the earth and figuratively

falling through the earth's recorded history. When she removes a jar labeled "ORANGE MARMALADE" off of one of the shelves, she discovers that it is empty. When one is falling down and past the history of the Symbolic order, the perspective gained about its meaningfulness is that of its emptiness. The sign signifying "ORANGE MARMALADE" is a sign lacking substance and meaning for one whose onward journey is wildly determined.

Alice, a character who embarks on wild ventures, is content in her state of free-fall, does not fear loss, and does not attempt to scramble after some form of security—not projecting hatred, for example, onto the rabbit who has gotten her into her predicament. The rabbit, acting, we might say, as the wild "intimation" that draws Alice into the wild state of *wondering* about the earth's passing, fictional history is the warning call of the wild—which flashes quickly past, providing the chance to enter a consciousness that will not be shaped by any habitus. If we are like Alice or Scheherazade, we will respond to that passing flash and embark upon a journey where time and space expand and where "reality" is transformed. In other words, once the wild call is heeded, time itself alters so that wonder can begin to create new awareness about our place and places in and on the earth that we pass through as we live our lives. However, if we hear and see the "rabbit" but ignore its lead, eventually, those "moments" will become lost to us, and expanding time will seem an impossibility. In his discussion about the nineteenth-century English novel, Frederick R. Karl makes an interesting observation about the loss of love in its relationship to time. Love, he writes, "is possible when time is plentiful. As soon as time becomes precious, however, love turns to lust" (149). When King Shahryar invites Scheherazade to continue her tale the next night and so relents from his blind aggression, the king shows a willingness to

choose the time and space that the wild offers. Like Alice who falls through history, the king must learn, too, how to “fall through” the social codes that have shaped his behavior and his thinking. In surrendering to the arabesque nature of the tales, the king displays the possibility of being transformed by the wild. However, if the king’s insecurities, sense of worthlessness, and feelings of humiliation and shame cause him to think that he can “control all potentially painful conditions,” to use Riviere’s phrase, in a time and space that he views as limited and controllable, then wild journeying and discovery would be once again lost to him, as love and its powers lose their depth and expansiveness within a consciousness shaped by fear and dependent upon stalwart codes of honor.

In *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* (2002), Mary Beth Rose refers to the behaviors that shape a “heroics of action”—most often perceived as masculine—and a “heroics of endurance” that “is not so clearly gendered as the heroics of action, and . . . [involves] the endurance of suffering, represented in female terms” (xv, xxii). The differences between the two types of heroics, Rose explains, “frequently come down to a choice between killing and dying. Given the complexities of human potential, it would seem possible to come up with better options” (xxii). What Rose finds admirable in attempts at heroics is the “desire to survive,” where the “capacity and desire” to live “designates meaning and determines value” (xxii, 113). However, she writes, the “male heroics of action of course survives as a Western cultural model” where male heroics in history and literature “seek omnipotence by endeavoring to monopolize all dominant subject positions” (113-14). What Rose calls the “heroics of action” shapes legendary accounts, and just as wild consciousness is foreign in legendary

stories—too intent on fitting the constraining mask and therefore oblivious to the wild call—wild inspiration generally eludes kings and rulers of the dominant realm. For instance, Rose indicates that whereas England’s Henry VIII addresses his subjects by threatening them—for he relates in his only recorded parliamentary speech of 1545 that he “will not hesitate to use . . . power against them if they refuse to obey his commands”—James I in 1609 “lectures Parliament on the nature of monarchical power, reminding them that, like God, kings ‘have the power to . . . make of their subjects like men at Chess’” (51-52). Rigid in their inherited notions of omnipotent rule, “[n]either Henry nor James,” says Rose, “approaches the conception of mutuality” (53). Acknowledging “mutual dependencies between subjects and monarch” would require a “dialogue,” Rose points out (53), and a successful dialogue requires the capability of listening on both sides. Because King Shahryar has demonstrated to his subjects a remarkable inability to listen, Scheherazade’s attempt to “save” the king from his own destruction is an exceptional endeavor, for rulers or ruling powers as furious and aggressive as King Shahryar rarely possess the attentiveness necessary for pursuing the call of the wild.

Scheherazade’s fisherman’s voice, as he speaks into the copper jar, can be interpreted as the voice of the wild, which warns those possessing wild consciousness to steer clear from the master model and its ungenerous, devouring, blind, imprisoned and imprisoning methods, and communicate, instead, in those places and with those spirits and minds that listen. When the Jinni calls out from the jar to the fisherman to “[o]pen for me that I may bring thee weal,” the fisherman answers: “Thou liest” (28). That the Jinni may possibly be lying, however, is not the central problem or issue, for lies, in the

perception of the wild, can work greater transformations than direct, open truths. When the fisherman says “[t]hou liest” to the Jinni, he is exemplifying the problem of dualities—of the two “sides”—in the master model’s consciousness. In other words, through his merciless, unbending decision to kill the fisherman, the Jinni defines himself as “dominant” or as the master, relegating the fisherman to the opposing position of the non-dominant, inferior, and muted slave—the “pawn,” as it were, on the “chessboard” controlled by a higher power. The Jinni becomes, in effect, the colonizer, and the fisherman becomes the colonized. *Before* the Jinni makes the decision to kill the fisherman, however, the dualistic, hierarchical structure is not apparent. The Jinni appears as a terrifying presence to the fisherman, but the Jinni could have just as easily viewed the fisherman, his releaser, with awe. Both may have recognized the powers inherent in each other—the fisherman respecting the Jinni’s powers of transformation, and the Jinni respecting the fisherman’s powers of deliverance—recognizing, for example, that no one else, in eighteen hundred years, was gifted enough or able to be guided to draw him from out of the depths of the sea.

The ability to observe constructive powers in others stems from the skill of knowing how to make emotional reparations in the midst of resentment—even when resentment arises out of a justified cause. In a psychoanalytic essay, “Love, Guilt and Reparation,” Melanie Klein refers to the human unconscious tendency to relate to newly introduced individuals by connecting them with our “first loved person,” generally a parent or parents, and most often, our mother. In accepting substitutes for a mother, she explains, a child feels guilty; however, there also exists a drive for reparation, which, says Klein, is connected to love. When a child “rediscovers” or “recreates” a new

relationship based on an earlier emotional feeling and remembrance of love and acceptance, an unconscious emotional restoration to a good condition occurs. This “making reparation—which is such an essential part of the ability to love,” explains Klein, “widens in scope” when it is extended to others, and the child’s ability to bring “into himself goodness from the outer world steadily increases. This satisfactory balance between ‘give’ and ‘take’ is the primary condition for further happiness. If in our earliest development we have been able to transfer our interest and love from our mother to other people, . . . then, and only then, are we able in later life to derive enjoyment from other sources” (117-18). Had the Jinni possessed such an ability for transference, what followed the Jinni’s release may have been a different story. In that different story, the master/servant struggle could have disappeared, had each recognized in the other the powers of devoted service—of “give and take” from both sides—rather than of dominance in a struggle for power.

Instead of expecting the Jinni to be the one who is supposed to serve him in gratitude for his release, for example, the fisherman could have found contentment in being awarded with an extraordinary occupation (as is Scheherazade)—that of possessing the uncommon power of releasing Jinnis. Instead of devising ways, for eighteen hundred years, of showing off his powers—either through rewards or through execution—to his expected releaser, the Jinni may have conceived of a way of sharing or teaching his knowledge of transforming power with his mystically guided liberator. Instead of *assuming* one thing or another based on preconceived notions, both the fisherman and the Jinni could have recognized their dependence upon one another: the Jinni, of course, needs a deliverer, and the fisherman needs an unexpected, marvelous

“catch”—that is, he needs not merely a meal for the night, but a new belief in transformative power, where the old stories do not simply repeat themselves over and over again. Instead of displaying the human drive for reparation, however, Scheherazade designs the story to express the same recurring patriarchal code, of the dualisms that unfortunately arise out of bitterness and projection, which divide and set one side against the other. In finding himself finally free, the Jinni desires full freedom—not to be tied to and dependent upon any deliverer—so he decides to destroy his releaser. In finding himself finally pulling in a good catch, the fisherman expects a reward for his labor. Neither are thinking wildly enough to think beyond their self-satisfying desires and expectations. To be given a liberator does not have to mean that one must express *eternal* gratitude and be required to serve that liberator forever, as the Jinni may feel would be the case if he does not kill the fisherman. And to be given the gift of releasing a prisoner does not mean that one should expect immediate prosperity to follow from that release. However, through each act, one *should* imagine that life will follow. The Jinni should believe that he will be able to live after having been imprisoned for so many years. And the fisherman should anticipate that he will be able to live and grow in his knowledge that, as a fisherman, he can continue to fish and to yield unexpected results that may occasion marvelous regenerations and transformations.

What Scheherazade does, emphasizing what is typical, is narrate the codified, embodied history of the habitus by dividing and alienating two powers by making them oppositional, where it just so happens that the fisherman—although just as powerful in his innate abilities as the Jinni is in his—is denied life. Her story thus accentuates the problem with dualistic thinking, the same problem Susan Griffin describes as the

constraint that “splits” culture, where we end up “dying by increments” due to the split narrative that prevails as the authoritative script presiding over western, phallogocentric culture. In molding the Jinni’s response to his releaser to the unrelenting, constraining mask of the habitus, where the dominant realm asserts its mastery over the muted realm, Scheherazade deliberately demonstrates the mistrust that naturally occurs as a result of the splitting of the two sides. After tricking the Jinni into returning to the jar, the fisherman defines the Jinni’s newly found desire to bring “weal” to the fisherman as a lie. In fact, when the fisherman does release the Jinni, the Jinni proves that he has not lied, but Scheherazade is not intent on demonstrating the wrongfulness of lying; she is demonstrating the splitting of two powerful sides due to mistrust and fear. Indeed, we know that when the Jinni begs to be released that he is not lying in his promise to bring “weal” to the fisherman because the entire text of *The Thousand Nights and a Night* is overshadowed by the power of the code or the oath, which, once spoken, must, regardless of the cost, be fulfilled. Scheherazade devises the fisherman’s words, “[t]hou liest, thou accursed!”(28), in order to show the king, through the artful telling of the story, how he has been mistrusted, feared, and cursed by his people, even though he can claim to be “truthful” and faithful to his oath. What is required is not that the Jinni be faithful to his word—for so much “honor” derived from such “faithfulness” is very often destructive—but that he be respectful of and in awe of the gift of life—a gift still freely given—not to be perceived as inferior or worthy of death when it exists in a being who appears to be from the other “side.”

If we imagine Scheherazade saying “thou liest” to the king, we can also understand that what she means by his “lying” will not readily be interpreted by the

king. He can announce to the world that he does not lie—that he is faithful to his oaths—but what he cannot comprehend is that his beginning premise is a breach or a betrayal of life itself, and therefore of reverence for his people, and an uncreative one at that. To say that two sides exist—male/female, human/animal, reason/nature—is to celebrate the possibility of diverse thought. But to say that one side is superior to the other is to misconstrue and therefore kill off diversity and creative expression. When Scheherazade, through the voice of the fisherman, says “thou liest,” what she means is that the king cannot be trusted—regardless of how many oaths he keeps—because he cannot apprehend or value life and mystery. He cannot be “released,” as it were, for his own mental manacles keep him tied to his own lies—that is, to his own codes of honor. He lies, surely, even though he is true to his word, but he knows not how to *fabricate*—how to envision alternative ways of thinking. The ability to fabricate creatively—to fantasize in a constructive, expansive manner—arises from a strong resourcefulness in knowing how *not* to “smother” both love—a wild force—and trust. As Klein explains,

[i]f love has not been smothered under resentment, grievances and hatred, . . . [then] trust in other people and belief in one’s goodness are like a rock which withstands the blows of circumstance. . . . With the capacity for reversing situations in phantasy, and identifying himself with others, a capacity which is a great characteristic of the human mind, a man can distribute to others the help and love of which he himself is in need, and in this way can gain comfort and satisfaction in himself. (“Love” 116)

As long as King Shahryar denies that he is in need of love and remains proud of his adherence to his own lies, he will remain accursed—by himself through his blindness,

and by his people, through their natural insistence on being allowed to survive. The greatest lie of the Jinni—that is, the king—is that he believes he has power. Although he does possess the power to kill the fisherman—or, as the king has the power to kill a wife a day—what he is powerless to do is to kill off the destructive oath that he believes is central to his conception of “honor.”

Thus, in order to encourage within the king the ability to develop ears, Scheherazade must create fabrications, with elements both familiar and unfamiliar, in order, first, to make the king aware of the problem behind his codified thinking, and second, to make him recognize his dependence upon powers other than himself. When the fisherman releases the Jinni from the copper jar, the Jinni is faithful to his promise to “help thee to what shall put thee out of want” (28), but his faithfulness extends itself merely on a surface level. He takes the fisherman to a secluded spot where the fisherman may catch varicolored fish, which, when brought to the Sultan will “make thee a wealthy man.” After providing the fisherman with the promise of monetary wealth, the Jinni says: “And now accept my excuse, for by Allah, at this time I wot none other way of benefiting thee, inasmuch I have lain in this sea eighteen hundred years” (29). In other words, because the master narrative is so constraining, upon immediate release, all the Jinni knows or feels capable of doing is offering material help to the fisherman. He knows of no other way of attending to the fisherman for the master narrative itself knows of no other way. Hence, we ascertain the same problem in the Grimm brothers’ *Little Red Cap*, where the grandmother is allowed to receive the practical gift of wine and cake, but the child’s gift of flowers disappears once Little Red Cap arrives at the intended recipient’s house, and so the brief, wild moment of sharing

the gift-still-freely-given vanishes. In “The Fisherman and the Jinni,” instead of desiring to associate with the fisherman and to learn from him, the Jinni merely provides a minimal fulfillment of his promise and leaves. By presenting the Jinni’s “excuse” as such, Scheherazade foreshadows the indeterminable length of time that her storytelling skills will require in order to begin the process of altering the pre-established thought of the habitus.

Although the basic, direct understanding of Scheherazade’s storytelling technique of intertwining stories within stories is that she is able to prolong her life each day, a more complex interpretation is that she is complicating the hierarchical, dualistic thought-processes of the Symbolic order and is exposing its mirage as a too resolute, too cemented mirage in order to reveal that it is in need of deliverance—an extrication that requires a significant amount of time and creative energy to carry out. Hence, the dualisms are reinforced in the stories in order to convey the “illnesses,” or impending dis-eases, inherent in them. In many of the stories Scheherazade relates, the female characters she draws are beautiful, displaying hair that “float[s] in long plaits” and eyes “fringed with jetty lashes, whose glances were soft and languishing” (45). In one tale, a son of a king and a king himself, but unacknowledged as such in his adventure, discovers in a hall “forty damsels, sumptuously dressed and ornamented and one and all bright as moons. None could ever tire of gazing upon them, and all so lovely that the most ascetic devotee on seeing them would become their slave and obey their will” (97). The Kalandar discovers that the women are the daughters of kings; yet neither their beauty nor their sovereignty convinces him to obey their will once they depart to return to their kingdoms, leaving their seasonal palace under his protectorship. Before the

women leave, they weep, telling the Kalandar that “our hearts tell us that thou wilt not listen to our words and this is the cause of our tears and cries” (98). In this particular tale—titled “The Third Kalandar’s Tale”—Scheherazade demonstrates the breaking of an oath by a king who is not in his own kingdom ruling upon his own throne. After the women depart—after the memory of their loveliness has faded to the back of his mind—and when he is alone with no one to observe or criticize him, the Kalandar breaks his promise to the women. As a result, he is taken away from the palace on a flying horse, which gouges out his left eye and leaves him on a terrace he had visited before. There he “[finds] himself again amongst the ten one-eyed youths” who had warned him previously not to ask them about the origins of their one-eyed condition, but the Kalandar had persisted and had thus predestined himself to the same fate. The Kalandar asks to be received into their society, but they respond: “No welcome to thee, nor aught of good cheer! . . . Upon brocades and cloths of gold we took our rest, and we slept with our heads on beauty’s breast, but we could not await [that] one day [when we may have gained] the delights of a year!” (101), and they drive the Kalandar away.

What Scheherazade does in “The Third Kalandar’s Tale” is to put a different spin upon the oath. Unlike King Shahryar, who has sworn a personal oath to himself based on a misconception of womankind, the Kalandar has to decide if he wishes to break an oath he has made to regal, wealthy, powerful women. Even though he is a king and understands the power of royalty, we know by the tale’s plot that he does not respect the daughters of kings, but he is merely drawn to them because of their beauty. As a king in his own kingdom surrounded by his subjects, he may have kept a similar oath—possibly made to an ambassador assuring a neighboring kingdom, such as his brother’s, of his

protectorship—for fear of the shame that would follow if the oath were broken. But alone in the palace that he promises to oversee in the absence of the women, he decides to break his oath—knowing that by breaking it, he will never again see the women he claims he so adores. What he doesn't expect is that he will also be shunned by those who have been deformed as he is as a result of the same offense. He is excommunicated from their society, although—unlike the women King Shahryar slaughters—he still retains his life.

The oath, then, Scheherazade seems to say, is capable of becoming inconsequential in the mind shaped by dominant, imperious codes, when the breaking of it involves the dishonor of being separated from women and their counsel, even if—and more likely *when*—they are the most beautiful women in the world. What Scheherazade is suggesting to King Shahryar is that, if he were alone in an empty palace, with no fear of shame or humiliation resulting from an injured sense of security and with no kingly brother or other rulers and courtiers present to judge him in terms of his felt helplessness, he could readily enough break his personal oath to murder a bride a day. What she can thus be suggesting to the master narrative of western culture is that, if social and political prominence, as well as the defending of categorical, anthropocentrically driven conceptions of “honor” and recognition, were not an overriding incitation to comply with the constraining mask—or to believe, as Orwell put it, that “a sahib has got to act like a sahib”—both the spoken and unspoken rules that perpetuate hierarchical divisions in thought and action could be broken. Although the Kalandar is excommunicated for his oath-breaking, he is not killed for it, and, in fact, he learns some important lessons—first, that he is fallible, but most importantly, that he has

discovered that he has not known how to listen to what is most crucial. Before he tells his story, the Kalandar introduces it by saying to his hostess:

O my illustrious lady, my history is not like that of these my comrades,
but more wondrous and far more marvelous. In their case Fate and
Fortune came down on them unawares, but I drew down Destiny upon my
own head and brought sorrow on mine own soul, and shaved my own
beard and lost my own eye. Hear then The Third Kalandar's Tale. (85)

The phrase, "Hear then," is not a mere light, transitional phrase guiding Scheherazade's listeners into each of her tales. Scheherazade creates a king, a character with a male voice, to say to King Shahryar—and to the kings who came before him and to the rulers who will come into power after him—*Hear then, how you are drawing Destiny down upon your own head and bringing sorrow to your own soul, as long as you remain obedient to rigid, enfeebled codes.* What is different about the third Kalandar's tale is not that the plot of the narrative is that much more wondrous than the plots of the first two Kalandar's tales. What is "wondrous and far more marvelous" about the third Kalandar's tale is that the Kalandar—the storyteller—is beginning to hear; he is beginning to understand not the wild itself, but that the wild exists and will not be violated.

In story after story, Scheherazade presents the problem of the oath. And, in story after story, the oath is broken. The main concept to be garnered from the arabesque-like tales that weave themselves in and around oaths—some initiated by male figures and others initiated by female figures—is that they tend to be broken. In fact, the stories lead us to *expect* them to be broken, for they involve secrets and mysteries and novel tales

about further, as yet undiscovered knowledge. For each oath that is broken, some price has to be paid, but the price is not the same as King Shahryar's required payment of death. Instead, the price, when paid, leads to inner discoveries that cause the oath-breaker to reconsider his or her position in the world and to re-conceive and value seemingly chance encounters with personages previously thought of as inconsequential. Thus, the ten one-eyed youths—oath-breakers themselves—who reject the third Kalandar's request for inclusion in their society not only exclaim about themselves that "our frowardness brought us unease!" but also recognize that others will be just as undisciplined as they (95). Therefore, when they first invite the Kalandar to dine and converse with them, they tell him: "[A]sk not of our case nor of the loss of our eyes" (94). When the Kalandar cannot help but ask, they say: "[Q]uestion us no questions" (95). When he persists, they respond: "'Twere better to keep these things secret." But the Kalandar loses control of himself, "for my heart was aflame with fire unquenchable and lowe [meaning, "flames" or "blazes"] unconcealable," so after warning him that they will "not again harbor thee," the one-eyed youths perform a ceremony that provides the means for the Kalandar to visit the palace of the daughters of kings (96-97). Like the one-eyed youths who went before him, the Kalandar sleeps "with [his head] on beauty's breast," but he learns little from his association from the women, for, just like the one-eyed youths, he cannot await the one day for the return of the daughters without breaking his promise.

The oath that the Kalandar breaks is very similar to the mistake Bluebeard's wife makes in the fairytale, "Bluebeard," by Charles Perrault, but it is not altogether the same. Before the illustrious, regal women depart, they give the Kalandar the keys to the palace

and tell him that he may open any of the thirty-nine doors that lead to various chambers, but he must not open the fortieth door, “for therein is that which shall separate us for ever” (99). When Bluebeard’s wife opens the forbidden door, she discovers the previous wives whom Bluebeard has gruesomely murdered, and she therefore understands that she will be the next. In the tale of the third Kalandar, the Kalandar is not met with such violence, either before or after he opens the fortieth door. When the daughters of kings are departing, one speaks to him in verse. She says:

If Time unite us after absent-while,
The world harsh-frowning on our lot shall smile,
And if thy semblance deign adorn mine eyes,
I’ll pardon Time past wrongs and bygone guile. (99)

The Kalandar vows never to open the fortieth door, but the women—and the listeners of the tale—already know that he will. Scheherazade suggests through the third Kalandar’s tale that it is human nature to be curious and that curiosity can many times cause our hearts to become “aflame with fire unquenchable.” A pardon has already been granted for the Kalandar *before* he breaks his oath, and even though the world may initially frown harshly on his disloyalty, it will eventually “smile.” What is required of the Kalandar due to his untrustworthiness is not his death, but a realization of his error and a faith in union and re-union, even in the midst of harsh self-judgment and worldly denunciation.

When the Kalandar opens the fortieth door, he is greeted with scents of “musk and ambergris” from oils that overwhelm his senses but do not harm him. The candles and censers “each big as a mazer bowl” indicate, clearly, that he is in a sacred place—a

place that has been denied to him for good reason. Within the room is a noble black steed, and the Kalandar says to himself: “Doubtless in this animal must be some wondrous mystery” (101). Recognizing that he is in a sacred place with a mysterious, noble animal, the Kalandar then attempts to mount it and take control of it. When the horse does not move, he “hammer[s] his sides with [his] heels,” and when that doesn’t work, the Kalandar strikes the noble steed with a whip. “When he felt the blow,” relates the Kalandar, “he neighed a neigh with a sound like deafening thunder and, opening a pair of wings, flew up with me in the firmament of heaven far beyond the eyesight of man. After a full hour he descended and alighted on a terrace roof and shaking me off his back, lashed me on the face with his tail and gouged out my left eye, causing it to roll along my cheek” (101). It is no accident that the sacred animal that the Kalandar whips is a horse, for the ancient, mysterious skill of *firasa*—derived from *faras*, or “horse”—is manifested in the telling of the tale by the Kalandar. In other words, although the “seeing through” into deceptions or inner betrayals would usually be performed by a person skilled in the art of *firaza* upon another person, in “The Third Kalandar’s Tale,” the Kalandar himself, through his wild journey into the “firmament of heaven far beyond the eyesight of man” and through the loss of an eye, is able to discern about himself that he is no honorable king, but a “pearl” that is rotten inside, or the mere “son of a baker.” The horse’s literal leaping into the firmament is the figurative “leap from the known to the unknown,” to return to Carlo Ginzburg’s explanation of *firaza*, for what the Kalandar learns through the loss of social connection—he is taken “far beyond the eyesight of man”—and through the loss of his eye is that he has neither seen nor known anything. As he explains it, “I drew down Destiny upon my own head and brought sorrow on mine

own soul.” His “destiny”—that is, the unfortunate events that follow his cruel treatment of the noble steed—is unsurprising to a listener of the tale, for, as Irwin remarks, “a man’s destiny is written upon his forehead.” However, what is clearly known by many is not readily or easily perceived by the rotten “pearl” itself—that is, when it believes that its inner core is commensurate with the outer resplendence of the mirage. When the known-unknown becomes known to the Kalandar, he, like the ten youths, recognizes the gift that had been granted him when he, and they, “slept with our heads on beauty’s breast”—the power of that gift only revealed to him when he makes the leap into wild terrain.

What “The Third Kalandar’s Tale” allows us to recognize is that, unlike Perrault’s and the Grimm brothers’ warnings against curiosity in their versions of the tale about Little Red Riding Hood, it is not the Kalandar’s *curiosity* that is “punished,” but his disrespect for, cruelty towards, and desire for mastery over sacred spaces and forces—spaces and powers venerated by the female principle. The chamber behind the fortieth door houses “wonder” and “mystery,” and as it is the fortieth chamber in a palace of many resplendent chambers, it exists in a place of delegitimation—far removed from the social order and its codes. Indeed, from that space, the winged horse within it is able to leap into the wild, unknown “firmament”—a solitary but life-altering space, distant from the Symbolic order, yet possessing a “language” of its own, a language that communicates without words yet provides a compelling motive for sentient consciousness and transformation. The loss of the Kalandar’s eye and his removal from the social order is *meant* to show loss, not only of sight but of all that the Kalandar has been grounded in—that is, the embodied history of the habitus. That “historicity of

force,” to return to Butler’s phrase, ritualistically shapes his actions in that, in mounting the noble steed, the Kalandar can see no transgression—no violation—in his injurious, authoritative, conditioned response of viewing the mere presence of a majestic horse as his for the taking. Instead of being allowed to whip the sacred horse—as King Shahryar has been allowed to slaughter a bride a day—the horse overturns the Kalandar’s conditioned response, carries him to wild terrain, and gives the Kalandar the experience, at least for an hour, of realizing what little he knows about life and livability.

The notion of livability in spaces deemed non-authentic is, of course, one of Judith Butler’s main philosophical and theoretical subjects. Summarizing Butler’s arguments about living in a “de-realized mode,” Sara Salih explains that Butler

points out that the desire to kill someone for not conforming to the gender norms by which subjects are supposed to live means that “life” itself requires the norm, while living outside the norm involves placing oneself at risk of death—sometimes actual death, but more frequently the social death of delegitimation and non-recognition. . . . Non-normative subjects who are forced to conduct an existence at one remove from life and its recognized norms suffer the protracted pain of social exclusion, as nonconformity is punished with a life in de-realized mode, neither fully (socially) living nor fully (physically) dead. (11)

In the case of the third Kalandar, when he steps through the fortieth door, he finds himself in a place where the “norms” are different from what he is accustomed to. In violating those norms, he finds himself not only in a foreign land, but barred from the society of the one-eyed youths, so the Kalandar can do nothing but wander—as neither

king nor subject—and he is unrecognized except for his deformity in the loss of his eye. Even then, he meets up with two other Kalandars who have both lost their left eyes, and the only way he can distinguish himself—in order to be recognized—is by telling his story. But whereas Butler’s theories about the performative place *recognition* at the heart of the consideration that “one’s life is possible and viable” (Salih 11), wild consciousness apprizes that viability *through* non-recognition. In other words, although the third Kalandar tells a story that is meant to show his singularity and differentiate him from the other two Kalandars, instead, their stories are so woven together that it is difficult to remember which Kalandar did what on which strange and fascinating journey. In attempting to set himself apart from the other two, the third Kalandar relates a story that is interconnected with the others, and which also coalesces with the stories that follow his narration. Transitions are lost in the recollection of the tales, making many tales seem like one lengthy tale, and the Kalandar’s journey into the firmament is rather like the fisherman’s warning to the Jinni in “The Fisherman and the Jinni” that “when I have cast thee back into this sea, I will warn whosoever may fish thee up of what hath befallen me with thee, and I will advise him to toss thee back again. So shalt thou abide here under these waters till The End of Time shall make an end of thee.” What the fisherman *doesn’t* do to the Jinni the horse *does do* to the third Kalandar, casting him upon the firmament. However, instead of the *horse* or a *fisherman* advising others to toss him back, the Kalandar himself, in effect, “tosses” himself back, for in the relating of his tale, he casts himself, and his listeners, into the sea of non-recognition and wild motivation.

The Kalandar thus possesses a voice—for he tells his tale—but he also is mute, for his tale becomes one of many on a sea of stories, lost in the remembrance of listeners and readers as they make their way through the myriad of stories they hear and read. Yet, in the consciousness of the wild, the third Kalandar's tale is not insignificant, for as a wanderer amongst other wanderers, he is transformed *out* of his role as a ruling monarch and has become open to hearing the stories of others—stories about oath-breaking and other non-codified behavior in fantastic lands and amongst beautiful, strange, powerful, and mystifying personages and forces. His *openness* is what is recalled, rather than the specifics of his tale. In possessing a history that is difficult to remember by his audience, the Kalandar ends up possessing a non-codified history, with little to no “historicity of force,” and so his status as a wanderer in the process of learning to respect the wondrous becomes a new motivation for him. He demonstrates that he is learning not to “mount” the noble steed—that is, not to attempt to rule and control what is sacred. It is only through that experience that he is able to acquire a voice, for what is remembered is not his adventures to other lands, but his transformation, for he begins his tale by acknowledging not that fate has dealt him many misfortunate blows, but that “I drew down Destiny upon my own head and brought sorrow on mine own soul.” The third Kalandar's new motivation is what generally tends to escape the master consciousness.

When the master narrative—such as that conjured up by King Shahryar—takes on the power of the “historicity of force,” it becomes difficult to begin the process of transformation that the wandering Kalandar embarks upon. For instance, referring specifically to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women writers, Sandra M.

Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in *No Man's Land: The War of the Words* (1988), point out that the “father-daughter paradigm” that directs women to revere the “father” as the more worthy aspect of the dualistic conception is, even when it is recognized and rejected as both violent and tenuous, a haunting influence:

[T]he turn-of-the-century woman writer was not only haunted by the charisma of her literary fathers, she was for the first time troubled by the simultaneous fragility of their power and ferocity of their anger. Thus, the move that Freud defined as the most “mature” move toward desire for the father sometimes becomes in our own era a vexed, nostalgic, and guilt-ridden service to sustain his name and fame, . . . and sometimes becomes a fearful and guilty propitiation of his outraged authority. . . . [T]he traditional father-daughter paradigm is so haunted by history . . . that it cannot by itself provide an entirely satisfactory motive for female creativity. (171-72)

Gilbert and Gubar suggest, then, that the Symbolic order that shapes and defines language, being both fragile and fierce, is misplaced in being hierarchically more authentic in the father-daughter paradigm, where, according to Freud, the daughter both desires and envies the father. In Gilbert and Gubar’s analysis, it is not desire or envy that causes women writers to “sustain his name and fame,” but fear, guilt, and acts of propitiation. Although fear and guilt, at times, may be motives for creative action, Gilbert and Gubar indicate that female creativity emerges out of another or other spaces. Scheherazade, clearly unafraid and irreproachable in her views concerning King Shahryar’s “bloodthirsty” oath and the grievous codes recorded in the “books, annals,

and legends of preceding kings, and the stories, examples, and instances of bygone men and things,” conceives stories, such as “The Third Kalandar’s Tale,” in order to draw attention to the “other” spaces from which creative inspiration emanates. The Kalandar’s experience of the firmament—of what is outside the social order—places him *beyond* the liminal, *beyond* the marginal, *beyond* just “one remove from life.” The horse’s wild leap is a gracious leap, for the Kalandar later recognizes the power behind the wildest word that is appropriated by language, and being transformed by its force, he begins to allow himself to be a subject-in-process—casting off what he has previously learned from the “fragility” and “ferocity” of the master narrative.

Vivian R. Pollack and Marianne Noble point out that Emily Dickinson, at forty-eight at the end of 1877, “entered into an unmistakably passionate correspondence” with Otis Phillips Lord. Lord, they write, “was pressing her to give him something, either her hand in marriage, or her sexual favor, but she wrote him: ‘Dont you know you are happiest while I withhold . . . —dont you know that “No” is the wildest word we consign to Language?’” (50). Whatever Dickinson was withholding from Lord is not altogether known, but her correlation of that withholding to the wild and to a state of happiness reveals a sort of thinking that is in line with Lewis Carroll’s, where the “null class” is associated both with authenticity and the irrational. Lord desires something that Dickinson will not oblige him with, and her use of the word, “no,” places him somewhere *outside* of the fulfillment of his desire. When Carroll’s White King praises Alice for her keen perception in observing nobody at a great distance down the road, the “happiness” element that Dickinson connects with the utterance of “no” is apparent. In other words, the commendable acknowledgement of negative space as a viable, full

space requires wild consciousness. Lord may be disappointed, but his happiness rests in disallowance, for Lord is redirected to discover other possibilities beyond his singular desire. The direct attainment of Lord's desire is a rational, logically-driven cause-and-effect arrangement. However, to be redirected away from such straightforward attainment into negative space is to discover circuitous, creative variants that possess the potential for new and better plots. In asking why Carroll's "null class" humor is "so interwoven with logical twists," Martin Gardner answers his own question by indicating that Carroll responded to "unconscious compulsions" that "made it necessary for him to be forever warping and stretching, compressing and inverting, reversing and distorting the familiar world" (143n5). Finding existence in nonexistence means, for a time, saying "no" to familiar existences, and it means saying "no" to the shortest, most direct, most easily understandable route. Nonsense—having "no" sense—is wild in its plotting, where leaps into the known-unknown, lacking transitions and obvious routes, provide meaning that is ascertained *outside* of the Symbolic order.

Referring to Scheherazade's gift of storytelling, Melinda Rosenthal points out that "[i]n return for her life, she offers the king the gift of possibility" (124), and possibility is precisely what observance of the "null class" grants. In terms of the fantastic elements that extend beyond Scheherazade's inclusion of "fables, romances, fairy tales, [and] historical material" in the stories, Rosenthal asks: "[W]hy include works of pure imagination? How can we profit from that which has never occurred?" (123). In the same vein, we might ask: How can we profit from the description of a fantastic leap into the firmament—a leap that never *actually* has occurred or will occur on horseback? Rosenthal's answer to that question is that, besides profiting from

rational, “reality”-based situations, we can “take warning as well from dreams as from chronicles of actual events, for they can reveal a kind of truth that goes beyond (and sometimes becomes buried underneath) the facts and details of daily life” (123). We can “profit from that which has never occurred” precisely by observing nobody at a great distance down the road—that is, by observing that which has never occurred. Like Carroll’s “warping and stretching, compressing and inverting, reversing and distorting [of] the familiar world,” our observations of nothing can be the very outside resources we need to escape King Shahryar’s trap.

Rosenthal argues that any human being is capable of settling into the mindset of King Shahryar. In fact, it is “only too likely” that we will. Our egos, she writes, both blind and bind us:

Isolated within the bounds of our egos, blind to all beyond the reach of our immediate perceptions, we pose a threat to ourselves as well as others; lacking any access to outside resources, we find ourselves nevertheless constantly called upon to react in situations outside the very limited range of our past experiences, and our continual survival is therefore placed in jeopardy time and again. (124)

Hence the difficulty in transforming King Shahryar—and ourselves—is enormous. However, Rosenthal, when she refers to the lack of “access to outside resources,” is relying upon the experience and consciousness of King Shahryar *before* he listens to Scheherazade’s tales. Yet, as Rosenthal also indicates, “the gift of possibility” is given to King Shahryar. That gift *is* the “access” to the outside, for it is freely given—free because all Scheherazade requires in return is the life that King Shahryar had no valid

authority to take anyway. However, in giving the gift-still-freely-given, the giver also expects one other condition—that is, that the receiver accept the free gift. We, like King Shahryar, cannot expect to “rule” over the jeopardy that threatens our survival unless we discover “access” into the outside resources that generate transformation. And that discovery is contingent upon our acceptance of the wild forces that teach us to be a “necessary lunatic”—relying upon non-presiding, non-acknowledged forces in order to know, effectively, how to rule. In other words, in the unfolding of the tales of the *Nights*, King Shahryar is transformed without our knowing it—without, indeed, *his* knowing it. The life of King Shahryar, Scheherazade, and their children is hidden behind—perhaps underneath—the tales, and the restoration of the King Shahryar’s kingdom is assumed as their children grow older. Life itself becomes less obvious than the tales, for the arabesque artistry of the *Nights* instills the concept of a subject-in-process—a concept adopted by the king unawares as he continues to listen and be transformed by its power. The authority to rule, wild consciousness teaches, is a luxury not to be apprehended or undertaken under the “historicity of force”—for it must follow, must be next in line, that is, to the continual striving to learn more about the “outside,” about the “no” that directs us into negative space, into the creative, into the possible.

Written around 1861, Emily Dickinson’s poem, “Wild Nights – Wild Nights!” is Carrollian in expression in that Dickinson juxtaposes images of security, safety, and peace with their seeming opposites. “Were I with thee,” she writes, “Wild Nights should be / Our luxury!” A “Heart in port,” she suggests, is not bothered by the “Futile . . . Winds,” and the speaker is thus “Done with the Compass – / Done with the Chart!” “Rowing in Eden” does not mean gliding along a silver lake or stream, for such

“Rowing” is followed by “Ah, the Sea! / Might I but moor – Tonight – / In Thee!” (114). King Shahryar—a “bloodthirsty” ruler dependent upon a violent decree and enfeathered by his self-inflicted separation from the “other” side of humanity—in casting himself upon the “Winds” and the “Sea” of Scheherazade’s arabesque tales, discovers the security of a “mooring” that is not grounded in a discernible, code-distinguished past. Offering a portal into the wild, Scheherazade extends, as a gift to the king, an unsafe security, where a compass is a “no” and a chart is a “no” in a journey where being anchored means being cast “Ah,” upon the “Sea.” The nights that make the winds “Futile” in their ability to isolate and afflict with fear are the same winds that create “Wild Nights” as a “luxury”—to be relied upon and desired. In recognizing his dependence upon the force of the wild through Scheherazade, King Shahryar uncovers the known-unknown about himself and his ability to rule, and so finds his transformed “Heart in port”—that is, anchored to his new recognition that he knows very little about Nothing. As he learns to recognize nobody at a great distance down the road—as he wanders into the wild firmament—he has the potential to become the best of all rulers, knowing, finally, how to rule by *non-rule*, by seeking *outside* resources, and by depending upon the curative powers, that, formerly muted and silenced, reveal themselves when accepted “truths” are finally discerned to be of less value than the fabrications that transform those “truths” into viable forms of expression and desire.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ I am referring to Sidonie Smith's use of the term "maneuverings" in her discussion about women's autobiographical writing, which, being marginalized, creates an "I" like that of the "I" in Virginia Woolf's writings, where "the autobiographer refuses to take the position of the one who knows and authorizes, dispersing herself instead across time, memory and relationships. Anonymous subjectivity enables her to enter the stream of life, that liquid time and place of history, memory, being, and non-being." See Sidonie Smith, "Self, Subject, and Resistance: Marginalities and Twentieth-Century Autobiographical Practice," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 9.1 (1990): 18-20.

² Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Penguin, 1995) 2.

³ Sallis explains that she spells "Sheherazade" in the "European way as a reflection of the composite nature of the *Nights*' present day identity." Eva Sallis, *Sheherazade Through the Looking Glass: The Metamorphosis of the Thousand and One Nights* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999) xi.

⁴ The earliest known collection circulated in the tenth century. A text dating back to the ninth century has been discovered and translated, but it is a fragment. Referring to Muhsin Mahdi's 1984 translation, Irwin writes: "With the exception of a fragmentary page from a ninth-century version, the manuscript edited by Mahdi is the oldest surviving version," but only includes the first thirty-five stories. See Irwin, *Arabian Nights*, 7.

⁵ Like Irwin, who says "I have decided to use and quote from Burton's translations of these stories," I am using Burton's translation as well. Burton, as Irwin

explains it, understood, to some extent, exclusion. Although Burton has been criticized as “one of those orientalists who provided a blueprint for colonialism,” Irwin points out that Burton was an “outsider, at odds with the Foreign and Colonial offices, as well as with the Church and with most of the literary and academic world. He had little reward from the Empire and not much regard for it.” In addition, although “Burton’s transliteration of the Arabic now seems archaic, and his use of the English language always was eccentric,” and although Irwin points out that there are other problems with Burton’s translation, nonetheless I see Burton’s contribution not only as comprehensive in terms of the tales themselves, but also favorable in that his footnotes—outside of the text, not purporting to be the text’s author, yet still a part of it—are informally personal. Regarding Burton’s footnotes, Irwin’s tone is critical. They are “interspersed with snatches of autobiography.” In some, says Irwin, Burton “remembers how he was once attacked by a dog in Alexandria and reminisces about seances he has attended.” However, I read Burton’s inclusion of himself in footnoted passages as being a part of the “arabesqueness” of a wild text, where new stories are allowed entrance into the overturning *plotbene* of a text. See Irwin, *Arabian Nights*, 7, 34-35.

⁶ Irwin is quoting from Ginzburg’s essay, “Clues, Roots of an Evidential Paradigm,” in Carlo Ginzburg, *Myths, Emblems, Clues* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1990) 125.

Chapter Three:
The Silent “E”s Speak: Anne, Entwine, Fate, Woodbine

The paradox of an unsafe security, offered by Scheherazade to King Shahryar as a gift, is, surely, a paradox that psychoanalysts have concerned themselves with in attempts to understand and explain cultural phenomena—broadening the child/parent relationship and its complications into the expanse of culture and human relations. Referring to Freud and the “advent of ego psychology,” Simon A. Grolnick, in “Fairy Tales and Psychotherapy” (1986), indicates that an interest in child-rearing methods prompted child psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic anthropologists to study “the early interplay between the mother and the child and its later elaboration in the interplay between the individual and the culture” (206). However, traditional Freudian or Jungian psychoanalytic approaches have tended to identify the mother as a problem.¹ For instance, describing King Shahryar as a “monster of injustice,” Jerome W. Clinton connects the king’s rage and fear with a childhood trauma (36). This unknown trauma, says Clinton, “both involved his mother and included the essential elements of the later trauma that so disordered his wits. That is, his mother, like his wife, used her intimate bond with him to betray him cruelly at the very center of his being. It is impossible to know much more than this” (40). We may argue, as well, that it is impossible to know what Clinton claims *is* possible to know—that King Shahryar’s mother “betrayed him cruelly at the very center of his being.” Clinton’s approach, essentially, is to find a breach in what is supposed to be perceived as a safe security—that is, the relationship

between child and mother—and when that rupture is discovered or imagined as discovered, to attribute its destructiveness to some violation on the mother's part.

What requires more attention is the notion of “play” in the “interplay” between mother and child that Grolnick says interested early psychoanalysts. When play is considered as part of the interpretive act—interpreting relationships in fact as well as in fiction—it allows for a different sort of discourse, where reason and rationality do not maintain the upper hand. However, play, when it bends or thwarts traditionally accepted ideas of logic and reason, entails risk. Those who speculate upon play hazard both voice and caution, but, in borrowing from the unknown, capture the inexplicable. In Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), Anne is perceived as a danger by some of the townsfolk in Avonlea, on the Canadian province, Prince Edward Island, when she arrives from an orphanage to live with a middle-aged-to-elderly brother and sister, the Cuthberts, on their Avonlea farm. She is from the unknown and relates unfamiliar concepts and stories, and so she is initially mistrusted and feared, even though she is only around eleven years of age when she enters Avonlea's Victorian, morally conscientious, scrupulously upright culture. Without intending to be, Anne is a cultural code-breaker, and although the Avonlea townsfolk eventually accept her as one of their own, she remains a “borderland” presence, continuing to offer a portal into the wild, like Scheherazade, and transforming consciousness as she stimulates others to hear wild voices—emerging through mysterious presences, such as fairies and fays, who are associated with the Fates, crones, and other figures generally allied with the imagination. Fiction and poetry, for Anne, are entryways into worlds that are not removed from everyday life, for she not only experiences the stories she reads but also adds to them,

creating her own versions—versions as real and vital to her as any other tangible experience. Listening with a different ear than the Avonlea folk, Anne, although physically young, is more of an ancient crone, seeming to arrive from a place not related to chronological time and, in her capacity as parturient of wild language, like a mother enveloping the subject-in-process that is Avonlea, Anne provides a wild security—not intending safety, but engendering effects that are long-lasting.

When Clinton places blame on King Shahryar’s mother for the king’s adult rage against women, he is attempting, through psychoanalysis, to find some original source for the problem that Scheherazade fearlessly cures. However, psychoanalysis is not always a profitable approach, for sometimes conjectures beyond origins are necessary in order to discover the “better plots” that are not stagnant—not fixed in the conceptions that have become part of the habitus of cultural thought. In *The Motherhood Constellation* (1995), Daniel N. Stern presents a different approach to child/mother relationships, pointing out that Oedipal complex issues and other psychoanalytic therapies have been “very misguided.” He writes:

[I]t has been eye-opening to me to realize that most mothers in therapy have known this all along. . . . They know full well that they have entered into a different psychic zone that has largely escaped psychiatry’s official systematic theorizing. . . . And they have . . . tolerated the traditional psychodynamic interpretations (e.g., the baby is symbolically the equivalent of a missing penis or a fantasized gift from their own father or from the male therapist) without giving them too much weight, in order to benefit from other aspects of the therapeutic relationship. (172-73)

Similar to Mary Douglas and Yvonne Verdier, who view the werewolf's role in the tales of Little Red Riding Hood as "incidental and unimportant," so do the women in Stern's experience and observation view psychoanalytic theory. As part of the Symbolic order, such systematic analyses are tolerated but ignored, for the fiction that has been developed of women as deficient or disadvantaged due to being defined as those who "lack" is part of the make-believe that Kristeva says that women perceive as a game. Women, she explains, "are able to keep on going . . . *because they don't believe in it*, they believe it's an illusion." They "play-act," perceiving their identity as a double-negation—where "I am, nonetheless, if only by sheer force of *not*" ("Experiencing" 33-34; emphases in original). Breaking away, then, from analyses that he has recognized have been ignored, Stern organizes several themes under what he calls the "motherhood constellation," using a metaphor from the universe—from outside of earthly time and its restrictions—in order to describe the experiences of those intimately involved in generating subjects-in-process as they themselves are subjects-in-process.

Part of Stern's approach is to evaluate relationships in what he calls the "triadic play situation," where relatedness is affected by emotional experience and by reorganizations of support matrices (144, 177-78). For example, although a husband may be present in a home where a new baby is expected, and although theoretically he could provide maternal support, mothers, says Stern, tend to "need and seek a maternal figure as a crucial part of the supporting matrix when she has her own baby" (180). After a child is born, problems may and do arise that are benefitted by therapy. Although Stern presents diverse examples in order to focus on ways in which to alter behavioral patterns within familial units, one example in particular can be broadened in

order to show how the child/parent relationship and its complications can explain problems in cultural phenomena. I will quote the case at length, for, if we consider the husband in the situation as the Symbolic order and the mother as she-who-is- nonetheless, “if only by sheer force of *not*,” we can begin to see the therapist’s role as that wild sort of silent wisdom that reiterates “no” as the wildest word that is appropriated by language in order to introduce a “better plot” in the communicative structure of the triad. Whereas the therapist in the example is a trained analyst—Antoinette Corboz—her symbolic presence outside of a therapy session often reveals itself in “wild” ways—as an “intimation,” as P.L. Travers describes it, for example, that is lost if not recognized or heeded, but when recognized and heeded, leads a wild journeyer to become a “necessary lunatic who remains attentive and in readiness” to respond to further wild guidance—when, that is, it reveals itself (“On Not Writing for Children” 21).

The therapist’s action that I am calling “wild” Stern describes as “a single therapeutic maneuver.” The goal of the therapy in this particular case was not to change a member or members of the family, but “to change the family interactions.” The case involved a mother who, after the birth of her first baby, had had a depression requiring hospitalization. The result was a father who was sure of himself as a caregiver and a mother with little confidence in herself. At this point in the evolution of the family, the mother deferred to the father at many points in the family interactions seen in the triadic play situation. She let him take the lead and be the more active one. He accepted this role and was gratified by it. In this sense, he maintained the

current imbalance in their caregiving roles and even aggravated it. . . . [Corboz's] intervention occurred at a point when the family triad configured itself as "two (mother plus infant) plus one," with the father pulled back in his chair as observer. At such moments the father had the tendency to lean forward and reenter the action, either making it a triad or effectively forcing the mother to back off—as she willingly did—to be the observer, resulting in a different "two plus one." He would do this with the conscious idea . . . to "help out"—the baby, but effectively not the wife. At this point . . . Corboz quietly slid over behind the father's chair (she was standing) and gently, from behind, rested her hands on his shoulders. . . . The effect was to restrain the father from leaning forward and reentering . . . [and was] in the spirit of "You don't really have to go in there. Let us both, together, watch your wife and child interact. I have confidence they will do well and it will be fine." And he accepted without words. (144-45)

The father, in this case, accepted the therapist's guidance, and as a result, the mother grew more confident and active in her relationship with her child. The father gained the experience of not jumping in but rather taking pleasure in his wife's success. And the baby had the experience of an active engagement with his mother in the passive presence of his father. . . . To the extent that the maneuver worked well, the probability of the reoccurrence of the behavior went up. A behavioral change was initiated in the direction of altering the family interaction. (145)

A simple resting of hands on the father's shoulders had the power to alter the relationships among the family, giving the mother the space and freedom to communicate with her infant. And the father, because he was attentive to the therapist's quiet communication, was able to experience pleasure in playing a passive role. Had he been inattentive to Corboz's communication, however, the imbalance in the triadic play situation would not have altered.

The most simple, most direct difference between Stern's, Corboz's, and Corboz's collaborator, Elisabeth Fivaz's "constellation" approach and traditional psychotherapy is that the mother's communication and relationship with her child are not perceived of as being based on some deficiency or lack and so does not presuppose a desire for the intervention of the father. However, when we broaden the example in order to consider cultural imbalances and hierarchically-based dualisms, we discern that there is little to no attentiveness paid to a "therapist's" restraining hands, for no "therapist" seems to exist in the "split consciousness" of a culture that Susan Griffin calls "phallogentric," where we are "dying by increments" attempting to defend delusion. Thus, recalling Gilbert and Gubar's presentation of the impaired "father-daughter paradigm," we recognize that women, directed to revere the "father" as the more worthy aspect of the dualistic conception, are driven to do so not out of desire but out of historically-derived, hauntingly pervasive feelings of fear and guilt—fear of inadequacies, for instance, and feelings of guilt associated with succumbing to emotional influences, such as depression, that place them, repeatedly, in the role of muted observer. The "better plot" that Corboz directs the father to see in the triadic play situation is either rarely seen or when seen, disparaged in our western, phallogentric culture, for the habitus does not recognize the

silent language of the resting hands—that is, of a call that does not speak or communicate in the traditional, rational mode of the Symbolic order.

The therapist's restraining action in the case detailed by Stern does not appear to be particularly "wild," nor does it seem to be a "call," as it does not call forth but, instead, inhibits action. Yet, in a larger cultural sense, its silent direction is a wild call, for it intervenes in order to redirect—mutedly speaking the "wildest word," "no," with a larger purpose of transforming consciousness. The difference between the therapist's action and the "no"s of the Symbolic order is that when the *habitus*—that is, embodied, internalized history—acts as a constraint, it is protecting itself from alteration by rejecting that which might question its unifying formula. On the other hand, when the wild restrains, it is attentive to the opening up of further possibilities. What the therapist does in the case study is to create an environment where a listening-to-what-has-been-excluded is introduced and encouraged. The father could have easily rejected the therapist's inaudible "call" to "watch your wife and child interact"—just as King Shahryar could have decided not to listen to Scheherazade's stories night after night. The decision made by both the father and King Shahryar—that is, to listen—is based, both in the factual account and in the fictional, fluid "frame" story of the *Arabian Nights*, on a physical presence—in each case, a woman—discretionally presenting and inviting a different observational stance. The female principle that works through the wild involves such a furtherance of ministration, an ushering in of awareness, of the interdependencies that exist within situations that are at variance. The father's very experience of pleasure in the triadic play situation is dependent upon understanding the powers and charms of passivity and restraint, while the mother's association and

relationship with her child requires following the initial, active example of the father—of refusing to retreat, for instance, so as not to lose connection with the infant. Both parents, too, are dependent upon the child—as the child is upon them—for the infant’s call, in the sense of a broadened, cultural interpretation of the “play” situation, represents the semiotic—that unnameable “something else” that Kristeva says is “filtered inevitably by language and yet is not language” (qtd. in Pollock 9). Having no special status in culture, the voice emerging through the utterances of the infant—the moving semiotic element—is that element of possibility, of language communicating from somewhere unknown before birth, moving through minds and enunciations on earth, and continuing its song beyond the regions we know of as death. When a listening-to-what-has-been-excluded takes shape in and around the “ears” of a social order, and when “play” is allowed to enter into its organization, then larger worlds begin to unfold as the wild and its influence expands conceptions of time, boundaries, and reality itself.

In *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne continuously challenges Avonlea’s conception of reality, as the reality she perceives differs from the physical and social world that surrounds her. Montgomery describes Anne as imaginative, but her imagination is not something separate and distinct from her everyday life. Marilla Cuthbert, who eventually becomes a foster mother to Anne, views Anne’s imaginative approach to reality as a “shortcoming”:

During the forenoon she kept the child busy with various tasks and watched over her with a keen eye while she did them. By noon she had concluded that Anne was smart and obedient, willing to work and quick to learn; her most serious shortcoming seemed to be a tendency to fall

into day-dreams in the middle of a task and forget all about it until such time as she was sharply recalled to earth by a reprimand or a catastrophe.

(101)

The “reprimand” or “catastrophe” that “recalls” her back “to earth,” we might say, is the Symbolic order, demanding that she be attentive not to negative space or to nonsense, but to sense, reason, and rational thinking. In terms of the social order of Avonlea, Anne is out of place. Like the mother in the triadic play situation, Anne has little confidence in her abilities to speak forth the proper articulations that are expected of her in the social realm. Although she is spirited and lively, she dwells upon death, romanticizing its effects and completely feeling herself to be in the “depths of despair” and unable to eat or behave rationally when her hopes are dashed—a “lonely, heart-hungry, friendless child [who] crie[s] herself to sleep” (70, 74). Her self-conscious knowledge about her difference from others and her solitary existence as an orphan and wanderer, unloved and little noticed except for the additional work she can provide in foster homes, keep her in close company with despair. When, for example, she realizes that she is about to become part of a household where her potential foster mother—a “sharp-faced, sharp-eyed woman”—simply wants a worker to help her with her large family, she begins to fear that she cannot keep her tears back. Marilla, who possesses the power to transfer Anne to the “Blewett woman” or to keep her at her farm and home, softens “at the sight of the child’s pale face with its look of mute misery—the misery of a helpless little creature who finds itself once more caught in the trap from which it had escaped. Marilla felt an uncomfortable conviction that, if she denied the appeal of that look, it would haunt her to her dying day” (93-95). In many ways, Anne is, interpretively

speaking, the mother in the triadic play situation suffering from depression and lacking confidence. She is muted by the Symbolic order, having to yield to the divided “father-daughter paradigm,” continually told to hold her tongue, to submit to her lot, and to remain in the role of muted observer—a “caretaker” with little to no hopes of care or attention returned to her, and unable to be, as Marianne Hirsch has phrased it in referring to the silencing of the maternal voice, “the subject of her own discourse” (252).

Though a child, Anne is a mother in that she brings new consciousness into being—a consciousness acquired through a mystical connection with what appears to be uninhabited, or desolate, but is alive, lively, and communicative. Where Anne differs from the mother in the triadic play situation is in her inability to back away completely when the Symbolic order—that is, the social restrictions set by the Avonlea townsfolk—intervenes. Instead of backing away, Anne continues to play, even when, instead of a *triadic* play situation, hers appears to be *monadic*. Anne, however, is not locked into her imagination, but communicates with that which is outside of it. Brooks, she says, are “always laughing. Even in winter-time I’ve heard them under the ice” (77). Sometimes when she looks out of her window, she tells her friend, Diana, she seeks a particular dryad and searches “for her footprints in the dew in the morning.” Diana, influenced by her mother’s cautions against believing in Anne’s “flights of imagination,” tells her: “You know there is no such thing as a dryad.” Whereas a conditioned reaction—aware of the designing habitus and the need to conform to it—would be to back away and acknowledge the lack of reason in such a belief, Anne, instead, responds: “Oh, Diana, don’t give up your faith in the dryad!” (239-40). In her introduction to *The Annotated Anne of Green Gables*, Margaret Anne Doody points out that Anne sees the material

world around her as “full of power—of feminine power—and creativity.” The religion of the novel, Doody indicates, “is not precisely a goddess religion,” but Christianity is reinterpreted in that female power is not disconnected from or “less than” traditionally conceived ideas of spirit:

The traditional view has it that to love Earth means to reject Spirit. Woman is of the Earth, earthy. She is all dull, dead matter. Man is of the Spirit, spiritual, his body a mere unfortunate material accident, his sexuality the result of the lamentable attraction of the wily inferior female. It would be too much to expect any one woman writer to succeed in changing our collective mind, yet [Montgomery has] made decided inroads. . . . All women who read *Anne* at a young age have within themselves a reassurance that they are spiritual and imaginative beings—but also that they do not have to achieve spirit and imagination by foregoing the dear Earth or their femaleness. (23-24)

Anne provides a “better plot” by merging the dualities—not negating one or the other, but illustrating how the two can get along well together. Although Doody refers specifically to the mingling of religious concepts, *Anne* exemplifies as well the female principle as it fearlessly makes free associations between other “traditional views” and what has yet to be acknowledged by the “collective mind.”

Anne’s interest in literature, for example, is aroused and energized by canonical works—many of which inspired Montgomery. Anne reads and quotes from Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, Robert Browning, James Russell Lowell, John Greenleaf Whittier, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and, most frequently, Lord Alfred

Tennyson. In “Literary Allusion and Quotation in *Anne of Green Gables*,” Doody and Wendy E. Barry detail the authors and works quoted in the novel, and the only female writer they relate as having an influence on Anne is Elizabeth Barrett Browning, even though Montgomery viewed many other works by women as significant (460). Yet just as *Anne* depicts matter and spirit—the earth and heaven—as being interrelated and connected through the consciousness of a young girl influenced by both dryads and biblical figures, so are canonical literary works transformed through her reception of them. Anne, Doody points out, “is not to be an artist or an author.” Nevertheless, she “has a real and creative imagination beyond what both the author and reader diagnose as borrowed stuff” (Introduction 31). For Anne, literary works are not merely “borrowed” but alive—imparting ideas to interact with and to share, bestowing words to dwell upon and exercise in new, fresh ways. With Anne, a story lives beyond the page and becomes something other than the written narrative, disclosing unrehearsed renditions as it quickens and bestirs itself in her life. Marilla and the Avonlea townsfolk view Anne’s use of literary language as both too advanced and too silly for a young girl of eleven and attempt to intervene—much like the father in the triadic play situation—in order to harness the verbal “play” that Anne expresses as only too real in her life. Anne is not, as Marilla and other Avonlea folk seem to think, attempting to express herself as a burgeoning authoress, nor is she trying to show off a knowledge that is inappropriate for her at her age. In *The Alpine Path*, Montgomery explains that critics, like the adult characters in the novel, voiced similar criticisms of Anne’s relationships with literary works. Montgomery indicates that in its review of the novel, for example, the London *Spectator* commented that

Anne's precocity was slightly overdrawn in the statement that a child of eleven could appreciate the dramatic effect of the lines, "Quick as the slaughtered squadrons fell / In Midian's evil day." But I [Montgomery] was only nine when those lines thrilled my very soul as I recited them in Sunday School. All through the sermon following I kept repeating them to myself. To this day they give me a mysterious pleasure and a pleasure quite independent of their meaning. (47)

Part of the pleasure, we may surmise, is derived from the alliterative "s" and "n" sounds in the lines, as well as the assonant, circumflexed "O" vowel sound in "slaughtered" and "squadrons." However, the meaning of the lines does play a part in their pleasure, for, at nine, Montgomery must have sensed the mysterious power of the cloaked, fantastic revelations that the words relate.

The lines Montgomery has Anne refer to are from a Christian hymn—a hymn Montgomery obviously recited or sung as a young girl attending church services and Sunday School.² The hymn, written by John Morison in 1770, is a poetic rendering of Isaiah 9:1-7 and refers simultaneously to the defeat of the Midianites and to the birth of the "Child of hope" who is the "Prince of Peace," the "Wonderful, the Counsellor," with "power, increasing," a throne guarded by justice, and "peace abound[ing] below."³ The defeat of the Midianites is symbolically represented in the hymn and in the ninth chapter of Isaiah as the removal of the rod of the oppressor and the heavy burdens that have caused the oppressed to dwell in "the shadow of death" (Isaiah 9:2).⁴ The story of the vanquishing of the Midianite forces by Gideon in chapters six and seven of the book of Judges describes the children of Israel as being greatly outnumbered by the Midianites,

as “numerous as locusts,” who would “encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth . . . and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey,” rendering Israel impoverished and bereft of hope (Judges 6:4-5). The miracle the Angel of the Lord works through Gideon has to do with a lack of numbers. Although Gideon’s forces originally constitute around thirty-two thousand men, many are encouraged or directed to depart, “every man to his tent,” so that only three hundred men remain to fight the great forces of the Midianites (Judges 7:2-8). When the three hundred men blow their trumpets, the Midianites flee and so are pursued by the men of Israel, who seize “the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan” (Judges 7:24). After the “slaughtered squadrons” fall, the country is “quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon” (Judges 8:28). In Isaiah, the fall of the Midianites is likened to an emergence out of the shadow of death:

[T]he gloom will not be upon her who is distressed,
As when at first He lightly esteemed
The land . . .
And afterward more heavily oppressed her. . . .
The people who walked in darkness
Have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them a light has shined. (Isaiah 9:1-2)

Whereas only forty years of peace follow Gideon’s subduing of the Midianites, in Isaiah, “[o]f the increase of His government and peace / There will be no end” (Isaiah 9:7).

The London *Spectator* reviewer obviously thought that a young girl relishing lines about a bloody slaughter, and understanding its allusions, was too much—or too “overdrawn”—in a novel that portrays a town of citizens advocating Christian ethics.

Yet many biblical stories *are* about bloody slaughters and relate other problematic practices. Gideon, the hero of the account, for instance, has “seventy sons who were his own offspring, for he had many wives,” as well as concubines (Judges 8:30-31). What should a young girl, being raised by those advocating a strict code of Christian ethics—where a man has one wife and a wife has one husband—think about Gideon’s libertine sexual appetite? Seventy sons, after all, are about a quarter of the forces, in terms of numbers, that defeated the Midianites. And the biblical account makes no mention of daughters. Surely all of Gideon’s wives did not only bear sons. In a narrative that is concerned with numbers, the number of children who are Gideon’s “own offspring” practically demands to be taken into account. Anne, however, knows nothing about the story, for she is told to learn Morison’s hymn on her very first day in Sunday School. She does not, therefore, understand the allusions to Gideon and the forty years of peace following the overthrow of Midianite oppression, but she *does* understand, paradoxically, that Morison’s allusions are tragic. When Miss Rogerson, the Sunday School teacher, asks Anne if she knows any paraphrases, Anne tells her she does not and offers, instead, to recite a melancholy poem. Miss Rogerson tells her that a funereal poem “wouldn’t do and she told me to learn the nineteenth paraphrase for next Sunday” (132). Morison’s lines, referring to Gideon’s defeat of the oppressor and to the “Child of hope” who, as described in the book of Isaiah, will increase the joy of the nation, providing a “government and peace” without end (Isaiah 9:3, 7) are meant to inspire optimism, the anticipation of miracles, and the end of severe ill-treatment. But after reading over Morison’s lines, Anne decides that she likes the paraphrase due to the two lines: “Quick as the slaughtered squadrons fell / In Midian’s evil day.” She explains to

Marilla: "I don't know what 'squadrons' means nor 'Midian' either, but it sounds so tragical. I can hardly wait until next Sunday to recite it" (132).

Anne's enthusiasm over lines concerned with slaughter and "evil" oppression, like Scheherazade's intent single-mindedness in her decision to marry King Shahryar, is a fearless, wild approach to the cultural codes that teach, as Doody describes it, that "to love Earth means to reject Spirit." Instead of seeing the ethereal hope portrayed in the hymn of what *will* be when burdens are lifted, Anne gravitates towards the "earthy"—to the quick, physical slaughter of a particular "day" or time in history that the lines relate. Not knowing their specific allusion, Anne, like Montgomery, finds pleasure in lines that, in fact, illustrate a restricted victory, for what is fantastically revealed to Anne—through the thrill of the poetic lines—is a "falling" that does not eliminate the oppressor, but embraces the reality of his presence—not as something to be endured in helplessness, but as a real burden to be voiced—to be dramatized with all of its "tragical-ness" intact. Dwelling too much on a distant hope can bore through a sense of meaninglessness rather than inspire, for earthly sorrows and injustices tend, through vague expressions of future rescues, to be ignored. Thus, Anne tells Marilla that she did not listen to the minister's sermon because "he hasn't enough imagination," and Marilla discovers that she cannot scold her for it since Anne has described "what she herself had really thought deep down in her heart for years but had never given expression to. It almost seemed to her that those secret, unuttered, critical thoughts had suddenly taken visible and accusing shape and form in the person of this outspoken morsel of neglected humanity" (133). Anne may not recognize direct allusions, but she understands neglect, and so she is drawn to words and phrases that pull away from reason and emphasize what is not supposed to be

uttered—that is, what has been neglected and left undramatized—like a miraculously quick slaughter, engineered with an element of surprise, trumpeting forth burdens so grievous as to frighten away squadrons with their impact, and calling forth other buried utterances through that trumpeting—heard only in the semiotic movement of sounds dramatizing themselves through alliteration, assonance, and echoes of an underground story.

The echoes of the story that Anne hears in the two lines from Morison’s hymn that thrill her are echoes that call forth accounts of those who have been metaphorically buried alive. Before the intervention of the therapist in the triadic play situation described by Stern, one can imagine the mother as being “buried alive” in the familial group—silent in the hope that all will progress smoothly without her interaction. One can also imagine that the congregation in the church that Anne attends does not question the unending “increase of [the] government and peace” established by the Prince of Peace delineated in the book of Isaiah. Yet both the passage in Isaiah and Morison’s paraphrase of Isaiah allude to the years of peace enjoyed after Gideon’s defeat of the Midianites—a peace restricted, it seems, to Gideon, his sons, and the patriarchal culture that reacts to oppression through slaughter, and, in fact, through further oppression within its own system. Although Gideon and the men of Israel throw off the Midianite oppression through a miraculous defeat, they do not extend the gift of unburdened freedom to the women of Israel, for, although Gideon produces a multitude of sons—which could be interpreted symbolically as plentitude and fruitfulness—with a multitude of sons comes, for the women who bear them, a multitude of pain and work in the midst of that plentitude. The names of Gideon’s wives are neglected in the description of the

forty years of peace in the “days of Gideon.” In fact, the account in Judges, so attentive to numbers, does not even indicate *how many* wives, or *how many* concubines Gideon had throughout those “peaceful” years. The message received by women about the “quiet” years is a reminder of women’s historical roles as acquired property and as breeders of sons. To be told about Gideon and his wives, concubines, and many sons is to be reminded of a “benefit” presented in Jonathan Swift’s eighteenth-century satire, “A Modest Proposal” (1730), where the narrator proposes that the breeding of children for human consumption “would be a great inducement to marriage.” If women are perceived as breeders who bring fruitfulness and prosperity to an overburdened, overtaxed economy, then men “would become as fond as their wives during the time of their pregnancy as they are now of their mares in foal, . . . nor offer to beat or kick them (as is too frequent a practice) for fear of a miscarriage” (151). Swift’s satire is doubly damning for women, for the narrator describes the “tragic” nature of women-as-bearers in the phallogocentric mind: either they are bearers treated with contempt for adding to economic burdens, or are bearers treated fondly for adding to economic prosperity. Whether in the “days of Gideon,” in eighteenth-century Ireland, in Anne’s nineteenth-century Presbyterian social world, or in a postmodern consciousness that values, as Val Plumwood describes it, the “master model” that has “evolved as hierarchical, aggressive and destructive of nature and of life, including human life,” women are reminded that they have been, to return to Gerda Lerner’s words, “deprived of a knowledge of their own history.”

To be relegated, fondly or no, to the role of a “breeder”—one of many briefly alluded to in the historical records of fathers and sons—is to be consigned to a position

that makes forty years seem like a miserable, burdensome, exhausting eternity. To relate, by extension, Isaiah's allusion from the "days of Gideon" to the Prince of Peace's "government and peace" without end is to imagine heaven as hell, where a female subject, her burden unremoved, is buried alive in a "peace" that is not peace, in a prosperity that entraps, suffocates, and silences forever—one of the most "tragical" situations the human soul can imagine. In such a case, Morison's "Child of hope," if he is to behave like Gideon, is to be avoided at all costs, for the unending "peace" of such a rule would destroy any other possible hope in the human heart. Anne, then, is drawn to the two lines in a hymn about hope that mysteriously relate the destructiveness of the hope it celebrates. Desiring to dramatize that destructiveness, Anne thrills to the task in order to demonstrate how much is unfinished—that is, how much tragedy continues to exist in stifled, everyday lives—and how other forces must come into play before a cure can be effected. Montgomery's description of Anne's enthusiasm over the lines directs us to a different, more enigmatic interpretation of the lines—especially since Anne senses, rather than intellectually knows, the power that can be drawn from the drama inherent in them.

Much like Scheherazade's ambition to narrate the fisherman's cleverness in "The Fisherman and the Jinni," Anne wants to dramatize, *besides* the tragedy felt in Morison's paraphrase, the cunning power behind an activity that enlivens and liberates those nameless numbers—buried under burdens, and oppressed in times of "prosperity" and "peace." Whereas the hope of the coming of the Prince of Peace is a far-off, removed hope, the "quick" slaughter of the Midianite squadrons speaks forth the fantastic—rather like a magic utterance that causes formidable thousands to fear mere hundreds, simply

because the sound of the trumpeted utterance of the weaker side fearlessly expresses its confidence in its grievance. Scheherazade's fisherman tells the Jinni that such an enormous, powerful being as the Jinni could not possibly transform himself into a less powerful entity and so tricks the Jinni and illustrates how power is not necessarily expressed through size and might. The falling of the Midianites involves, in a similar manner, the cunning thinking of the Angel of the Lord, who is intent upon proving that size and might can easily and quickly be diminished through a "spell" created by expressed belief. Reason tells us that squadrons as numerous as locusts should not fall quickly under the sound of trumpets. Indeed, magic seems to be at work in the sounding of the horns, and the spell put upon the Midianites is the "spell" the fisherman casts upon the Jinni—a spell which seems to chant: *Try as you may, you cannot do all. Too much is too many; you will never be small.* In fact, both the Jinni and the Midianites *can* be reduced, even conquered, but neither possesses wisdom about the "null class," where a few, well-directed words (or no words at all, for that matter)—along with the power of the semiotic, moving when recognized and allowed entrance—can express more wild outcomes than volumes of unburied, unburdened expression. What is invisible, underneath, buried, wild is what the spell calls upon in effecting the miraculous. Eager to begin that calling forth, Anne looks forward to dramatizing Morison's words, not realizing that the "spell" released in her discussion *about* it has already affected Marilla, who finally hears what her heart has been telling her for years—those "secret, unuttered, critical thoughts" that, buried alive, had quietly bidden their time until awakened by a mere "morsel of neglected humanity."

Whereas Anne's Presbyterian minister would surely not condone the idea of the Angel of the Lord as casting a spell, the female principle celebrates such connections, not splitting the miraculous activities of "Spirit" from elemental powers that shape matter. When the desire to establish hierarchical units of thought that either empower or impede discovery and progression controls cognition and mental responses, then much is lost in terms of being able to relate to the natural world and to each other. In *Pure Lust* (1984), Mary Daly describes women who are not "chagrined" at "seeming inconsistenc[ies]" as those sort of women who live dangerously (421n2). The quest of such "Wanton women," she writes,

is not preoccupied with terror of "the negation of everything that *is*."
Rather it is rooted in the intuition that Powers of Be-ing are constantly unfolding, creating, communicating—Be-ing more. . . . Shrews shrink . . . alienating archetypes [and] Lusters uncover the Archimage—the Original Witch—within our Selves. . . . Brewsters brew potions, primevally potent. Our Archaic active powers are unleashed. Angelic forces are awakened. (30-31; emphasis in original)

The female principle that informs "shrews" like Anne directs its listeners towards a different sort of "Lust" than phallogentric lust, for the "Lust" that Daly refers to is a creative, active desire for expression which, while it expresses itself, also "shrinks" the "alienating archetypes" that silence the "brewing" of spells that unfetter burdened spirits. The Christian perspective of an angel is one such "alienating archetype," for such beings are not supposed to be identified with witches and potions. Daly reminds her readers, however, that the word "angel" means "emissary, messenger. An angel is a spiritual

being of great intelligence. Claiming that speaking Radiant Words has Angelic power is Naming/re-claiming primal force. It is overcoming the false dichotomy between spirit and matter, proclaiming Lust for that Integrity of be-ing from which we have been separated and which we have half-forgotten, but never lost” (*Pure Lust* 19). Having been taught to separate the “Spirit” from her “secret, unuttered, critical thoughts,” Marilla, for most of her life, has “half-forgotten” how to *be*—how to be a subject-in-process, “Naming/re-claiming” the “primal force” that speaks forth those “Radiant Words” that, somehow, awaken life and courage in others. Anne, who “Names” and “re-claims” the world around her, is an “emissary” of the wild—rejoining dualisms that have been separated but not completely lost to one another. For Anne, “Midian’s evil day” is just the day required for brewing forth potent “Radiant Words,” for it recalls her neglected situation, Marilla’s culturally taught situation, and the situation of all others tragically shrunken, cerebrally and emotionally, in their process of coming to *Be*.

Anne’s message, gleaned through words that celebrate the “tragical,” is connected to another idea that has been “half-forgotten”—that of the symbiosis between the “real” and the imagined, between what is considered “actual” and the fantastical. Anne is a “mother” in the sense that she speaks forth be-ing out of what she imagines—even though at times she is a “mother” to grave, but pivotal, images. For example, when Mrs. Barry, Diana’s mother, determines that Diana should no longer “associate” with Anne, she removes Anne from Diana’s life, creating a situation where the two are “buried alive”—necessarily meeting at school but commanded not to play or communicate with one another. Mrs. Barry creates a situation where Anne is to be figuratively dead to her daughter, to herself, and to her family. As a result, Anne tells

Marilla: “I don’t believe I’ll live very long. Perhaps when she sees me lying cold and dead before her Mrs. Barry may feel remorse for what she has done and will let Diana come to my funeral” (193). Of course, Anne does not physically die, but Mrs. Barry does feel remorse, for instead of the death of Anne, she has to face the image of the near death of her own daughter, Minnie May. When a large segment of the citizens of Avonlea, including Marilla and Mr. and Mrs. Barry, go to Charlottetown for a political meeting, Minnie May unexpectedly comes down with the croup, and Diana rushes to the Cuthbert’s for help. Anne tells the frantic Diana: “You forget that Mrs. Hammond [one of Anne’s previous foster mothers] had twins three times. When you look after three pairs of twins you naturally get a lot of experience” (203). Although the doctor is summoned, he is hindered by distance and doesn’t arrive until three o’clock in the morning. Had Anne not been summoned by Diana to treat the young Minnie May, the child would have died (205-06). When Mr. and Mrs. Barry return later that morning, Mrs. Barry has to recognize that, not Anne, but her own daughter had come dangerously close to death. The figurative death she had inflicted on Anne almost becomes a physical loss of Minnie May. When Anne previously announces to Marilla that “Mrs. Barry may feel remorse for what she has done,” her words take on the power of life, for later Mrs. Barry, regretting her former hard-heartedness, asks Anne “to come over as often as I could” and even invites Anne to an elegant tea. “Nobody,” Anne tells Marilla, “ever used their very best china on my account before” (209).

Besides knowing how to tend to children with the croup, Anne is a mother to mothers, drawing them away from actions that inflict “tragical” consequences—speaking forth words that do not hide or ignore deplorable decisions and actions. When

Mrs. Barry orders Anne to stay away from Diana, Anne pleads with her to relent, but Mrs. Barry, instead of growing compassionate, becomes more irritated: “She was suspicious of Anne’s big words and dramatic gestures” and responds to Anne “coldly and cruelly” (189). After Mrs. Barry subsequently welcomes Anne into her home and family, Anne tells Marilla that when she grows up, “I’m always going to talk to little girls as if they were [grown up], too, and I’ll never laugh when they use big words” (209). For Anne, words *are* “Radiant” and powerful, creating and calling forth life through affliction—mingling the “I am not what is” with the always emerging “I am, nonetheless.”

Unlike the phallogentric, historically-derived concept of women-as-breeders, the mother that is Anne is not concerned with codes that shape themselves either around an economically driven profit-seeking agenda—as Lewis Hyde indicates is the case with advertising in western consumer culture, where the advertiser/usurer “seeks out the bonds of affection and the liveliness of the imagination to move his own product for his own profit” (238)—or around demonstrations of human “products” as validations of “fruitfulness,” as appears to be the case in the account of Gideon and the sense of ownership and display of prosperity that is to be inferred from his keeping of many wives and concubines and the birth of his many sons. The mother that is Anne is concerned with the “bonds of affection and the liveliness of the imagination” that are not tied to codes related to an “economy” of the mind that wastes what it thinks is unprofitable by burying it. When Mrs. Barry rejects Anne and wishes her “dead,” she is using the same codified thinking as King Shahryar, for she makes her decision based on the fear of being socially humiliated. Mrs. Barry’s rejection of Anne is due to a mistake

Anne makes in inviting Diana to tea while Marilla is absent. Thinking she is offering Diana raspberry cordial—something Anne has never before tasted—Anne unknowingly pulls a bottle of currant wine from off the pantry shelf, for Marilla has told her that the raspberry cordial is in the pantry. Marilla later discovers that she had put the cordial in the cellar, but it is too late. Diana drinks “three big tumblerfuls” of wine—a “home brew” Montgomery knew how to make from a recipe of her grandmother’s, “clear, ruby, sparkling, with a quite sufficient ‘bite’”—and returns home ill and drunk (186, 186n8). Instead of attempting to understand the situation, Mrs. Barry, Anne relates, “says I must be a thoroughly bad, wicked little girl and she’s never never going to let Diana play with me again. Oh, Marilla, I’m just overcome with woe” (186). Like King Shahryar, Mrs. Barry engages in what Scheherazade calls a “bloodthirsty custom,” for just as the king is ready to believe the exaggerated lie that “there never was nor is there one chaste woman upon the face of the earth,” Mrs. Barry is ready to believe that orphans—especially those who are from outside of the community—are wicked, and so she breaks the bond of friendship that has been growing between Anne and Diana and attempts to “kill” Anne off by excommunicating her. In Mrs. Barry’s thinking, Anne is to blame for a dishonorable event in the Barry family and to associate with her is not a “profitable” nor a fruitful enterprise. Shackled by the codes of the habitus and by fears of disgrace, Mrs. Barry cannot comprehend the cultural tragedies she is replicating, for she is deaf to the wild.

The plot that Montgomery presents in the currant wine episode is so constructed as to illustrate the fear of a “brew” that is not only a liquid substance but which also bubbles up in a young, strange outsider who views the world from a different perspective

than the rest of Avonlea. Although within the restricted habitus—embodied in the consciousness of the Avonlea townsfolk—Anne thinks that the “stars in their courses fight against me” (187), Anne, who is “tragedy personified” (186), is actually connected more to the rhythm and duration of the “stars and their courses” than she directly realizes. When Anne makes her way to the Barry home to plead with Mrs. Barry to allow her to continue her friendship with Diana, Montgomery writes that Anne steps out “bare-headed into the chill autumn dusk; very determinedly and steadily she took her way down through the sere clover field over the log bridge and up through the spruce grove, lighted by a pale little moon hanging low over the western woods” (188). She is greeted with the harsh, unrelenting cruelty of Mrs. Barry, but her journey, guided by pale moonlight, across the clover field, log bridge, and spruce grove links Anne with other-worldly, achronological spaces. Doody points out that Anne has red hair, symbolic of a fiery temper and passion, and she also has “gray-green eyes that look green in some lights. She is thus doubly witchlike, a fairy or changeling, as fairy-folk have green eyes rather than an honest blue or brown” (Introduction 29). Fairy-folk, perceived through nineteenth-century eyes, are not mere “whimsical” beings, K.M. Briggs points out—although some nineteenth-century writers do treat them with the “dangers of whimsicality”—nor are they treated with eighteenth-century satire, as in Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*. Rather, says Briggs, the more earnest reaction toward fairy-folk surfacing in the nineteenth century “springs from a delight in strangeness, distance, otherness. . . . But the situations are often accepted seriously, and seriously imagined” (171, 197). Such is the case with Montgomery’s portrayal of Anne, for Anne not only seriously accepts other-worldly beings, but seems to have emerged from a space

where dryads, sylphs, witches, fays, and crones live, breathe and, at times, interact with the human world.

Through her research examining fairy beliefs particularly as they have arisen and evolved in Great Britain, Briggs indicates that fairy spaces are sometimes “out in the open, visible to those to whom the fairies wish to show them, though apt to vanish at any moment and to leave the guest exposed to the windy night” (12-13). Montgomery frequently describes Anne in places imbued with mystery, twilight, and moonlight—as if to suggest, without directly relating it, that fairy spaces might reveal themselves at any moment. In fact, such descriptions, subtle in their portrayal as they assist in moving the plot along, indirectly persuade a reader that Anne’s fanciful imaginings are not merely cerebral—not merely borrowed from the literary works she has read and absorbed. She simply gravitates towards those works that confirm her experience and then uses the literary vocabulary—that is, what seems appropriate to her from the Symbolic order—in order to convey the semiotic as it moves *through* the Symbolic order—to convey expression that is not bound by time but delights in nature’s transforming seasons.

The time that passes in the fairy realm is related to mortal time, but can never precisely be measured. Sometimes a few minutes’ play may take “a hundred years or more,” Briggs explains. Although fairies may possibly ignore time, she indicates nonetheless that

they are bound to seasons. . . . The time of the full moon and the days before and after it are important to the fairies. Certain times of day belong to them—twilight, midnight and full moon are times when fairies are to be seen. . . . Not only are they active at May Day and All Hallows,

Lady Day and Lammas, but Midsummer and Christmas also sees them busy. . . . Possibly they were . . . agriculturalists and shepherds, for the fairies show interest both in cattle and crops. . . . The agricultural fairies may very possibly be explained as the dead; those buried under the earth would be in the best position to supervise the growth of seed. (105-06)

After having moved from foster home to foster home, pragmatically tending to children, as she has been taught, in a mother's role, Anne finds herself at home on a farm helping tend to crops and cattle. The "seed" she nourishes is the wild growth of thought and consciousness that begins to become available, as they listen for it, to the citizens of Avonlea. Her "buried" position as an orphan in the community—both feared and rejected for her seeming lack of origins—links her with the sort of "agricultural fairies" that Briggs describes. Like the plotbene—which may have received its general directives from the lord but was ultimately shaped outside of the control of the lord by other forces, setting the time and path of the plough—Anne's weaving of germs of ideas into the consciousness of others is shaped not by what she is taught or what she reads, but by a wild consciousness—gleaned from borderland communications. She understands tragedy, and she understands death. Like a fay, she also possesses ancient healing knowledge that is connected with powers of transformation.

The most well-known fay in western lore and literature is Morgan le Fay, who is linked to Arthurian legend. However, Briggs and Roger S. Loomis point out that in folklore, her presence emerges out of beliefs arising earlier than ancient classical or Celtic times (Briggs 4). Loomis traces her background and connections, indicating that her name has variations in Welsh, French, and Irish lore. Early manuscripts identify the

fay as Morguein, Morgan, Morgain and Morganz, as well as Modron, “the Welsh counterpart of Morgain” (Loomis 184, 195). The name Modron is derived from the name of a Celtic river-goddess, Matrōna, which means “the Great Mother,” and “this is not unconnected with the fact that in recent times the Welsh called the female fairies *Y Mamau*, ‘the Mothers,’ as in Brittany they are called ‘nos Bonnes Mères les Fées’” (194). Such fays appear in earlier manuscripts than Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth-century *Vita Merlini* (ca 1150) as nine enchantresses who dwell on an island and are known for their “powers of metamorphosis and of healing, and for their knowledge of events to come” (202).⁵ The fay that is Morgan le Fay thus has many counterparts and “may be the most beautiful of nine sister fays, or an ugly crone. . . . In her infinite variety she enthralled the fancy of the Middle Ages, and has lived on to our day not only in literature but also in folklore. As the Fata Morgana, . . . [her name] is derived from Latin *fata*,” and so we find fays and fairies as beings who are intertwined with the Fates (183, 200).

Although Anne is a young girl who blunders, envisions herself as not beautiful, and mourns over her lot as a red-haired waif, she remains steady in her convictions about other-worldly spaces and beings, viewing those who turn away from both their presences and their connections with the imagination as mentally repressed and withering. In Briggs’s study of folklore about fairies, she presents accounts where fairies are described as being grey, sometimes, and sometimes connected with light. They are difficult to observe, or even spot, for they are “to be seen only between two twinklings of an eye; their gifts must be secret if they are to be enjoyed; they are, and always have been, the Hidden People” (210). When Anne catches glimpses of fairies, she tends to see them in

colored light—as with or around rainbows. Lamenting the loss of other-worldly sight on Diana’s part, Anne, returning from the Haunted Wood, tells Marilla that she believes the ferns and satin weeds were tucked in for the winter by a “gray fairy with a rainbow scarf that came tiptoeing along the last moonlight night and did it. Diana wouldn’t say much about that, though. Diana has never forgotten the scolding her mother gave her about imagining ghosts into the Haunted Wood. It had a bad effect on Diana’s imagination. It blighted it” (315). In *Faerie Charms* (2005), Ted Andrews explains that fairies are drawn to “creative and artistic efforts” and especially to the creative process when it is enjoyed (111-12). As Anne perceives it, Diana’s imagination has been “blighted” since Diana, in remembering her mother’s scolding, no longer delights in seeking out beings from fairy spaces and has therefore curtailed enjoyment and the assistance she may have been granted had she remained open to borderland disclosures. Ultimately, Diana, in refusing to see into or hear about fairy realms, has rebuffed the wild and its call, preferring the more comfortable mental condition of subscribing to the habitus. Her imagination “blighted,” she has chosen to reject the creativity that may have allowed her to weave “better plots” in her own life and in the lives of those she encounters, not attempting to know or accept the secret gifts that the fairies share, nor the deep wisdom that would define her, even in her youth, as an ancient crone or fay.

On the other hand, Anne, “tragedy personified,” is not only old for her years but ancient in her thinking in that she acquires knowledge from sources outside of textbooks and taught behavior. Obtaining wisdom from her brief but memorable engagements with fairies and fays, Anne understands something about the mysteries of the Fates that the sixty-year-old Matthew senses in her in his very first encounter with her. Identifying

Matthew with “an extraordinary observer”—as opposed to “the ordinary observer”—Montgomery writes that an extraordinary observer, upon meeting Anne,

might have seen that the chin was pointed and pronounced; that the big eyes were full of spirit and vivacity; that the mouth was sweet-lipped and expressive; that the forehead was broad and full; in short, our discerning extraordinary observer might have concluded that no commonplace soul inhabited the body of this stray woman-child of whom shy Matthew Cuthbert was so ludicrously afraid. (51)

The fear of the “woman-child” that almost overwhelms Matthew is due to a certain power that Anne possesses that connects her with death. The Fates, in literature and lore—most often described as three, although sometimes working in numbers that vary from three—are described as women, and usually remembered as older women. Shakespeare has helped to solidify the notion that the Fates are witches by calling, in *Macbeth*, his three witches “weird” (1.3.32), for the “Weird Sisters” have been mythically understood as the “three Goddesses who determine the course of events.”⁶ Unfortunately, the negative associations far outweigh the positive associations when it comes to an understanding of the Fates. However, Montgomery’s descriptions of Anne as the “woman-child” draw our attention to that aspect of fate that is far too often forgotten—the aspect that weaves and spins and stitches together.

Although usually conceived only as apportioners, who draw lots and cut lives short by cutting the threads that represent life, the Fates, mythically understood as being present at each individual’s birth, also spin and weave and creatively expand the directions of lives, overseeing connections and encounters. The Fates in relation to the

beliefs of the ancient Greeks are associated with the twofold nature of life. Lewis Hyde points out that there are two terms for “life” in Greek, *bios* and *zoë*. *Bios*, he explains, “is limited life, characterized life, life that dies. *Zoë* is the life that endures; it is the thread that runs through *bios*-life and is not broken when the particular perishes” (32). Anne, acutely familiar with the limited *bios*-life and so able to announce the afflictions of tragedy as they impede life’s progress, is also in tune with the *zoë*-life—that aspect that crones know exists as it moves through and beyond the particular. Crones, explains Daly, are “the long-lasting ones.” Although a crone is usually understood as an old, withered woman, Daly indicates that a crone is not a *withered* woman, but a puissant, sapient, fearless woman. The “status of Crones,” she writes, “is not determined merely by chronological age, but by Crone-logical considerations. A woman becomes a Crone as a result of Surviving early stages of the Otherworld journey and therefore having discovered depths of courage, strength, and wisdom in her Self” (*Gyn/Ecology* 16, 16n†). Anne is not only a crone whereas Diana is not, but she is also a crone whereas Marilla, the Cuthberts’ neighbor Rachel Lynde, Mrs. Barry, and the “sharp-faced, sharp-eyed Blewett woman” are not. After later recognizing that she was in error in her harsh criticism of Anne upon their initial meeting, Rachel Lynde admits to her misjudgment but explains that “it weren’t no wonder for an odder, unexpecteder witch of a child there never was in this world, that’s what. There was no ciphering her out by the rules that worked with other children” (325). Not as “old” as Anne, Mrs. Lynde does not possess an abacus that can “sum up” Anne because the thread of the *zoë*-life continues to add up encounters and connections, as well as to foresee further possible linkages.

Understanding that Anne's expressions emerge out of "Crone-logical considerations" and viewing her as one of the spinners of the Moerae, or the Fates, we can perceive a more complex presentation of a story involving the live burials of "morsel[s] of neglected humanity" such as Anne, for Montgomery places the power of fate in individual hands. As Jane Caputi remarks in *Gossips, Gorgons & Crones: The Fates of the Earth* (1993), "it is up to us to become *fateful*—to . . . influence the form the Fates will take when they greet us" by holding "all things to be sacred. [I]f we 'pay' for what we take—that is, return energy and gifts to the elements and the Earth—and if we respect our bodies and the bodies of others, through all of their transformations, the elements will not abandon us" (270-71; emphasis in original). Anne's lamentations about all that is "tragical" in her life is a reflection of the way those who are considered as "I-am-not-what-is" are treated, for Montgomery emphasizes that, in Anne's case, not all has been considered sacred. In fact, like the depressed mother in the triadic play situation, Anne is mistrusted, is perceived as inadequate and as a threat or danger to the social order, generally receives no expressions of love or care except for what is utilitarian, and is repeatedly told or made to be silent. To such assumed notions about the "null class," the Fates, who are the weavers and spinners of individual lives, may vehemently disagree, and those who do not respect *their* wishes may find that certain unexpected threads are meant to be cut, and others, who "return energy and gifts to the elements and the Earth," are meant to be interwoven in the fabric of life. The Fates, fays, and fairies are not to be perceived as creatures of "whimsicality," Briggs points out, nor should they be targets to be destroyed or to be possessed through attempts to catch or contain them in some way, for such endeavors at destruction or possession only cause

them to acknowledge disrespectfulness and to vanish.⁷ Instead, when respect is shown to elementals and to their time and spaces, not only are we not abandoned by them, but we learn about their transformations and how our own transformations and our perceptions about them in others are dependent upon other-worldly gifts to us and upon our abilities to give back. In effect, we learn how to become dependent upon and responsive to the wild.

An acknowledgement of the interdependency between other-worldly beings and human mortals is part of the “Crone-logical considerations” that Daly says leads to the “depths of courage, strength, and wisdom” in crones. Briggs explains that “fairies not only confer benefits upon mankind but also receive them.” Although they “have their own cattle, . . . yet for meat, meal, butter and cheese, they seem to depend chiefly on human resources. They need human nurses and midwives, and must reinforce their blood from human strains.” However, humans perhaps benefit more from fairies, who foresee and sometimes forestall “human happenings and disasters,” for fairies

bring luck and increase on the farm, they can give presents of silver money, and they keep a jealous eye on the order of the house and farmstead. . . . They can concoct herbs and ointments, make bread and cakes, spin, weave, make shoes, and sometimes fairy implements, make musical instruments from straws and pipes, and occasionally do metal work, and labour, or seem to labour, in the mines. (102-03)

“[H]owever much they resent human spying or human interference,” Briggs indicates, “they greatly desire to influence human destiny” (95). Except for doing “metal work” or making shoes, Anne is involved in fairy work. Although she does not labor in literal

mines, at eight years of age she takes care of eight children in a foster home that is supported by a nearby sawmill. When she is initially orphaned at three months of age, she tells Marilla that “folks were at their wits’ end, so Mrs. Thomas said, what to do with me. You see, nobody wanted me even then. It seems to be my fate. Father and mother had both come from places far away and it was well known they hadn’t any relatives living” (86). Seemingly fated to be unwanted and undesired by humankind, Anne, a fay or Fate herself, knows what to do with “herbs and ointments” when she cures Minnie May; protects the farm and homestead at Green Gables by imbuing it with inner “luck and increase” by transforming Marilla’s heart and Matthew’s fears; makes bread and cakes that unexpectedly encourage fellowship and laughter, as well as the spinning of lively stories; reveals fairy “implements” and presences; and gives presents not of literal silver coins, but of the awareness of the powers that accompany silvery moonlight and night winds. After Matthew’s death and Marilla’s revelation that she is losing her eyesight and will be forced to sell Green Gables, Anne gives the “present” of giving up a scholarship, stays at home to study her college courses, and teaches nearby in order to ensure that she and Marilla remain at “dear Green Gables.” “Nobody,” she tells Marilla with a rather sylphidine “eye on the order of the house and farmstead,” could “love it as you and I do—so we must keep it” (391). Although she does not directly *make* musical instruments, she speaks lyrically and puts her “whole soul” into her recitations, causing, at times, her audience’s “blood [to] run cold” (260) as she listens for and expresses the semiotic rhythms and tones that wildly declare, from underground, unexpected sources of courage in the midst of irremediable deprivation or inequity. Most of all she weaves—threading courage, strength, and wisdom over, under, through, and into lives

paralyzed by the codes of the habitus, assisting in transformations of consciousness so that such lives may not be abandoned by the elements, and so the power of fate can be recognized in individual hands.

In her portrayal of Anne, Montgomery asks us to look beyond the “law of the land,” that is, beyond social codes and the internalized habitus, to the condition of “tragical” live burials—to treatment that not only disregards the sacredness of other human beings, but also assumes, in the distorted manner of hierarchical, dualistic thinking, that non-life and rehearsed, inexpressive silence are the equivalents of life. Anne’s references to death and to deathlike situations are partly an approach to finding some sort of comfort in her rejected condition, but they are also emotive expressions, or voicings, about the poor state of an historically driven and rationally defined consciousness that hinders the ability to conceive of better plots. Anne is thus not preoccupied with a death drive that draws her further into the buried state that would mute her expressions. Able to hear the call of the wild, she speaks out of Crone-logical time, and does not attempt to escape from loss or pain, nor to engage in a repetitious cycle of fantasy that seeks to conceal nothingness.

In psychoanalytic theories, the death drive is associated with the way death is evaded or seemingly controlled in the unconscious. Elisabeth Bronfen indicates that with Freud, death is “always implicated in the subject’s narcissistically informed desire for pleasure. The subject’s imaginary desire is most pronouncedly expressed in fantasies of wholeness and security gained by an appropriation of the beloved, modeled along the lines of the infant-mother dyad.” In Freud’s articulation of the death drive, “issues of femininity” emerge as a “disruption” *from within* the masculine, and, as “tropes for the

enigmatic and for alterity,” both death and femininity “mark the absence of a fixed place within culture” (52-53). Freud refers to the “repetition compulsion,” which, governed by the death drive, brings satisfaction, for repetition “serves as a fulfillment of two fundamental desires: for an absence of tension and for the re-finding of lost wholeness.” Such a desire for the recovery of what has been lost, however, is connected to a “notion of constancy” in that Freud determines that “the aim of life cannot be a state never before attained but rather must be that initial state from which the living organism departed at birth and towards which it returns” (54-55). Constancy, invariableness, and regularity, then, inform a Freudian conception of the death drive and, rather than a subject-in-process, the subject is a subject-compelled-to-return both through and to some fantasy of wholeness.

An interesting literary depiction illustrating the psychoanalytic principles that oversee the death drive can be found in a 1926 novella, built on Arthurian legend. *Mayday*, Taylor Hagood explains, is William Faulkner’s “one expressly Arthurian work” and “relates the quest of a knight named Galwyn of Arthgyl for his ideal woman whom he has envisioned in a stream at the novella’s beginning” (51). Hagood points out that Faulkner draws particularly from the “mythic Camelot” presented in Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* “to inform his own story [*Absalom, Absalom!*] of a mythic Old South that collapses from corruption hidden behind and undermining its gallant and beautiful façade” (45-46). One theme, “the theme of loss,” which Hagood indicates is “peculiar to the Arthurian legend” (46), not only informs *Absalom, Absalom!* but appears in *Mayday* as an unsatisfying, distressing, afflictive problem that must be dispelled. The “ironic contrast between beauty and tragedy” (52) in the novella and in its reference to the

month of May in the title is something Anne would appreciate, for the contrast, even in its irony, depicts a union during a season and day, May Day, when fairies are active. Summarizing Galwyn's quest, Hagood writes: "Travelling with embodiments of Hunger and Pain, Galwyn encounters three women who remind him of that ideal woman: Yseult, Elys, and Aelia. But none of them can hold his attention. Dissatisfied, his companion, Hunger, beckons him to see his, Hunger's, sister. Galwyn finds that the face he saw in the water is Hunger's sister, whose name is Death" (51). Attracted to and by Death, Galwyn joins her in the water and drowns, leaving behind Hunger and Pain: "Now drowned, Galwyn has escaped the pain and loss of life, and has attained the beautiful maiden forever" (52).

Although Anne would enjoy dramatizing the union of Galwyn and Death, the larger purpose or "plot" behind her dramatization would be to horrify her audience with ghostlike, haunting depictions of Hunger and Pain in order to draw attention to them—a different drive that, although associated with death, is not compelled to escape pain and loss. Anne delights in making an audience's "blood run cold" because emotional responses, when not hindered by the rational mind, assist in influencing us to be open to alterity and to a lack of repetition, to the *presence* of tension and dissatisfaction, and to an understanding that a return to the beauty or "perfection" of the infant-mother dyad, although a "fantasy" and therefore associated with the imagination, is not, actually, imaginative. The sermon that Anne does not listen to because the minister "hasn't enough imagination" is devoted to the death drive—as conceived through psychoanalytic thinking. The very long sermon is drawn from chapter three in the book of Revelation (Montgomery, *Anne* 132), which presents a command to John to write to

the angel of the church in Sardis to “[b]e watchful, and strengthen the things which *remain*, that are *ready to die*. . . . [H]old fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you” (Revelation 3:2-3; emphases added). The passage speaks about strengthening that which still remains and has *not yet* died but almost will at any future moment, about holding fast and remaining constant, and about the fear of a great loss that will, at some unspecified future time, arrive unexpectedly through a formidable, all-powerful thievery. The message to be conveyed to the angelic messenger is charged with fear—especially the fear of loss—and conveys the idea that any quest the church in Sardis may undertake should be an inert one, where “hold[ing] fast” is the precept to be followed, and any active “strengthening” or encouraging is directed to that which is already standing, “ready to die,” but not already buried alive. Whereas fairies celebrate certain seasons, such as May Day and midsummer, the passage Anne’s minister speaks from and about is an intentional reminder about the inability to know the season—that is, the fearful time of death—that will suddenly arrive. The sermon is thus unimaginative, as Anne sees it, for it is about non-movement and non-progression, except in the sense that the dissatisfaction of the speaker must somehow be assuaged through an active watchfulness. However, even in such restless watchfulness, the action of watching is inert—based on an immobilizing fear of loss and on “hold[ing] fast” to that which represents acquisition and recovery—and so it keeps the watcher in an endless repetitive cycle of returning to some fantasy of wholeness, where, perchance, the speaker’s declaration that “I have not found your works perfect before God” (Revelation 3:2) will somehow, through a fixed focus on a mirage of beauty and perfection, change.

The fixed focus that Galwyn demonstrates in his shunning of not only Hunger and Pain but of Yseult, Elys, and Aelia exemplifies the Freudian conception of the death drive, for nothing/no one but Death “can hold his attention” as she is “his ideal woman”—the fantasy of perfection and wholeness that Freud says provides a “notion of constancy” and security “gained by an appropriation of the beloved,” as Bronfen paraphrases it. The beloved, “modeled along the lines of the infant-mother dyad,” represents a return to a fantasy of an unbroken union “from which the living organism departed at birth and towards which it returns.” The irony of Galwyn’s quest is that in seeking the beauty of the beloved, he dies. But a further irony exists in that the quest to return to the state of the infant-mother dyad before birth is a “security” that, for the mother, and even for the “whole” infant, is non-security. Daniel Stern explains that when a fetus is between four and seven months in the womb, there is a “richness and specificity of the maternal representations of her fetus-as-infant” (22). However, at around seven months, “there is a kind of undoing of the reported representations [as they] decrease and become progressively . . . less rich. . . . After all, birth is the meeting place for the baby now in her arms and the one in her mind” (23). Once the baby is born, Stern indicates,

the mother starts to rebuild her representations of who her baby is and will become. But now she normally does so along the general outlines provided by the real baby (such as the baby’s sex and temperament) and by who she is turning out to be as a real mother. Many of the old schemas she held during pregnancy will reappear, but they will be varied and reelaborated to fit the given reality. (23)

In the initial “rich” maternal representations—which are fantasies about wholeness and beauty—there is yet to be a meeting between the mother and her infant. Birth, “the meeting place for the baby now in her arms and the one in her mind,” alters the initial fantasies. Without the mother’s reelaboration about the “old schemas,” the original fantasies would become a psychological threat, a danger, to the growing infant, as inertia would become the controlling paradigm in the relationship. Rather than desiring to return to the “old schemas,” the mother prefers the “meeting place,” for no mother desires to be in a perpetual state of pregnancy, only and forever fantasizing about the “perfect,” kicking fetus. The birth, even in the midst of pain, becomes a joy when the meeting is finally able to take place—when new elaborations that change each day can begin to alter the “old schemas.” Loss occurs, for the fantasies about the fetus decrease and are modified as the fetus is transformed into a baby and then into a growing child, but the loss is embraced, not escaped, in anticipation of the new meetings that take place between child and mother and between the mother and her varied, changing mental representations. The loss of the pregnant state is also embraced, even though pain marks that loss and even though the “meeting place,” the birth, ushers in new experiences with hunger and dissatisfactions, tears and wailings, and miscommunications.

Anne, who is an ancient crone, one of the spinners of the Moerae, a mother, a child, and a fay in tune with other-worldly spaces and times, proclaims and embraces the “tragical” not in order to recover some fantasy of wholeness that has been supposedly lost, but to illustrate the imperfections, losses, pains, and hunger that accompany life—even in its initial stages. Doody points out that Anne is also a changeling, for her origins are unclear, and she is the embodiment of the possibility that there *is* no whole or perfect

state from which humans come from or return to. Anne, like all of us, has to imagine the “meeting places” of her birth and infancy, but the difference in her experience, having lost her parents after three months of being in the world, is that she has no subsequent “meeting places” with her mother that could inform her imagination. Looking outward rather than inward, Anne sees death not as a “narcissistically informed desire for pleasure,” but as a meeting place—like May Day or midsummer—where unions with muted or unacknowledged, invisible presences encourage awareness and growth, even when such growth is not pleasureable.

Marshlands or “muddied” areas, where the earth is not groomed or neatly divided into sections of land, are borderland, wild spaces that are, many times, “meeting places” of subjects-in-process, where “old schemas” and fantasies about wholeness and perfection undergo continual alterity. On the night before the morning of Matthew’s death, Montgomery places Anne in her room, looking out through her open window, and describes one such “meeting place.” Outside the window, she writes,

the Snow Queen was mistily white in the moonshine; the frogs were singing in the marsh beyond Orchard Slope. Anne always remembered the silvery peaceful beauty and fragrant calm of that night. It was the last night before sorrow touched her life; and no life is ever quite the same again when once that cold, sanctifying touch has been laid upon it. (378)

Even though Anne’s life has been touched by sorrow before that night, Montgomery brings in the silver cast of the moon, the frogs in the marsh, and the Snow Queen all together in unison in order to illustrate how the outside, other world communicates through a cold touch, at times, that establishes crone-like alterity—where its effects are

long-lasting. Matthew's death the next day will not allow a return to a former state, and any fantasy about the recovery of loss or an escape from its effects is, after the "last night" before its "sanctifying touch," recognized as unimaginative and monotonous. Anne will remember that last night as a calm moment before new changes take place—as a sign or signal of untried growth. Indeed, Montgomery "sanctifies" loss—blesses it—in order to celebrate the wild's Basic Tactic, which is to keep moving.

The expression of the wild, emerging in Montgomery's portrayal of Anne as "tragedy personified," most markedly diverges from Freudian or Lacanian understandings of the death drive by radiating away from the psychoanalytic conception of the desire or need for repetitious return. Although loss is at the center of Lacan's theory of the death drive, Lacan, Ellie Ragland-Sullivan points out, argues that through the *objet a*, a function that masks lack, a subject is compelled, by filling in gaps, to escape loss: "The *objet a* is any filler in a void in being, which, because of its indispensable function in filling up that void, quickly provides a consistency, palpable in repetitions" (58). By filling in gaps that represent lack, a subject hopes to reach a consistent state of *jouissance*, which differs from desire in that it is believed to be certain in its fulfillment, certain in its ability to satisfy the dissatisfaction that is generated by desire. "Lacan's reading of the death drive," explains Ragland-Sullivan, is "a desire to repeat patterns by which one hopes to achieve *jouissance*, leading to endless repetitions of finite desire." Unconscious fantasies control and attempt to "hide the palpable void of nothingness and meaninglessness—death—at the centre of apparent meaning or appearance" (58-59). But the *jouissance* that shapes Lacan's theory of the death drive is based on a *jouissance* that is phallic—a "masculine structure," that Sean Homer explains

as being “characterized by turning the Other into an *object a*, and mistakenly thinking that the object can fully satisfy our desire. . . . [I]t is experienced by both men and women and is defined as phallic insofar as it is characterized by failure” (104). Although such *jouissance* may be experienced by both men and women, it is, as Homer indicates, a “masculine structure”—not informed by the female principle. A representational illustration of the logic that marks the “desire to repeat patterns by which one hopes to achieve *jouissance*” shows up, interestingly, in the form of the signifying map in a nineteenth-century text that has drawn and continues to draw the interest of children, especially boys—that is, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*.

In *Cruising with Robert Louis Stevenson* (2007), Oliver S. Buckton refers to the concept of the “logo-map”—“both an indicator of the commodity status of *Treasure Island* . . . and a material residue of Stevenson’s travel writings: unprofitable journeys from which he had nevertheless learned the value and marketability of travel, adventure, and the quest for profit” (102). Although the map is “a key object in the expansion of empire, providing a grid of knowledge and power that allows the colonizing peoples to claim possession of the colonized” (116), in *Treasure Island*, the map’s role problematizes the advantages of quests that aspire to lucrative culminations. In *Treasure Island*, Buckton indicates, “there remain traces, sometimes buried, of the questioning of the profit motive, the critique of capitalist enterprise” (104). Whereas Death takes on the female form in Faulkner’s *Mayday*, the “abrupt dismissal of women from the scene of fiction” (119) by Stevenson in *Treasure Island* rules out the personification of either desire or death as a woman. Instead, the *map* “emerges as an object of desire” (112) and as a “fantasy object” (117) and, as such, provides, I think, an apt depiction of the

“masculine structure” of phallic *jouissance* and the *objet a* in its compulsion for repetitious return.

The treasure that Jim Hawkins, Dr. Livesey, Squire Trelawny, and the pirates seek, Buckton notes, moves “into a kind of symbolic circulation,” for “the promise of discovering the treasure has always been illusory” and the map, “which has been sought and killed for as a valuable commodity with a direct link to the treasure, retains traces of its status as a useless artifact” (122). It is even more useless when it acquires the signification of a logo, for a reproduction of the map “brings a sense of loss.” When the original map is replaced with another, the reproduction lacks the very information required to find and retrieve the treasure. Thus, the “very act of reproduction necessary to make the logo-map entails a loss of ‘aura’ that leads to disappointment” (118). The map, then, promises what the *objet a* cannot satisfy, for when the pirates do locate the place where the treasure is supposed to be buried, they find the spot unearthed and empty—lacking the desired treasure and exposing a void that is unfilled and unfulfilling. The desired consistent state of *jouissance* is thwarted, both by the attempt to reproduce the map that promises adventure and remunerative fulfillment and by the attempt to follow the original map’s direction, which leads to loss, disillusionment, and a recognition that desire is finite, governed by the “beyond of pleasure, the inaccessible, the forbidden, the ultimate limit that cannot be overcome” (Homer 90)—that is, by death. Thus, Buckton points out that “the boyhood romance ends not with a dream but with a nightmare, as the desired destination promised by the map becomes the last place on earth one wishes to return to” (123). As a critique of colonial expansion and declarations of possession, *Treasure Island* points to the futility—to the ultimate

unprofitability—of imperialistic endeavors that seek to attain gainfulness and gratification in the Other. And the “nightmare” that is at the culmination of the search for buried treasure would also suggest that the Lacanian logic of the “desire to repeat patterns by which one hopes to achieve *jouissance*” fails. However, Buckton draws our attention to the beginning of Jim Hawkins’s narrative, where Jim tells his readers, “as an explanation for withholding the precise location of the island—‘there is still treasure not yet lifted’” (124). Although “Jim disavows any desire to return in search of this treasure, . . . the possibility of another quest for treasure has not been convincingly ruled out by Jim’s narrative” (124). The death drive, urged on by the anticipated phallic *jouissance* that promises certainty in its fulfillment through repetitious pursuits, is thus inscribed in the opening phrases of the story—rousing attention and the desire for repetitious expeditions that aim to “hide the palpable void of nothingness and meaninglessness.” What is missing in the void or loss that accompanies the discovery that the illusory treasure has vanished is a “sanctifying touch” to bless it—to allow the loss to speak for itself.

Anne, assuredly, speaks of and about loss, voicing the void, as it were, in order to *mark* and not *hide* its presence. Her expressions of the “tragical” follow the experience of loss. Indeed, she is Loss itself, as she both knows loss and is lost, or unwanted, in the social order of Avonlea. The recognition of her power and the subsequent assimilation of the threads of her being by the Avonlea townsfolk begin in Montgomery’s narrative with the person who is most fearful of her presence—the sixty-year-old Matthew Cuthbert. Matthew, terrified at the prospect of speaking to any woman other than his sister, discovers that with Anne, he rarely needs to speak. It is not only because Anne

chatters that he finds himself comfortable in her presence, but because he is able to communicate with her without speaking. When he does verbally speak, she listens—without attempting either to interrupt him or to draw more words from him than those he gives—for few words are required when communication takes place elsewhere than within the laws of the Symbolic order. When Diana rushes in requiring immediate help for Minnie May—a crucial moment when clear communication is imperative—Matthew does not say a word, but simply rises from the sofa and disappears. Montgomery interprets his silence for both Diana and for her readers: “‘He’s gone to harness the sorrel mare to go to Carmody for the doctor,’ said Anne, who was hurrying on hood and jacket. ‘I know it as well as if he’d said so. Matthew and I are such kindred spirits I can read his thoughts without words at all’” (203). Matthew’s most common phrase, when he does speak, is “I dunno.” When Anne asks him if he has ever courted a woman, he says: “Well now, no, I dunno’s I ever did.” When she laments that there is too much that is difficult to understand in other people’s behavior, Matthew responds: “Well now, I dunno as I comprehend them all myself.” And when Anne asks Matthew if he would like some russets, Montgomery writes: “‘Well now, I dunno but what I would,’ said Matthew, who never ate russets but knew Anne’s weakness for them” (202-03). “I dunno” takes on the signification of “What do *you* think about it?” and portrays Matthew as a great listener of that-which-has-been-excluded, of the void that is not silent, of the unfilled unfulfilled-that-gives-from-nothing-yet-gives-nonetheless. Matthew is rather like Scheherazade’s sister, Dunyazade, whose “I dunnos” could be translated as: *Allah upon thee, Anne, O Sister of the Cronos, recite to us some new story, delightful and delectable, wherewith to while away the waking hours of our latter night.* The spinning

that Anne does, even in its “tragical-ness,” is the sort of storytelling that is not a form of *jouissance* for Matthew—not some culminating fantasy of fulfillment or a psychological, unconscious return to an earlier, embryonic state—but a journey involving awareness about spaces and realms that, seemingly empty, nonetheless assist in shaping the fate of our human lives.

Anne may be a woman-child, a crone, a witch, and a mother, but being “bewitched” by the wild does not translate into the Freudian logic that “the aim of life cannot be a state never before attained but rather must be that initial state from which the living organism departed at birth and towards which it returns.” In fact, the “mother” that is Anne does not speak about origins or of comfort or beauty to be sought in prior states; rather, she speaks often about states never before attained that are attainable in the present—only they are generally altered and perhaps not recognizable in their transformations. When Anne initially arrives at the train station where she is picked up by Matthew, she is a “mistake” in that the Cuthberts are expecting a boy to assist them on the farm. Marilla decides that Anne must be returned to the orphan asylum, but Matthew questions her decision. “What good would she be to us?” she asks him, and Montgomery writes: “‘We might be some good to her,’ said Matthew suddenly and unexpectedly.” When Marilla responds, “Matthew Cuthbert, I believe that child has bewitched you!” Matthew says: “Well now, she’s a real interesting little thing. . . . You should have heard her talk coming from the station.” Instead of being curious about what Anne spoke about, Marilla’s response is: “I don’t like children who have so much to say” (73). Marilla, who represents the social order of Avonlea, is similar to the father in the triadic play situation described by Stern, who wants to “help out” by silencing the

chatter and ludic expressions that Anne utters. Not listening to the call of the wild, Marilla cannot hear the rhythms of the semiotic speaking through Anne's chatter, and for quite some time, she cannot feel the restraining hands of the "therapist" on her shoulders—asking her to sit back and listen again. Afraid of being bewitched, Marilla cannot hear the wisdom of the witch—or the crone—that speaks in the present and not in some state of perfection or beauty solely discovered in the "initial state from which the living organism departed at birth." Altered from the desired state of a strong, healthy boy to assist Matthew on the farm to a young, thin, expressive girl, Anne's presence is not recognized in its immediate state as the presence most required in the "meeting places" of Green Gables and Marilla's heart and mind.

Mary Daly refers to her own expressions in and through language that, I think, are similar to what Matthew hears in Anne's storytelling—that is, the rhythms, tones, and messages that "bewitch" him. "When I play with words," writes Daly,

I do this attentively, deeply, paying attention to . . . deep Background meanings. . . . At times I have been conscious of breaking almost into incantations, chants, alliterative lyrics. At such moments the words themselves seem to have a life of their own. They seem to want to break the bonds of conventional usage, to break the silence imposed upon their own Backgrounds. They become palpable, powerful, and it seems that they are tired of allowing me to "use" *them* and cry out for a role reversal. I become *their* mouthpiece, and if I am not always accurate in conveying their meanings, that is probably because I haven't yet learned to listen closely enough, in the realm of the labyrinthine inner ear.

(*Gyn/Ecology* 24-25; emphases in original)

To Marilla, Anne may appear *not* to be attentive to the words she chatters forth, but to Matthew, who listens well to the messages emerging through Anne's words, she is very deeply attentive to "Background meanings" and to the "labyrinthine inner ear." Anne delights in "big words" because they convey deeper, larger concepts than those that are expected by a child making her way in the Symbolic order. She tells Matthew that "people laugh at me because I use big words. But if you have big ideas you have to use big words to express them, haven't you?" (56). The spirit of water smiling, the sound of trees rustling as they sleep, and even the subterranean rattle of wheels resonating on a bridge all possess voices that speak to Anne. As she and Matthew near Green Gables on their ride from the train station, and as they cross a bridge, Anne says:

"I can't help imagining that perhaps, just as we get to the middle [the bridge will] crumple . . . [and] if the bridge *did* crumple up I'd want to *see* it crumple. What a jolly rumble it makes! I always like the rumble part of it. Isn't it splendid there are so many things to like in this world? There, we're over. Now I'll look back. Good night, dear Lake of Shining Waters. I always say good night to the things I love just as I would to people. I think they like it. That water looks as if it was smiling at me." . . . They drove over Lynde's Hollow, where it was already dark, . . . and up the hill and into the long lane of Green Gables. . . . The yard was quite dark as they turned into it, and the poplar leaves were rustling silkily all round it.

"Listen to the trees talking in their sleep," she whispered. . . . "What

nice dreams they must have!” (62-64; emphases in original)

Anne is conscious of communications that speak from other places other than the Symbolic order, and for her, each communication is a different “meeting place,” where bridges seem to have stomachs in their middles that growl and want to give way and give in to their appetites, where lakes greet you when you acknowledge them, and where trees unknowingly speak out as they dream. When Matthew listens to Anne, he hears about worlds and realms that he has never been aware of before, and, like Daly, who acknowledges that she is still in the process of learning “to listen closely enough,” Matthew, after living for sixty years on the earth, wants to begin a process he has little experience with or practice in—that of developing wild “ears.” His “I dunnos” reveal that he is learning about a new way of listening to other languages, and so he encourages Anne, a translator of those languages, to speak.

Montgomery titles the chapter of Matthew’s death “The Reaper Whose Name Is Death.” Wendy E. Barry, Margaret Anne Doody, and Mary E. Doody Jones point out that the phrase is from the first stanza of an 1839 poem written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow called “The Reaper and the Flowers”: “There is a Reaper whose name is Death, / And with his sickle keen, / He reaps the bearded grain at a breath, / And the flowers that grow between” (*Anne* 379n1). The Reaper in Longfellow’s poem is not the “Grim Reaper” of later lore, but is compassionate and tearful. The last stanza describes the Reaper as an angel: “O, not in cruelty, not in wrath, / The Reaper came that day; / ’T was an angel visited the green earth, / And took the flowers away.” The message that the angel conveys is that the flowers that have been gathered (“He gazed at the flowers with tearful eyes, / He kissed their drooping leaves”) will be given away: “Though the

breath of these flowers is sweet to me, / I will give them all back again.” However, the Reaper does not return the flowers to the earth. Instead they are transplanted so that they may “bloom in fields of light” where “saints, upon their garments white, / These sacred blossoms wear.”⁸ The angel who gathers the flowers with the grain weeps for the wilted flowers that have been removed from the earth and transplanted to the “fields of light,” conveying sympathy for the loss the earth suffers. Yet a gift cannot be a gift—that is, the saints cannot enjoy them after they are transplanted—unless the gift is given away. The gift is always associated with loss, but loss—the void—is desired, not escaped from, for in the giving of a gift, it is its motion and its association with lack—that is, with the void—that provides its energy. As Lewis Hyde explains it, a gift has “momentum” when it “moves from one hand to another with no assurance of anything in return. . . . A market exchange has an equilibrium or stasis: you pay to balance the scale. But when you give a gift there is momentum, and the weight shifts from body to body” (9). The wild does not seek a market-rated “equilibrium,” nor does it seek perfection in its exchanges, but it does seek the energy taken and given in the varied and various “meeting places” of shared communication. The interdependencies inherent in Anne’s relationships with Matthew, with Marilla, with Mrs. Barry, with Diana and with the rest of the town of Avonlea are not based on a “market exchange,” for although she is provided with a home and education in Avonlea, Anne, though she gives from “nothing,” ultimately gives more than she receives. Market exchanges cannot define her gifts, for as the “weight shifts from body to body,” the gift alters, grows, mutates, and entwines in ways that do not provide motionless equilibrium, but vitality, as well as the

recognition that learning about the sacred in each person at the “meeting places” is essential in determining how the power of fate resides in individual hands.

Following the reference to flowers suggested in the title of her chapter, Montgomery indicates that Anne plants a white Scotch rose-bush on Matthew’s grave. Anne says that “Matthew always liked those roses the best—they were so small and sweet on their thorny stems. . . . Perhaps the souls of all those little white roses that he has loved so many summers were all there to meet him” (383). Matthew’s death, for Anne, is not only a loss, but a transference. The roses of the summers of over sixty years, though they have wilted and fallen from their bushes, are, for Anne, still alive and well in spaces outside of the Symbolic order of communication. Although communication along the lines of the Symbolic order has come to an end for Anne and Matthew, the communication they established that required no words still binds them together through the “meeting place” of the white roses. The roses, “small and sweet on their thorny stems,” is Anne herself, both a child and a sorceress—possessing the “small” nothingness of the “null class” and the keen, incisive powers of a witch. “It made me feel glad that I could plant [the rose-bush] by his grave,” Anne says, “as if I were doing something that must please him in taking it there to be near him” (383). It is not the rose-bush growing on top of the grave that Anne feels will please Matthew, but her action of *taking it there*. The motion of the gift as it is transferred from “body to body” is the sort of communication that does not die—even when one of the “bodies” has wilted and has been transplanted into “fields of light.”

When Anne makes her way back from Matthew’s grave to Green Gables to join Marilla on the front door-steps, it is twilight—a time, Briggs indicates, when fairies are

active. When she sits down next to Marilla, she gathers “some sprays of pale yellow honeysuckle and put[s] them in her hair. She liked the delicious hint of fragrance, as of some aerial benediction, above her every time she moved” (384). Although another chapter follows “The Reaper Whose Name Is Death,” Montgomery is nearing the close of her narrative and “blesses” the meeting place of the front door-steps with sylphidine enchantments. In the conversation that occurs on the door-steps between Marilla and Anne, Marilla reveals that she once was involved in a romance that ended due to her inability to forgive her “beau” after a quarrel. The death of the relationship was caused by a refusal to communicate—something Marilla realizes, at long last, that does not have to continue in either her life or Anne’s life. Marilla’s failing eyesight is an indicator that her hearing is becoming more wild. Anne, who has refused to be friends with Gilbert Blythe, ends up falling under the “fateful” awakening powers of Marilla, for when Marilla reveals her past romance, she tells Anne: “Everybody has forgot about me and John. I’d forgotten myself. But it all came back to me when I saw Gilbert last Sunday” (385). Marilla has, up until the door-step conversation, been pleased that Anne does not associate with Gilbert. However, as her listening is becoming stronger, and under the power of the “aerial benediction” invited by the honeysuckle in the twilight hours, Marilla, beginning to acknowledge how the power of fate resides in individual hands, recognizes the whirring hum of the thread of the *zōë*-life, which weaves together encounters and connections, and foresees further possible linkages. Like a Fate spinning her first thread from distaff to spindle, Marilla connects the name “Gilbert” with a tale about romance and so, like a crone, foretells, without saying a further word, the next “meeting place”—a bend in the road—for Anne and Gilbert. An achronological space,

the “bend in the road”—that is, the figurative space where Anne and Gilbert meet—is marked by a gate—a “borderland” space, generally unnoticed by chroniclers of history and biography, but occupied by storytellers and beings from fairy realms: “Were we really there half an hour?” asks Anne. “It seemed just a few minutes. But, you see, we have five years’ lost conversations to catch up with, Marilla” (396).⁹ The sweet and erotic powers of the honeysuckle have worked their enchantment and “aerial benediction” on Marilla, for after the “meeting place” of the front door-steps, “crispness was no longer Marilla’s distinguishing characteristic.” She naturally has momentary returns to that characteristic, as when she replies to Mrs. Lynde’s comment that Anne seems to be retaining too much childishness about her in certain ways with: “There’s a good deal more of the woman about her in others” (393). However, “[a]s Mrs. Lynde told her Thomas that night: ‘Marilla Cuthbert has got *mellow*. That’s what’” (393; emphasis in original).

The loss that is occasioned by Matthew’s death is “sanctioned” at the meeting place at the front door-steps by the honeysuckle—a late-June bloom, flowering in midsummer—growing at the steps where Anne gathers them and puts them in her hair. Honeysuckle, Barry, Doody, and Jones indicate, is a climbing vine, also called woodbine. “Long associated with fairies and elves,” they write, “honeysuckle is an erotic flower. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the bank where Titania sleeps is ‘Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine, / With sweet musk roses and with eglantine’ (II.i.251-52)” (*Anne* 384n6). By putting the honeysuckle in her hair, Anne provides the “canopy” under which the fairies can work their magic, for in midsummer, during the mysterious night of the summer solstice, according to traditional lore, certain plants are

supposed to reveal their miraculous powers, and spirits and fairies potently make their presences known. By entwining the honeysuckle in her hair, Anne welcomes the wild and its binding powers, for the tendrils of woodbine bind together shrubs and trees, as well as those who fall under its power. Robin Whiteman points out that honeysuckle is “an emblem of fidelity and affection. Tradition says that if the flowers are placed in a girl’s bedroom, she will dream of love” (120), and Titania’s dream under her canopy, we know, is quite powerful in its spellbinding effects. However, besides its “erotic” potency, woodbine, one of the oldest medicinal herbs in known history, is recognized for its healing benefits, even though its berries are poisonous. Besides being used “for treating colds, asthma, constipation, skin infections, and urinary complaints” (Whiteman 120), honeysuckle has been found to be beneficial in reviving the “benumbed.” In a late sixteenth-century guide, *The Herbal or General History of Plants* (1597), John Gerard explains that “the flowers steeped in oil, and set in the sun, are good to anoint the body that is benumbed, and grown very cold” (qtd. in Whiteman 120).

Through the death—that is, the loss—of Matthew, Montgomery, rather than narrating an account detailing some unconscious void in Anne or Marilla that needs to be filled or escaped, instead presents the promise of the encounter with Gilbert as a continuation of the healing presence that Anne has brought to Avonlea. Gilbert does not emerge as a new “Matthew,” filling a gap of sorrow and disappointment that Matthew has left behind. Instead, his arrival at the bend in the road is initiated by the new powers Marilla is recognizing in herself and so is seen as a gift—a freeing up of energy that Marilla has held “fast,” not allowing the gift-still-freely-given to have any space to move nor any momentum to allow it to shift “from body to body.” The power of the entwining

woodbine, which is Anne's power, is thus able not only to move out from Anne and heal others—as her binding with Matthew healed his fears and encouraged a newfound listening for the wild at the end of his life—but is able to cross through her from a different source, Marilla. As the power of the woodbine anoints the body of Marilla that has grown cold and benumbed, it, warming her spirit, moves outward from her gift of welcoming Gilbert, entwines its tendrils back around Anne, and then moves out to the next “meeting place”—the gate—where it can weave its tendrils around Gilbert.

What is important to recognize about the wild movement of the healing woodbine, however, is that the season—in this case, midsummer—is a necessary part of its extension of curative power, for the season marks the presence of the other-world's interest in human lives. The woodbine berries are “extremely poisonous,” and those wishing to plant honeysuckle are, at times, counseled to attempt to check its growth by cultivating it as a hedge and cautioned that it may become invasive.¹⁰ In other words, if a person is “deeply entrenched” in the “overvaluation of reason” and the “overvaluation of rationality,” to return to Plumwood's words, the powers of woodbine will be rejected as poisonous and too invasive, just as Anne is rejected from Avonlea when she first arrives, for as Mrs. Lynde initially warns Marilla, “I heard of a case over in New Brunswick where an orphan asylum child [put strychnine in the well], and the whole family died in fearful agonies. . . . [I]t was a girl in that instance” (47). At the beginning of the novel, Mrs. Lynde only recognizes the seasons as they exist within the Symbolic order, speaking to her in the form of crops and ornamental plants. But after time, Mrs. Lynde begins to recognize—although not as clearly as Matthew and Marilla will—that Anne's connection with other-worldly powers have affected her vision. Mrs. Lynde is

compelled to judge what can be visually observed and so insults Anne about her looks when she first meets her. Later in the narrative, accompanying Marilla at sunset to the end of the lane, she admits:

She's a real pretty girl, . . . though I can't say I'm overly partial to that pale, big-eyed style myself. I like more snap and colour, like Diana Barry has or Ruby Gillis. . . . But somehow—I don't know how it is but when Anne and them are together, though she ain't half as handsome, she makes them look kind of common and overdone—something like them white June lilies she calls narcissus alongside of the big, red peonies, that's what. (325-26)

Once the “season”—that is, those magical, achronological times celebrated by other-worldly beings, “greatly desir[ing] to influence human destiny” (Briggs 95)—touches Rachel Lynde, she begins to warm to the wild's entwining tendrils and no longer fears its poison or invasiveness. Instead, a narcissism that is fixed and “overdone” and that-which-is-noticed—such as big, red “peonies”—begin to be recognized as unimaginative and even poisonous, for *their* “meeting places” are too “benumbed,” too isolated—too safe.

Anne's picking of the honeysuckle near the end of Montgomery's narrative is a reminder of the wild's power to transform and to oversee connections and encounters when we allow its entrance into our lives. Like woodbine, it appears destructive, yet is healing; it is delicate, yet it has the power to entwine and bind. As the death of Matthew signifies the mysterious conveyance of the quiet, transformative expansion of the “meeting places” between other-worldly realms and the human world, the “death” or

ending of *Anne*, too, is a death of transference. Anne's experiences come to a close, but the power of the woodbine—as it moves from the midsummer-sylphidine awareness and crone-like power emerging in Marilla, to the space surrounding Anne, and then out towards Gilbert and the gate—is offered and extended beyond and outside of the text. At the conclusion of the narrative, Anne is sitting at her window at night, as she did on the eve of Matthew's death, listening while the “wind purred softly in the cherry boughs, and the mint breaths came up to her. The stars twinkled over the pointed firs in the hollow and Diana's light gleamed through the old gap” (396). The “old gap,” Montgomery points out, will be altering for Anne as some “horizons” close and other paths begin to guide her way. Most of all, we know she will keep moving into the unknown—into, perhaps, larger gaps—for “there was always the bend in the road!” (396). But we know that Anne will travel into the unknown fearlessly and with enthusiasm, for, like Scheherazade, she knows the power of the arabesque—of the wild as it moves in, under, and around the *bios*-life in order to convey the message of the thread of the *zoë*-life. As Anne listens to the wind purring softly in the boughs of the tree, she seems to want to draw our ears to its sound and our senses to the nectars and “mint breaths” of the gesturing, glimmering, breathing, speaking wild, as if to ask: *Have you noticed the power of the woodbine? And will you, like it, entwine and bind with the stories of the wild?* To choose to do so may mean becoming as nothing. It may mean that your stories, your words, will be muted. But with the wild, being mute lasts only for a short while, for hearing and speaking forth the songs of crones means that, however it may appear on the surface, their effects are long-lasting.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹ Nancy Tuana, for example, traces the “major beliefs about woman’s nature generally accepted by Western philosophers, theologians, and scientists from the classical period to the nineteenth century” (x). Freud’s impact was that he “located the cause of woman’s moral deficiency in her psychological development rather than in her intellectual capacities” (88). Because Freud posited the female as “an incomplete male,” psychoanalysis tends to see incapacities and deficiencies in the female (91). Marianne Hirsch has pointed out, as well, that in psychoanalytic theories, the “mother exists only in relation to her child; as object of desire and fantasy she may be idealized or disparaged, but she remains distant and mystified. She cannot be the subject of her own discourse” (*Feminism and Psychoanalysis* 252). Hirsch, Madelon Sprengnether, Susan Suleiman, and Sara Ruddick, to name a few, have attempted to challenge the place of the father and expand the boundaries of psychoanalytic theory. See Nancy Tuana, *The Less Noble Sex: Scientific, Religious, and Philosophical Conceptions of Woman’s Nature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1993); Marianne Hirsch, “Maternal Voice,” *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*, ed. Elizabeth Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 252-54; Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989); Madelon Sprengnether, *The Spectral Mother: Freud, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1989); Susan Suleiman, “Writing and motherhood,” *The (M)other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation*, ed. S.N. Garner, C. Kahane, and M. Sprengnether (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1985) 352-77; and Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon P, 1989).

² Wendy E. Barry, Margaret Anne Doody, and Mary E. Doody Jones point out that John Morison of Aberdeen was a member of a committee that revised the Church of Scotland's *Translations and Paraphrases* of 1745. The hymn based on Isaiah 9 was “[p]ublished as Number 19 in the *Translations and Paraphrases* in 1781, [and] it was still in Presbyterian hymnals in 1911.” See *The Annotated Anne of Green Gables*, ed. Wendy E. Barry, Margaret Anne Doody and Mary E. Doody Jones (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 132n11.

³ Morison's hymn also appears in an 1876 Baptist hymnal, from which I am quoting. See Samuel Lunt Caldwell, *The Service of Song for Baptist Churches: Containing the Most Recent Popular Hymns and Melodies*, New and enl. ed. (New York: Sheldon, 1876) 145.

⁴ Biblical quotations are taken from the New King James Version of *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments*, Compact ref. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985).

⁵ Loomis remarks that “[f]rom ancient Gaul Morgain seems to have derived still other features of her tradition. Pomponius Mela (ca 45 A.D.) reported that in the island of Sena there dwelt nine priestesses, able to transform themselves into animal shapes, to heal the incurable, and to foretell the future.” See Roger S. Loomis, “Morgain La Fee and the Celtic Goddesses,” *Speculum* 20.2 (1945): 201-02.

⁶ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, vol. 8, 10 vols. (1603-06, 1623; Bath: Robert Frederick, 1990) 1-91. The connection of the Fates to the “Weird Sisters” is defined as such in *Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*. Daly and Caputi also define the Fates as “Moon Goddesses,

Be-Speakers, Weavers, Spinners of Stamina—the Thread of Life; the Forces who can save the world.” See Mary Daly, in cahoots with Jane Caputi, *Websters’ First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language* (Boston: Beacon, 1987) 124.

⁷ Briggs explains that “[e]ven when the fairies hold their revels outside and under the moon they are often supposed to come up from their permanent home underground.” Arising out of the earth and living in hills and crevices and under rocks, fairies, in Christian doctrine, have been believed to be evil demons (as opposed to the Greek understanding of daemon/daimon, which is an intermediary spirit) since they have been associated with the curse of the “serpent” in Genesis 3:14, whom God afflicts by saying “You are cursed more than all cattle, / And more than every beast of the field; / On your belly you shall go, / And you shall eat dust / All the days of your life.” St. Collen, a Celtic saint who lived at the foot of Glastonbury Tor in Somerset, England, attempted to eradicate a meeting of fairies, it is told, including the King of the Fairies, by throwing holy water over them: “‘Blue is for the eternal cold, and red is for the flames of Hell whence you came,’ said St. Collen, and he threw the holy water over their heads. The lights and the music died; there was no King, no Court, no Castle, nothing but the green turf on top of Glastonbury Tor.” In another account related out of Yorkshire, an elemental, a Will o’ the Wisp, usually perceived as a ghostly light, “here took the form of a pretty girl with a lantern, and the tailor whom she misled well deserved to be teased, for he had boasted that if he caught a fairy he would put it in a bottle.” See K.M. Briggs, *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967) 12-13, 60-61.

⁸ I am quoting from a reprint of the poem in William Cullen Bryant, *A New Library of Poetry and Song* (New York: J.B. Ford, 1876) 264-65.

⁹ Gates have been associated with what has been called being “pixy-led.” K.M. Briggs relates an account originally recorded by Ruth L. Tongue in *Somerset Folklore* (1965) that was told to her in 1961 by the president of the Nettlecombe Women’s Institute. The president relates a mysterious problem she encountered when attempting to find a gate and indicates that a tangible hedge that had pricked her fingers vanishes. (It is interesting to note, as an aside, that often woodbine is grown as a hedge). She recounts:

I went on a journey to a house in Cornwall to do some secretarial work. When the farm came in sight I walked in and asked if I were on the right track to the Manor. They all looked a little queer,—I thought it was because they never saw any strangers,—but the farmer’s wife was very kind and gave me careful directions. I was to cross certain fields, and then go down a certain track to where there were *two* gates, and I must take the white one. She was so insistent on this that I had visions of a bull in the other field, . . . and the farm men who sat by . . . all agreed in silence. Well, I came to the bridle track; it was a misty, snowy, depressing day and I didn’t want to be late,—I had to walk home after. Then I came to a gate at the end, set in a thick hawthorn hedge, *one* gate, and it wasn’t white, and I had a most creepy feeling. . . . Well, I went all along that hedge, and I pricked my fingers too, but there was only one gate. Then somebody came up the bridle track whistling, and the thick

mist cleared, and there was no hedge. It was one of the farm lads sent after me who knew what to do. “Here’s your white gate, Miss,” he said, and, sure enough, there it was, beside the other one. He didn’t stop for thanks, but turned back to the farm, still whistling loudly. The old Manor House was there, right in front of me, and I went in at a run. My job didn’t take me more than an hour, and I simply ran past the farm. The woman looked out, and I waved and hurried on. I wish now I’d had the courage to ask if her boy wore hob-nailed boots, or carried salt in his pocket, or if he had been told to sing or whistle.

See Briggs, *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature*, 138-39.

¹⁰ See Robin Whiteman, *Brother Cadfael’s Herb Garden: An Illustrated Guide to Medieval Plants and Their Uses* (Boston: Bulfinch, 1997) and Elizabeth Agate and Alan Brooks, *Hedging: A Practical Handbook* (1975; Doncaster: British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, 2002).

Chapter Four:
Tracks, Tentacles, and Thirsty Monsters: Tracing Terrestrial Tides in
Frank Norris's *The Octopus* and E. Nesbit's *The Railway Children*

Whereas the flowers of woodbine “are good to anoint the body that is benumbed, and grown very cold,” as John Gerard indicated as far back as 1597, St. John’s wort, another flowering plant associated with midsummer, has been used for centuries in order to soothe wounds—particularly deep sword cuts—and assist in relieving nervous conditions, such as depression, mental exhaustion, stomach complaints, and insomnia (Whiteman 173). Both poisonous and curative, woodbine graces the pages of Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* and Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and seasonally emerging alongside it, St. John’s wort, especially powerful when gathered under the moonlight, shares the magical potency of woodbine and other curative plants when recognized and collected during its most mystical time of life—that of midsummer and the summer solstice. Although Lou Agnes Reynolds and Paul Sawyer indicate that Elizabethans observed midsummer night on June 23rd, Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding point out that the action of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, occurring at the end of April and leading up to May Day, “does not actually unfold on midsummer night. . . . However, the heart of the play, set in nocturnal woods of magic and mischief, finds inspiration in the Elizabethan midsummer revels that provide the title” (199). The tide of the season, we might say, marked by the mystery of the moon, provides intimations of the wild—not necessarily accessible on a particular,

observed *day*, but disclosing themselves over a span of time marked by suspended disbelief.

Reynolds and Sawyer explain that Shakespeare “was well acquainted” with the folk medicine of his day, and indicate that he derived his knowledge from Greek and Roman astrology, from an awareness of Druidic sun worship, and from practices adhered to by believers in the Christian faith. The fullness of the moon in midsummer showed astrologers that the heavens were “favorable to the curing of disease.” The Druids believed that at midsummer plants were endowed “with marvelous and mystical powers,” and according to the church calendar, which set apart a time devoted to honoring John the Baptist, “miraculous cures could be effected with herbs collected” then—especially the saint’s “own herb, St. John’s Wort” (515, 517). A plant producing a yellow flower, St. John’s wort

is always marked by the red or purple juice that can be squeezed from its petals, stamens, or roots. From one drop of this juice, strange and unspoken wonders might be wrought. While no attempt should be made to identify Oberon’s “flower of the purple dye” . . . with St. John’s Wort, sacred to the memory of the martyred saint, there is semblance enough to make Oberon’s flower credible to all those who . . . had sought to possess the mystical herb of St. John. (Reynolds and Sawyer 517)

In other words, Reynolds and Sawyer argue that Shakespeare makes an “indirect allusion” to St. John’s wort in the portrayal of Oberon’s spellbinding flower, combining Greek and Roman knowledge and belief—since the play is set in pre-Christian Athens—with Elizabethan Christian observances. Shakespeare thus creates a “meeting point” not

only between two separate ages, but also between the “supernatural and the natural worlds, . . . making the real appear supernatural” and composing a “scene where an oaf of a mortal glimpses the fairy world and recognizes in it a part of his own: those creatures of nature who do the fairy queen’s bidding are man’s servants as well” (517). The “meeting point” that Shakespeare devises is explained away by Puck at the end of the play as a dream. Robin “shall restore amends” by indicating to the “Gentles” in the audience that such a meeting point does not occur in the everyday, rational world of the mind:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber’d here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend. (5.2.54-60, 69)¹

In order to “restore” the audience to reasonable thinking, Puck sorts out the mixed world portrayed in the sylvan scenes, separating the real from the supernatural by defining the “shadows” and the “theme” itself as “but a dream”—that is, not a part of non-visionary consciousness. The “purple juice” of Oberon’s flower can be removed from the “strange and unspoken wonders [that] might be wrought” from one drop and so be returned to its simple state of existence as a helpful, but not wondrous, herb. In effect, its threat—connected to a recognition that the fairy world is part of our own—can be separated out and relocated to the dream state, where it can be forgotten and so dismissed.

Of course, the whole of Shakespeare's play suggests otherwise—that perhaps good Robin and mischievous Puck cannot be separated as two different beings or states of being, where, instead, Puck/Robin is powerful and dangerous at the same time that he is rational, conciliatory, and “good.” After all, not too many lines before the “conciliatory” speech, Puck reminds the audience:

Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf behowls the moon; . . .
Now it is the time of night
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide. (5.2.1-2, 9-12)

Though the fairies will protect the house of Theseus, and Puck, with broom in hand, will “sweep the dust behind the door” and aid mortals in their quests for love, restoration, and peaceful domesticity, fairies also, says Puck, follow “darkness like a dream” (5.2.13-20). Fairies may be “man's servants,” as Reynolds and Sawyer indicate, but the woods where they live, Dunton-Downer and Riding point out, are a “place of danger, where some real thing, if not reality itself, is at stake” (207). In addition to the “festival themes associated with weddings” that are celebrated in the play, “violence, lust, jealousy, madness, nightmares, banishment, and even death haunt the Athenian woods” (Dunton-Downer and Riding 205). Danger, lunacy, and death thus coexist with aid and restoration in the unsafe security of wild, other-worldly realms, for in the wild, reality itself is subject to the moon's forces and to the rhythms of the tide.

In *The Railway Children* (1906), E. Nesbit concludes her narrative in the spirit of Puck/Robin not only by speaking to her readers as Puck speaks to the audience, but by “sweep[ing] the dust behind the door,” as it were, restoring peace and happy domesticity to the household of the “Three Chimneys up yonder” (Nesbit 39), while at the same time weaving the “dream state” into the closing narrative and guiding her readers away from the house and towards the “end of the field,” where “we may just take one last look, over our shoulders” at the house sitting on the other side of the “thin gold spikes of grass and the harebells and Gipsy roses and St. John’s Wort” (266-67). Nesbit thus ends her story in a borderland space—at the end of a field characterized by plants possessing mystical histories and at a distance from the house and its festival theme. But unlike Puck, who wants verbally to restore the “Gentles” to the world of reason by separating the rational from the “dream” of the fantastical, Nesbit directs her readers *outwards* and *towards* the borderland of the field and turns them away from the view of the house “where neither we nor anyone else is wanted now” (267). In effect, Nesbit empowers her readers with fairy mobility, drawing them into the harebells and St. John’s wort, giving credence to the dream/other world, guiding them outwards into the wild, and moving with them into different spaces—as if they are travelers embarking across mystical fields not connected to the newfound restoration of the family in the white house of the “Three Chimneys.” Not content to end her narrative in the garden by the house, Nesbit encourages her readers to travel with her, seemingly instructing them in the Basic Tactic of the wild, which is to keep moving.

The movement into the fields, with its waving “thin gold spikes of grass” and our “quick” and “quiet” retreat (266), calls forth images of fairy flight over an earthly sea—

where “waves” of Gipsy roses and St. John’s wort dip, rise, and roll in rhythm with our journey to the next unnamed space requiring unsafe aid and assistance. Such aid, at times, requires the implementation of tangible human vessels or tools—such as Puck’s use of a broom, or a Brownie’s use of a loom for weaving, or a wheel for spinning, in order to perform nocturnal work in human households.² As K.M. Briggs has explained, “fairies not only confer benefits upon mankind but also receive them” (102), and in order to confer and receive benefits, fairies mingle with humans and their dwellings and devices, providing “aid” that is not always perceived by humans as rational or comfortable. That tends to be because human tasks and endeavors involve beginnings and terminations—goals and desired results—whereas other-worldly help often involves redirection or upheavals, such as what tends to occur with a vessel at sea.

One definition of “wild,” according to the *OED*, is given as “of the sea” and is elucidated as “violently agitated, rough, stormy, tempestuous, ‘raging’; hence . . . full of disturbance or confusion, tumultuous, turbulent, disorderly.” As an example of its usage, the *OED* cites the phrase, “on a bad winter’s night in the wild Atlantic,” appearing in Dickens’s *American Notes* (1842). The description that Dickens provides about such a night is intended to move a reader from out of a state of reason into a space where it is to be understood that thoughts cannot be formed and related, where words fail, and where dreams are the only access to the wild experience. In Dickens’s description, the vessel takes on human characteristics—including a voice—as it interacts with the ocean—described as possessing not one voice, but voices upon voices, for each drop of water has its own “howling voice.” Although he must use the language of the Symbolic order to describe the experience, Dickens emphasizes that the wild night

cannot be *conceived*, much less *conveyed*, in words. Therefore he writes, referring to the man-made vessel on the wild sea at a particular time of night, that

[t]here was something in the unnatural repose of that hour . . . so inconceivably awful and tremendous, that its bursting into full violence was almost a relief. . . . To say that [the labouring ship] is flung down on her side in the waves, with her masts dipping into them, and that, springing up again, she rolls over on the other side, until a heavy sea strikes her with the noise of a hundred great guns, and hurls her back—that she stops, and staggers, and shivers, as though stunned, and then, with a violent throbbing at her heart, darts onward like a monster goaded into madness, to be beaten down, and battered, and crushed, and leaped on by the angry sea—that thunder, lightning, hail, and rain, and wind, are all in fierce contention for the mastery—that every plank has its groan, every nail its shriek, and every drop of water in the great ocean its howling voice—is nothing. To say that all is grand, and all appalling and horrible in the last degree, is nothing. Words cannot express it. Thoughts cannot convey it. Only a dream can call it up again, in all its fury, rage, and passion. (*American Notes* 23-24)

Within the wild experience, time is halted or extended—lost to the clock and to navigable instruments: “‘Will it ever be worse than this!’ was a question I had often heard asked, when everything was sliding and bumping about, and when it certainly did seem difficult to comprehend the possibility of anything afloat being more disturbed” (23). The “anything afloat” that Dickens refers to can mean the human body and mind,

as well as items aboard ship, for the wild disturbs comfort and stasis—physical, mental, and emotional.

Because thoughts cannot convey the wild experience, and because words are inadequate, dreams become a means for its communication. Yet in the Symbolic order, dreams are the “not what is,” yet *are* “nonetheless, if only by sheer force of *not*.” What Dickens attempts to convey through words, as well as he can, can be related to Kristeva’s conception of the semiotic as it moves “inside and beyond the Symbolic order” (Oliver 101). When the two interact, a “doubling of language” occurs, where, I argue, the wild is “called up again,” to use Dickens’s expression, and is deemed authentic through wonder of it. Although Dickens describes the wild experience as violent, it is also “awful and tremendous,” as well as “grand” and passionate. He finds relief in its passion, for the strange hour marking its presence does not coincide with rational conceptions of passing time. Although the wild experience may later be forgotten—as dreams are during waking hours—still the passion and fury that mark it provide the means to recognize the wild’s next communication, so that the “unnatural repose” of the wild “hour,” although different from another of its seasons, calls forth a recognition of its means of communication. By describing each ocean droplet as possessing its own voice, Dickens extends the conception of a “doubling of language” into the fantastic, or wondrous. For if we conceive of Kristeva’s semiotic as possessing the multitude of voices that Dickens describes as speaking in the wild, then the possibilities for Symbolic/wild interactions and communications are infinite. When the Atlantic is conceived as a whole, each droplet is a “not.” Yet each one *is* nonetheless, for without each one there would be no body of water that can be named the “Atlantic.”

Though each seems bound to the other—creating the mirage that the body of water is a “whole” unit—yet with one flick of a foot or wrist, droplets leap and splash, identifying themselves as separate and distinct. Wild communication, like the endless forming and reforming of surging waves upon the sea, does not provide the same message twice, for it moves and interacts with human vessels in such a way as to convey infinite methods of aid and assistance—even when such aid may appear destructive.

Dickens describes his experience in a ship on the wild night in the Atlantic as a conflict, where the ship and the wild forces are “in fierce contention for the mastery.” That “mastery” is related to survival on the side of the ship’s occupants, but what, we may ask, is the “mastery” that motivates the wild?—if, indeed, there is a desire for “mastery” in the wild’s borderland. In fact, the desire for “mastery” is generally one-sided when it comes to the rational need for stability, progress, and ultimate survival. The drives that compel humans to desire order, smooth progress, and balance begin early in life, Joan Riviere explains, when reparation—the same drive that inspires Shakespeare to conclude *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* with Puck’s speech about dreams as being separate from reality—becomes a key factor in ego-development. “Tiny children,” she points out, perceive that forces beyond their control bring about feelings of anxiety and helplessness. “Objects” become internalized as feelings or sensations and so are absorbed and become a part of the “internal conditions” that shape perception. “Inner persecutors” create hostility and agitation when it is recognized that, however much a child desires reparation where the “bad” is kept out and the “good” is kept in, the “bad” cannot be kept out. If there is a “full internalization” of the realization that vexatious, distressing, disagreeable figures—such as the child’s parents—are loved figures, then

that recognition “necessitates abandoning this defence-method of splitting feelings and objects into good and bad, . . . [which] means that both good and bad feelings have to be tolerated at one and the same time.” Riviere calls the merging of the good and the bad together a conflict; it is “the conflict of ambivalence,” and it is “what all previous defences have tried to avert, because it meant that the good object would vanish and be transformed into a bad one” (“Psychical Conflict” 62).

Using Riviere’s theory of the “internal conditions” that shape perception, we can interpret Dickens’s description of the ship’s and the wild’s “fierce contention for the mastery” as being, actually, *not* a contention between the ship and the wild, but a contention between the ship and the ship’s desired course—which is to stay afloat and reach its charted destination. Yet just as children are dependent upon parents or caretakers, so is a ship, in voyaging away from the port, dependent upon forces of the wild. If the “defence-method of splitting feelings and objects into good and bad” persists without tolerance for both at one and the same time, then, explains Riviere, “the compulsion to put and keep things right” controls the imagination, so that a child’s developing ego “imagines it can *bring back good feelings* that have been lost.” Therefore, “[w]ashing, eating, playing, must be done in the ‘right’ way; and those in charge of the child must carry out its need to be right” (“Psychical Conflict” 61; emphasis in original). A captain of a ship that is embarking on a voyage across the ocean desires that the wind be favorable and the waves calm. With instruments of navigation at hand, a captain, we might say, is in command of the voyage—compelled “to put and keep things right” where “those in charge” of the ship—that is, the wind and the waves—“must carry out [his] need to be right.” For a captain steering a course

through the ocean, a voyage is successful if the course he plans is completed according to plan, with cooperation from the forces he, like a dependent child, has to admit are ultimately “in charge.”

In Dickens’s description of the wild night in the Atlantic, however, the captain becomes non-existent. His communications are absent. To extend the analogy, then, the “captain” that is patriarchy—that is the Symbolic order, that is the habitus—cannot, like the child commanding “those in charge,” order wild forces to “carry out its need to be right,” for wild forces do not directly communicate through the language of the quadrant, chronometer, and chart. What Dickens makes clear in his description is the inability for communication to occur according to expected, familiar means when the wild is encountered. Yet, in Dickens’s experience, communication *does* occur, and he discovers that dreams, speaking differently, call forth messages from the wild. Moreover, Dickens clearly illustrates that such messages are *not* informed by an imagination that—as Riviere says of the ego developing in a child compelled to “split” feelings and objects into “good” and “bad”—believes “it can *bring back good feelings* that have been lost.” Instead, the wild, as it communicates through the dream-state, calls forth its expression, “in all its fury, rage, and passion,” as if to assert, in Dickens and in others possessing wild “ears,” a “full internalization” of being, where perceptions of “good” and “bad” are tolerated at one and the same time. On the other hand, the ego that “imagines it can *bring back good feelings* that have been lost” through actions that are compelled to split and divide concepts and force others to support a “need to be right” is an ego that would shape its development by becoming disposed to the death drive as conceived by Freud and Lacan. Unlike the Lacanian “mirage” of the ego as it conceives itself as “whole,”

Riviere's explanation of "full internalization" is connected with the "conflict of ambivalence," where the consciousness that splits one idea from another in order to achieve a whole, "good" self-perception is abandoned in favor of recognized, permitted conflict. The desire for reparation as understood through an internalized "conflict of ambivalence" is different from a drive to be restored to a previous, Freudian "womb-like" state of existence, and it is also different from a desire to fill Lacanian "gaps" that are perceived as empty. The acceptance of internalized conflict that Riviere describes is *empowered* by a concept that Freudian and Lacanian theories of the death drive depict as *needing to be conquered* so that peace without anxiety can be rediscovered and so emptiness can be filled. When, alternatively, the "conflict of ambivalence" is embraced, the messages of the wild are more readily perceived, and its unsafe methods of communication, although appearing to arise from out of the death drive, convey not that which is "good" as vanishing and being transformed into the "bad," but the needful recognition of the interdependencies between both.

The notion that empowerment and restoration can be achieved through an acceptance of internalized, permitted conflict is recognized by writers who desire to convey plots that are informed by wild consciousness, and *The Railway Children* illustrates such a desire on the part of E. Nesbit. However, before discussing how Nesbit intertwines the "good" with the "bad," I want to look at another narrative about the railroad that was published five years before Nesbit's novel for children. Although Frank Norris's *The Octopus: A Story of California* (1901) is not considered a novel for children, Norris incorporates wild communications in his narrative. However, the main difference between his text and Nesbit's novel for children is, as I see it, that the

characters who acquire wild “ears” in Norris’s story, Annixter and Vanamee, merely teach Presley, the protagonist, that that which is “good” is separate from the “bad,” whereas Nesbit’s story demonstrates permitted conflict. Good, Presley reasons in *The Octopus*, has “issued from this crisis [of the novel’s plot], untouched, unassailable, undefiled” (448), even though the railroad, the symbol in the novel of that which is “bad,” has prevailed (447). Struggling to understand injustice, Presley appears to be attempting to convince himself that although Annixter and others close to him have died, nevertheless, “in a far-distant corner of the world a thousand lives are saved,” so, somehow, “the greatest good” has been bestowed upon “the greatest numbers” (448). Presley ends up, in effect, vying for the Lacanian “mirage” of the whole “good,” separating it from the railroad, which he groups with “falseness” that “dies.” Instead of fearing, like the child Riviere explains as desiring order, that the “good” will vanish and be transformed into the “bad,” Presley rationalizes that the “bad” will vanish and be transformed into the “good.” The “individual suffers,” he reasons, “but the race goes on,” and “injustice and oppression in the end of everything fade and vanish away” (448). Presley may have witnessed wild disclosures stirring the lives of Annixter and Vanamee, but he does not hear the call of the wild himself.

Unlike the children who read Nesbit’s novel, then, Norris’s readers are not drawn into the powers evoked by harebells, Gipsy roses, and St. John’s Wort. Instead, they remain pinned to a static rationalization, where the “ranches”—representing “good” in the novel—“had been seized by the tentacles of the octopus. . . . The monster had killed . . . the very babe within the mother’s womb, strangling life ere it had been born, stamping out the spark ordained by God to burn through all eternity” (447). With

Norris, sparks are extinguished. With Nesbit, they are mysteriously ignited in unexpected ways, even though the railroad in Nesbit's narrative is also described as a type of monster—as a dragon “shrieking out of the mouth of its dark lair, which was the tunnel” (Nesbit 44). Earlier, in 1842, Dickens had described in *American Notes* the American railroad engine with its succession of cars as a “mad dragon” and a “thirsty monster,” clattering, rumbling, and tearing through the countryside and through cities, “scattering in all directions a shower of burning sparks from its wood fire; screeching, hissing, yelling, [and] panting” (74-75). The speed of the engine and its dragon-like emissions of sparks and snorts connected it with something foreign, powerful and uncontrollable in the minds of writers struggling to describe its intrusion in preëxistent, non-industrialized states of habitation and belief. Referring to the subjects of Norris's novels, Morton Rothstein points out that the symbols that arise in his writing “encompass the entire process of nineteenth-century industrialism and its destruction of rural values” (53). Norris's concerns are thus drawn from the encroaching interests of nineteenth-century industrialism, where the many who resisted its progress viewed the railroad as a symbol of predatory zeal and unforeseen, unrestrained strangulation. Hence, long before Norris used the image of the octopus in the title of his novel about California, the Southern Pacific Railroad had acquired the nickname of that particular marine mollusk since it “possessed an almost unbroken monopoly over California's rail network north of the Tehachapis [a range of mountains in southern California] for over forty years between 1869 and 1910” (Magliari 452). The “grip of the Octopus,” Michael Magliari explains, created “accumulated rural grievances,” since the Southern Pacific's “control of the rails” meant that it controlled the “transport of California's wheat and

barley crops to market” and thus controlled the survival of the farmers (452, 469). The image of the octopus, says Rothstein, “extending its tentacles into every part of the state, was constantly employed” in reference to “the largest single business acquisition in the state, the Southern Pacific Railroad” (54). Norris appropriates the familiar symbolic representation of the railroad-as-octopus to create a narrative about the railroad not as a mere destroyer of rural values and agrarian economies, but as an annihilator of life itself, “stamping out the spark ordained by God to burn through all eternity.” For Norris, the railroad is the “Grim Reaper” of the wheat and of the lives who tend it. It is the monster that strangles dreams and “stamps out” life. It is, indeed, death in its most furious, most hungry, most motivated state of the drive.

In *The Octopus*, Norris paints the railroad as an indifferent machine, connecting it to the hearts of men. One does not have to be involved in the raising of freight rates or corporately involved in the business of the railroad to behave like a mechanism barreling forward, driven by emptiness or by self-interest. In Buck Annixter, Norris presents a character who, like the railroad, is fastened to the “rails” that define his life’s direction. Although he is a rancher fighting against the railroad’s monopolizing abuses of those who oversee and cultivate the land, Annixter is the embodiment of the railroad itself. When he determines that he wants the winsome Hilma to like him, for instance, and she asks him why, he is “struck speechless” for a moment and then raves about the perceptions others have of him: “Let ’em grind their teeth,” he tells Hilma. “They can’t ‘down’ me. When I shut my fist there’s not one of them can open it. No, not with a *chisel*” (158-59; emphasis in original). Annixter’s fists convey a disposition for clenching, “coiling,” and “throttling,” much like the tendency the tentacles of an octopus

exhibit in refusing to release their prey (241). “Don’t I know,” he asks Hilma, “can’t I hear the men growling oaths under their breaths after I’ve gone by? And in business ways, too. . . . Oh, I know what they call me—‘a brute beast, with a twist in my temper that would rile up a new-born lamb’” (159). After his one-sided “discussion” with Hilma, he returns to the ranch house with an “evil light flashing from under his scowl [and] spread[ing] over his face. The male instincts of possession, unreasoned, treacherous, oblique, came twisting to the surface” (161). Ideas of possession consume Annixter’s thoughts, and so he fights against the railroad giants’ claims that the ranchers do not, in fact, own the land they cultivate. The railroad is not a passing, temporary mode of transportation and conveyor of goods, nor is it separate from the land it travels through, for the corporate railroad, the ranchers discover, has been busy with the activity of possessing the land its engines and cars traverse over and around through “unreasoned, treacherous, oblique” means. Fearful of and angry at the railroad’s claims of that possession, Annixter also fears, sometime later, that Hilma’s liking him—the very response he has desired—is an attempt at possession. “She was after his property,” he reasons to himself. “His unconquerable suspicion of the woman, his innate distrust of the feminine element,” writes Norris, “would not be done away with” (247).

Annixter, a “brute beast” wanting to possess but not be possessed, his fists clenched around the throats of those who hate him, is Dickens’s “thirsty monster” in human form, “screeching, hissing, yelling, [and] panting.” Preoccupied with the need to hunt and possess, Annixter’s “railed” way of thinking will not allow him to conceive of other plots that may threaten his conceptions of what it means to survive. Fearful of being prey to something larger than himself, Annixter, like the railroad he abhors,

exercises the predatory tactics of an adroit cephalopod. As a predator, an octopus uses its tentacles not only to grip its prey, but to flush it out of the sandy seafloor. An octopus will generally collect several of its victims—most often crabs and snails—before returning to its den, where it consumes its meal unperturbed. The Monterey Bay Aquarium's *Online Field Guide* explains that an octopus first kills its prey with

venom secreted from its salivary glands, then cracks the shell with its sharp beak. If the prey is a snail, the octopus drills a hole in the snail's shell with its radula and injects a chemical that dissolves the snail's flesh from its shell. An octopus deposits empty shells outside its den in a pile—commonly called an “octopus's garden,” . . . a collection of bones, spines and shells left over from past meals.³

The victims of the railroad's consumption in Norris's novel are the ranchers who are physically killed in a bloody gunfight, their bodies having fallen near or in an irrigation ditch. Before the fight, Annixter's ranch had been seized, the railroad-cephalopod having, as it were, dissolved the rancher's “flesh” from its “shell”—that is, from his habitation and the means of his sustenance and survival. The “octopus's garden” becomes a literal collection of bodies near the irrigation ditch, as well as a collection of acres of land—minus the “flesh” of its caretakers. Yet before the literal slaying of the ranchers, Annixter—much like the railroad giants but on a smaller scale—had “secreted” his own venom on those he sought to “consume” for his own self-interests. Hilma, too, may have become an “empty shell”—that is, a part of his collection—in his personal “octopus's garden,” but she does not, for on a starlit night Annixter encounters

something different than anything he has previously known—for Norris pulls Annixter off his “rails” and draws him into the wild.

When Annixter is drawn into the wild, his consciousness enlarges beyond the predatory tactics of survival that have dominated his thinking and behavior. Although an octopus is a creature of the sea, symbolically conceived, its clever but directed maneuvers, like the wolf’s in *Little Red Riding Hood*, also place it in a non-wild realm, where its den and its collection or “garden” fix it to a spot on the sandy seafloor—as a railroad’s tracks are fixed to a particular route on the land it corporately “collects.” The railroad-octopus, as H. Willard Reninger explains it, is “the unjust power” that causes others to “suffer because of its tyranny.” However, Reninger points out, another force, that of the wheat, is “eternal and resistless” and represents other “elemental forces” that move “in the direction of inevitable good” (226-27). Although Reninger discusses the novel with Norris’s philosophical conceptions in mind and so arrives at the conclusion that *The Octopus* is Norris’s poetic expression of a “romantic-realistic doctrine of the inevitable good” (226), what is missing in his observations about the elemental forces is that they appear to be just as indifferent to tyranny as tyranny is indifferent to the suffering it causes. Reninger does not point out that the wheat, like Puck/Robin in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, is powerful and dangerous at the same time that it is “good.” The “resistless flow of the wheat” surely is an instructor of “‘the larger view’ of things” (226), as Reninger indicates, but like Dickens’s verbal struggle to convey that “every drop of water in the great ocean [has] its howling voice,” the mental reception of the instruction about the “larger view” is not allowed entrance without a struggle, for that “resistless flow” does not communicate through direct, rational, comfortable means.

When a tyrannical figure in Norris's novel, Behrman, is drowned by the wheat as it flows into the hold of a ship he is in, we are tempted to celebrate, as does Reninger, with a justified sense of "rightness" that "in the long run truth will prevail" (227). But to do so is to ignore the "conflict of ambivalence" that Riviere describes as necessary in terms of abandoning the "defence-method of splitting feelings and objects into good and bad." As an elemental force, the flow of the wheat may have killed a "tentacle of the octopus," but in doing so, the wheat in the hold must necessarily become contaminated by the fleshy "tentacle"—or body—that will decompose under the wheat's weight. Does a force that is "good" contaminate itself? As Reninger philosophizes, it should not. Norris's novel possesses "greatness," he argues, because the belief in forces that bring about "the greatest good for the greatest number" provides a doctrine that "reconciles the alleged inconsistencies in the novel" (226-27). That philosophical doctrine contributing to the "greatness" of the novel is certainly an ideology that Norris would have been familiar with when he wrote his story of California around the turn of the century, for the desire to produce "the greatest good for the greatest number" is, as J. Joseph Miller explains, "the utilitarian's central slogan," a slogan that had gained appreciable popularity in the nineteenth century. Most often considered the founder of the theory of utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham offered what Miller calls his "grand pronouncement"—that the "right action" to take is one which "seems most likely to produce the best set of consequences"—and that "consequentialist theory" has been influencing philosophical, governmental, and economic thought ever since (190). It impacted thinking in the nineteenth century so much so that Bentham's disciples, many of them law-makers and educators, sought its principles in creating the various and needful legal and social

reforms that remodeled social institutions in the nineteenth century.⁴ David Roberts in “Jeremy Bentham and the Victorian Administrative State,” points out that Bentham’s friend, the Scottish surgeon and political reformer Joseph Hume, felt that there was a “new spirit of improvement which pervaded society,” which was “a spirit at once rational, questioning, innovating, a Benthamite spirit, dedicated to the greatest good of the greatest number” (206). Bentham himself, however, Roberts argues, would not have approved of the Victorian administrative state that emerged out of the efforts of “men of various persuasions, . . . [who] were disturbed at the existence of ignorance, disease, and misery in their changing society” and sought utilitarianism to assist in curing those ills. Because it was “a very confused and disjointed state,” says Roberts, “in all probability Bentham himself, the passionate lover of logic and efficiency, would have vigorously disclaimed” reform measures that were “too enthusiastically attributed to [his] ideas” (210). Formulated out of rational thought, Bentham’s “grand pronouncement,” is “one bound to become more explicit in a more rational and democratic age,” Roberts contends, for Victorian reformers “would probably have contrived their poor laws, factory acts, and educational schemes” without Bentham (209).

Correspondingly, John Troyer points out that the central model informing utilitarianism “sees rational action” as the guiding force behind the “attempt to maximize net utility” (vii). Because the central utilitarian principle necessarily requires that levels of happiness be gauged, “numbers have to be assigned to intensity levels” (xvi). However, those numbers, at times, in spite of the best calculations, can lead to dangerous consequences. Bentham himself acknowledged those who saw danger in his principle, but he explained such an objection as being formed out of the interest of *one* rather than

out of the interest of *many*. In his *Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1823), he relates that the Solicitor General, Alexander Wedderburn, had read one of Bentham's earlier publications where "the principle of *utility* was brought to view," and had afterward asserted that the greatest happiness principle was "a dangerous one." It is a dangerous principle, Bentham retorts in his response to Wedderburn's objection, when a government considers its actual "end or object" to be the "greatest happiness of a certain *one*." When that one "sinister interest" is "to maximize delay, vexation, and expense, in judicial and other modes of procedure, for the sake of the profit, extractible out of the expense," then "dangerous it unquestionably is."⁵ Yet, as Miller points out, even when the "end or object" is not based on the happiness of "a certain *one*," the ability "to pick out the best set of consequences" still is problematic in that it necessarily "gives rise to a number of objections to utilitarianism." That is because rational, calculated estimations "can misfire, sometimes quite seriously, with the result that an action whose expected utility was quite high turns out to be really disastrous." In addition, it is too difficult in the first place, he explains, "to agree on what a general scale of happiness would look like," and even if we could, "it is hard to know with reasonable certainty what the probabilities of each consequence would be" (191). What Miller does, as well as others who object to Bentham's "grand pronouncement," is to point out the complications in a principle that is too much governed by rationality and the logic of setting up declarative propositions, where, in a deliberate, historically accepted manner, it oversimplifies or aggrandizes its premise in order to make subsequent calculations appear plausible.⁶

Thus, when Reninger asserts that the inconsistencies that appear in Norris's novel can be subsumed under and reconciled by an implied belief of Norris's that "the

greatest good for the greatest number” settles everything, he oversimplifies the premise concerning “‘the larger view’ of things.” A multitude of voices howl in Dickens’s experience of the wild ocean, signifying a larger conversation outside of the realm of everyday, rational thought. In *The Octopus*, Annixter is drawn into a large “ocean” as well, where he becomes aware of “two immensities . . . widen[ing] around and above him” when he experiences the wild. The “silence of the night” and the “infinite repose of the flat, bare earth” expand around him “like illimitable seas. A half-light, mysterious, grave, flooded downward from the stars” (250). When Dickens paints his wild experience, he is on top of the ocean waves as the ship is tossed about in the sea. Inversely, Norris paints Annixter’s wild experience from a different perspective—that of being underneath the “waves,” as if on the sandy seafloor looking upwards toward a “half-light” mysteriously “flood[ing] downward,” as if through the filter of the “illimitable seas.” He is, we might say, the octopus on the seafloor outside of his “den,” and, instead of searching for prey or defensively protecting himself from oppressors, he unexpectedly looks up and apprehends that beyond those predators that are larger than he exists other communications that he has not even begun to explore. The wild experience, in other words, does not give credence to calculations about a larger good or happiness benefitting a greater number, but instead provides intimations about “better plots” that involve more diverse communications that extend beyond reasoned conclusions and premises and rational systems. Instead of hearing many “howling voices,” Annixter hears the “silence of the night”—a silence so vast and immense that Annixter, as if experiencing the entire weight of the ocean above him, is drowned by it. Silence, in Annixter’s situation, ends up communicating more than the mere absence of

sound. Instead of being consumed by a larger predator, the octopus-that-is-Annixter is drowned on the “ocean’s floor,” amidst the wheat that is growing mysteriously around him—wheat that is camouflaged “octopus-like” until the morning light reveals its presence. The growing wheat ends up affecting Annixter in such a way that he abandons the “defence method” that has caused his unhappiness; however, the wheat, too, causes him to “drown.” The dangerous, suffocating power of the wheat that surrounds Annixter would not be calculated in a utilitarian manner as being a “happy” element in his situation since it is an agent of his “death.” Resisting any rational system that would attempt to calculate its “net utility,” the wildly growing, silent wheat, like an octopus in camouflage, suffocates and kills its “prey”—that is, Annixter—in order to draw forth transformation in Annixter that he might not rate, quantify, or delegate happiness, but discover it.

A remarkable trait of an octopus is that it can camouflage itself so well within its surroundings that it becomes quite literally invisible. Roger Hanlon, in “Cephalopod Dynamic Camouflage,” explains that cephalopods, unlike other animals that camouflage themselves, “have evolved a different life history tactic . . . [where they] can adapt their body pattern for appropriate camouflage against a staggering array of visual backgrounds: colorful coral reefs, temperate rock reefs, kelp forests, sand or mud plains, seagrass beds, and others” (400). Besides “uniform” body patterns and “mottle” patterns that create resemblances to the background, “disruptive patterns” aid cephalopodic camouflaging. One trick that a disruptive pattern produces is the seeming disarrangement of “the recognizable shape of the animal, helping to obscure the outline or true edge of the animal” while also “achiev[ing] some level of general resemblance to

the background” (401). In *The Octopus*, the ranchers are not merely “choked out in their very beginnings,” but are tricked out of their investments and their property (245). By presenting the metaphor of the monopolizing railroad as an octopus skilled in the technique of camouflage, Norris demonstrates the complex tactics that have been and are inherent in capitalistic projects. The capitalistic mode of production, as it has traditionally been presented in theory and in the classroom, John G. Gurley explains, tends to be described as a “generally harmonious, equilibrating, efficient, and equitable system—at least potentially so,” where texts examining its principles promulgate approaches that tend to be either “radical,” “institutional,” or “romantic” (431). The romantic version that includes the connection of the railroad with economic progress in America in the nineteenth century involves the expression of freedom and democratic collective action as “part of the American character,” as Alvin F. Harlow indicates. The “vast natural resources” of the American West effected a challenge for “American mechanical genius,” he points out, for “[r]ailroad lines, tossed hastily into new territory while rule-making lagged behind, threw trainmen on their own responsibility and bred ingenuity in meeting problems—then mostly unexpected ones.” The railroad represented “freedom”—that is, democratic, shared responsibility that celebrated “genius” and “ingenuity” as new rails were laid. Invention and reinvention, the ability to adjust and alter direction and mechanical designs, and the harnessing of the American West’s resources for transport—all having to be continually refigured in accordance with struggles due to unexpected circumstances—made the locomotive engine both a symbol of American character and capitalistic enterprise and a trusted friend. However, Harlow also points out that while the romance of the railroad’s capitalistic endeavors captured

the American imagination, at the same time, “unknown dangers lurked in its path,” where the genius that furthers deception also was “fertile” and inventive.⁷

The “unknown dangers” that lurk within capitalism are not readily detected, for, as Gurley explains, it takes some time to understand the system. Once the working class “comes of age,” he elucidates, and begins to comprehend that hidden agendas inform “exchange equalities” and “contract freedoms,” then “another complex of economic ideas appears, a complex which . . . reveals the exploitative relations and contradictions of capitalism.” When one begins to recognize the “continuing failures of capitalism to alleviate poverty and misery in much of the world, including our own backyards,” then one begins to see that hidden under its “planning and controls” is its “class nature” (431-32). The “control” of the law, then, is identified as a non-control when the hidden agendas are taken into account, and it eventually becomes apparent, says Zechariah Chafee, Jr., that “[t]here are many dirty tricks in business which the courts do not stop” (1289). Chafee, descending “way down into the cellar of the law” to “look at the foundations,” uncovers the damaging practices that certain monopolies, established in and around the turn of the century, put to use. A book published in 1917 by W.H.S. Stevens and entitled “Unfair Competition” examined and reported such long-standing and prevailing detrimental practices, which Chafee refers to as “competitive tactics.” Such tactics included in Stevens’s 1917 study involved the “operation of bogus ‘independent’ concerns, tying clauses, exclusive arrangements, blacklists, boycotts, preferential arrangements, espionage, and coercion, threats, [and] intimidations” (Chafee 1307). Preferential, exclusive, “independent” concerns are given support and commendation over the concerns of the working class in a system that outwardly

supports free market exchanges but secretly promotes and aids a favored class.

Referring directly to the monopolizing power of the railroad in *The Octopus*, Colleen Lye points out that what gives the “corporation” its “special quality” is its abstruse coherence of “invisibility and ubiquity.” The railroad is everywhere—controlling cargo; engaged, Lye argues, in the beginning stages of global expansion; and involved in the politics of the time and in the ranchers’ lives (86, 88). Yet even as it is ubiquitous, the railroad is also invisible. It is difficult to “visualize” where it is going, says Lye. As a conglomeration of the “mechanical, mythological, and animal,” the railroad, a corporation engaged in “the movement of U.S. capital,” cannot be clearly seen, for one cannot quite “visualize whether the entity is moving or embedding itself, whether swiftness, largeness, or tenacity takes priority” (87, 89). Indeed, the capitalistic machinations of the railroad so resemble the “background” or landscape by being intimately and ubiquitously involved in the lives and communities that produce the “cargo” it transports that its hidden agendas are camouflaged in its swift and all-encompassing, seemingly “romantic,” ingenious relations with that “background”—that is, the “lower” working class. When the railroad, the corporation, capitalism strikes with its “competitive tactics,” those of the working class who have not yet “come of age,” to use Gurley’s phrase, and so have not recognized their designation as members of the lower class, find themselves struggling against a surprisingly swift and only partly revealed predator, as they squirm in “tentacles” that suffocate their prized ingenuity that they have falsely believed has been influencing social and economic relations.

In Norris’s novel, Dyke, who quits working as an engineer for the railroad and decides to invest in a hop ranch with his brother, becomes one of the victims of the

railroad's trickery, little suspecting that "unknown dangers" lurk beside someone like himself who is so intimate with the resourceful design of the locomotive and its cargo-laden journeys. Dyke at first blames himself for his financial failure, not suspecting that railroad could be "fertile" and inventive in its deceptions. However, he later realizes that "he had made no mistake":

His energy, industry, and foresight had been sound. He had been merely the object of a colossal trick, a sordid injustice, a victim of the insatiate greed of the monster, . . . choked by one of those millions of tentacles suddenly reaching up from below, from out of the dark beneath his feet, coiling around his throat, throttling him, strangling him. . . . For a moment he thought of the courts, but instantly laughed at the idea. What court was immune from the power of the monster? (241)

Having based his investments on a freight rate that had been "promised" to him, Dyke watches as the camouflaged Behrman reveals his true intentions, reading the small words printed on a tariff schedule that indicate that rates "quoted beyond Stockton are subject to changes" (238). Behrman continues swimmingly along his way as a participant in the railroad's aggressive wielding of "competitive tactics," while Dyke discovers that the "tentacle held [him] fast. He was stuck" (242). Behrman, like a camouflaged octopus invisibly waiting for movement from his prospective prey, can claim that he is not involved in the writing of the black-and-white print on the tariff page and so can obscure the "outline or true edge" of his participation in the railroad's monopolizing schemes. Just as, as Harlow paints it, the "heady atmosphere of liberty . . . bred ingenuity in meeting problems" during the railroad's western expansion in America, so does the

“heady atmosphere” of enterprising, competitive tactics breed ingenuity in discovering different methods of camouflage—whether, for example, one should adapt to a pattern that is “uniform,” mottled,” or “disruptive”—for a railroad giant like Behrman.

Referring to the engineman or the brakeman, Harlow writes that “when disaster occurs or threatens, the railroad man rises to true greatness.” In the same way, when a working-class “disaster” like Dyke threatens the smooth operation of the movement of U.S. capital by encumbering that process with his small farm, a railroad man like Behrman must use his ingenuity to rise to “true greatness” by employing the “lightning-quick thinking” of the “ruling class” capitalist, and emerge winningly, having put into action the profiteer’s “sporting instinct” while “grappling with danger and sticking to his post.”⁸

Like Behrman, Annixter-as-octopus has also been able to obscure his “true edge” behind the League of Defence, an organization created to fight against the railroad. More clever than Dyke, Annixter understands the power of camouflage and so perceives its technique as it is employed by the railroad. But what he does not see is that wild purposes also masquerade and achieve “level[s] of general resemblance to the background.” The “good” that Reninger views as being separate from tyranny and prevailing over the “bad” in order to benefit the greater number is described by Norris, in fact, as “mysterious” and “grave.” It is not a bright light of truth but a “grey half-light” that “flood[s] downward” upon Annixter, causing him “torment.” What eventually transforms Annixter as he sits for hours throughout the night under the weighty expanse of the “illimitable seas” is a “groping and battling in a confusion of spirit” where he is unable to “find his way out of the dark and out of the turmoil that

wheeled around him . . . [plunging him into] deeper trouble than ever” (250).

Emotionally, Annixter is “buried alive” in the sea of wheat that he does not realize is growing about him and surrounding him—wheat that is camouflaged in disruptive patterns in the night like an octopus stealthily moving along a dark, seemingly cavernous, underground plain. The nighttime movement of the wheat before it emerges under daylight is a wild force that possesses the eerie quality that Dickens describes as occurring on the wild night in the Atlantic when he writes that “[t]here was something in the unnatural repose of that hour . . . so inconceivably awful and tremendous, that its bursting into full violence was almost a relief.” Or, as Dunton-Downer and Riding point out about the woods where the fairies follow “darkness like a dream” in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, something about the sylvan space makes it a “place of danger, where some real thing, if not reality itself, is at stake.” In Annixter’s experience, throughout the length of the night, a change occurs that seems to him “elusive, almost fanciful, unreal.” But in the morning light as he looks across the “gigantic scroll of ranch lands unroll[ing] before him from edge to edge of the horizon,” he knows that the change is not “fanciful”: “The change was real” (252).

The “confusion of spirit” that besets Annixter during the night can be likened to the state that Riviere describes as the “conflict of ambivalence,” where the human consciousness permits conflict and rejects the desire to split concepts. As an “octopus,” Annixter has had an “innate distrust of the feminine element” that “would not be done away with” (247). Fearing that she will take his property, Annixter perceives Hilma as a predator and so shapes his life around what Riviere calls the “defence-method,” where he splits “feelings and objects into good and bad.” When he abandons that “defence

method” under the influence of the wildly growing, dangerous, drowning, “unreal,” dark force of the wheat by fighting “his way across that vast gulf” that splits one internal “feeling” or “object” from another, he discovers that the two separate ideas of Hilma herself and his ideas about marriage “melted into one.” In that moment, in the midst of the conflict, “into his harsh, unlovely world a new idea was born” (252). A “better plot,” as it were, presents itself to Annixter’s consciousness. As an “overwhelming sense of his own unworthiness suddenly [bears] down upon him with crushing force” (251), he decides to become “not what is,” yet *is* nonetheless.

When the wild captures Annixter in its expansive yet ponderous, smothering grip, he begins to see the worth in observing nobody at a great distance down the road, where he discovers that the “nobody” is himself in the body of the “somebody” who has, by following “darkness like a dream,” drowned under a haunting, “unreal” force at an “unnatural,” to use Dicken’s word, hour. The death that Annixter encounters in the wild is not arrived at due to a pursuit that culminates in a “womb-like” space, where he can feel safe, like an octopus in its den, hidden away from predatory suffering, pain, and oppression. Instead, using the same camouflaging tactics employed by the tyrannical railroad, the wild “contaminates” its course with the internal “objects” and “feelings” that are perceived as “bad.” In other words, although Reninger celebrates Behrman’s death as a justifiable death when he is drowned by the wheat in the hold of the ship, Reninger does not conjecture that the wheat—symbolically representing “goodness” in his analysis—has contaminated itself and so has merged with another force—symbolically represented by Behrman’s monstrous greed—that is not “good.” Yet wild consciousness perceives that the wild forces that transform are, many times, the very

forces of danger and death that inspire tricksters, like the railroad giants, to prey on unsuspecting victims. As Behrman is drowned by the wheat, so is Annixter drowned by the wheat. Annixter's death is no less real than Behrman's, for, as Norris writes, what at first seems "elusive, almost fanciful, unreal" to Annixter is "not fanciful" but is "real" (252). The force of the emerging wheat, using the cephalopodic techniques of the railroad by camouflaging itself and then vigorously and suddenly surfacing with a strong, encompassing grip on the land and on those present amidst its dark movement, is as violent and dangerous to Annixter as it is to Behrman. Both men are buried alive. The difference between the two experiences is that whereas Behrman remains an "octopus" chained or "railed" to his "den" at his death, Annixter's death is a "de-railing" or a movement away from the "den" and its garden. What Behrman does not fathom but Annixter begins to ascertain as he "drowns" is that the Basic Tactic of the wild is, at the core of one's consciousness, to keep moving.

Norris emphasizes movement particularly with the character most drawn to death, Vanamee. Vanamee possesses a "strange sixth sense" that heightens within his consciousness both a fear of death and a desire to conquer it (265). Having lost his beloved Angéle, who had died in childbirth, Vanamee cannot forget "that terror of many years ago—that prowler of the night, that strange, fearful figure with the unseen face, swooping in there from out the darkness, gone in an instant, yet leaving behind the trail and trace of death and of pollution" (265). On "the same night in which Annixter outwatched the stars, coming, at last, to himself" (266), Vanamee feels the "advance of the Vision" that materializes as the sleeping daughter of Angéle (267). Vanamee's vision reveals itself on the same night of the wheat's emergence, where a heavy silence

seemingly allows nothing to stir. However, Vanamee senses movement about him, even though “the earth was asleep,” when the moon rises. Indeed, the only movement that seems to occur on that soundless, still night is the advance of the moon. It is a “disk” in the sky that loses its distance when its “sheen,” a radiance that Norris describes as “new-risen”—suggestive of a new plot or occurrence in Vanamee’s life—reveals in Vanamee the ability to see, lucidly, that-which-is-not emerge out of invisibility. “[C]lear and distinct, against the disk of the moon,” Vanamee sees a vision of the young girl sleeping, and Norris writes: “She emerged from out of the invisible . . . poised motionless in the saffron sheen of the new-risen moon. She, a creation of sleep, was herself asleep. She, a dream, was herself dreaming. . . . Then, slowly she withdrew. Still asleep, her eyelids closed, she turned from him, descending the slope. She was gone” (267-68). The vision that greets Vanamee is connected with the rising of the moon, and just as the moon is always in motion, so does Vanamee’s vision continue to move, as if the moon has carried the vision of the young girl in its light and on its journey. In other words, Vanamee’s vision does not appear and then disappear as if commanded by some magic wand. Rather, it is more like an extension of the moon’s presence and radiance, appearing closer and larger as the moon journeys in its rising, and then trailing off into the distance as the moon progresses, becoming more distant and small and then continuing on its downward trek. The advancing and then receding vision that greets Vanamee and is kindled by the moon’s presence allows Vanamee, figuratively, to begin to move. Although he physically wanders the countryside, Vanamee has been “railed” by grief, unable to focus on much of anything else except his loss. He is driven by death, attempting, in a Lacanian or Freudian fashion, to recover both his lost love and a

previous state of contentment. He lies for many nights in a garden, attempting to coax life out of death—seeking to communicate in some way with the spirit of Angéle. Each night his attempts fail—until the night of the moon’s rising over the eastern horizon and the wheat’s emergence from its invisibility. Indeed, although Norris describes the night as still and tells us that “the earth was asleep,” we discover later that the earth has been far from asleep. Besides carrying a vision to Vanamee, the moon’s movement—seemingly the only motion in the landscape that night—is actually orchestrating and ushering in a great growth of wheat throughout the countryside.

What Norris does with the plot at this point is to shift the expected actualization of Vanamee’s desire. Vanamee does see a vision, but it is not the one he has been anticipating. Instead of denying Vanamee his vision, and instead of providing him with the experience he craves, Norris accommodates Vanamee’s desire by approaching it, as it were, from the side. Vanamee does not see a ghost of Angéle, rising in a perpendicular manner from out of the earth or descending vertically from the sky, as if being lowered from some rope in the heavens. Angéle remains buried in the earth. Rather, Vanamee has a vision of the advancing, sleeping form of Angéle’s daughter approaching and retreating with the moon, and, with the invisible wheat growing about him and surrounding him unawares, he is drawn into a transformative state of consciousness—for he is able to perceive a saffron-radiant or moonlit vision, which later inspires a perspective that abandons his intense focus on loss, and so, under a moon-inspired consciousness, he is released from his crippling mental inertia.

Although the gravitational force of the sun pulls on the earth with substantial power, its force is only forty-six percent of the moon’s gravitational force, making the

moon, Kim Long explains, “the most important factor for tides” (57). While the moon’s gravitational force pulls on the waters of the earth, the earth’s gravitational force pulls down at the same time. Tidal waters rise “because of a net balance of forces—the Earth pulling in and the Moon pulling out—averaging more in favor of the Moon. It does not happen in a perpendicular direction, however, but shows up where the external influence has a greater effect, from the side” (57). Such sideways “attraction,” Long clarifies, is scientifically described as “tractive force”:

In a simplistic sense, it is the same phenomenon experienced if a person attempted to pick up a heavy object from above. In order to lift the object, it requires enough strength to completely overcome the weight, or mass, of the object. But if a person pulls the same object from the side, sliding it over a surface, for example, it takes much less force to move it.
(57)

The movement of the tides, then, occurs due to “tractive forces,” which are “created by the pull of the Moon’s gravity around the sides of the Earth” (Long 58). Using a Dickensian concept, we might say, then, that “every drop of water in the great ocean [with] its howling voice” is affected by sideways maneuverings—tugged at by forces that are disposed, wisely, to use less energy by shifting rather than by lifting, by sliding over rather than by overcoming.

What Freudian and Lacanian explications of the death drive do is describe ways in which consciousness seeks to *overcome* the inevitable. Vanamee seeks to overcome the “terror” of “that strange fearful figure with the unseen face” by attempting to communicate with the spirit of Angéle and so recover loss and reestablish that secure

mental and emotional harbor of safety that he knew before the “trail and trace of death” invaded his life. But Norris does not have Vanamee *overcome* the weight that the “prowler of the night” brings, either by lifting him out of the “prowler’s” grasp or by affording Vanamee the ability to lift Angéle from the grave. In fact, the growing wheat becomes the unseen “prowler” of the night, rising stealthily in the darkness around Vanamee as he is distracted by and pulled into his vision of Angéle’s daughter. The two together—that is, the wheat and the moon-conveyed vision—merge in Vanamee’s consciousness, not showing him how to overcome death, but revealing a means of communication that mysteriously assists him in understanding death’s presence in his life. Sometime after his vision of Angéle’s daughter descends the slope and disappears, Vanamee decides to walk out of the garden (or the “den,” we might say) that represents his dormant state of consciousness. As he walks, and after some time, the sun begins to rise, and he pauses and then commences to see, as if being pulled by a tractive force, not from a perspective that focuses on drawing up a force from below, but from a sideways perspective that observes a larger, “horizontal” power. All of a sudden, Vanamee can see the wheat: “In the night it had come up. It was there, everywhere, from margin to margin of the horizon” (269). Although wheat grows from the ground up, Norris describes Vanamee’s newfound viewpoint as one which understands how to slide an imposing weight over a surface, not overcoming it, but moving it along in such a way that less energy is required to shift its mass. What Vanamee comprehends about the wheat is that it is both death and life—neither aspect being able to exist without the other. “So the seed had died,” he thinks to himself. “So died Angéle” (269). The seed dies so that the plant may emerge and grow to produce seeds that will be sown to die so

that new plants may surface. No plant springs up without the loss of the seed. And no new seed is exposed without first being enshrouded in mysterious darkness. Norris writes that the wheat, “called forth from out the darkness, from out the grip of the earth, of the grave, from out corruption, rose triumphant into light and life” (269). But as the wheat rises vertically from the earth, its expansiveness catches the eye “from margin to margin,” seeming to be under the attraction of a force that tugs at it from the sides, revealing its more transversal, more tidal, more wild movements.

Before he is aware of the wheat’s emergence, Vanamee attempts to understand his vision and reasons that “[d]eath was overcome. The grave vanquished; . . . all things were immortal [except] evil; all things eternal but grief” (268). In his reasoning, Vanamee attempts to order and organize the world like the child whom Riviere describes as being compelled “to put and keep things right.” Vanamee splits the “good” from the “bad” so that he can attempt to keep the “bad” out. Yet his reasoning provides him with no new or transformative insight. However, when he suddenly sees the wheat, broadening outward in its horizontal expanse, he “fling[s] up his arms [and] utter[s] a great cry” (269). Just as Annixter has been living the life of a railroad-octopus before he encounters the wheat, so has Vanamee been compelled by the “railroad” drive that hurtles along with the assumption that the rational preferences for stability, smooth progress, balance, and ultimate survival are the goals—the desired results—of living. When Vanamee recognizes that forces—such as those orchestrated by the moon, whether it happens to be visible and full or crescent, or whether it is “new” and invisible—can and do shift and work in the dark underground without human observation and sanction, and without rational, limited views of the definition of survival

shaping those forces, he shifts consciousness. He celebrates. The mystery of mystery, in effect, is “revealed” to him, and the burden of death—or of the “bad”—is released as a non-burden, as an accepted mystery in the cycle of life. Under the “saffron sheen of the new-risen moon,” Vanamee becomes, as it were, the emerging wheat itself—the element of cultivation in a figurative tidal basin, where terrestrial tides broaden his world. As the moon rises on that seemingly still night, pulling up the wheat from its hidden spaces, so does Vanamee rise—or, more to the point, begin to move or shift his perspective. The vision the moon brings him is not the one he has desired, but it inspires his understanding of the growth of a seed. Then, when he sees the wheat that had been emerging with the rising and falling moon, it is as if he can feel the earth shifting under his feet, for he finds that he can sense the presence of invisible, ample, varied communications taking place, and he discovers that he is becoming a part of the many rhythms that have gone, for so many years of his life, undetected. The moon’s forces upon both the water and the land of our earth, “play,” as Paul Katzeff in *Full Moons* (1981) points out, the “earth’s surface like an accordion, pushing and pulling,” for instance, “Europe and North America together and apart so that sometimes the Empire State Building is 63 feet closer to the Eiffel Tower than usual” (102). Although Katzeff does not elaborate further upon his accordion metaphor, that the earth’s surface—both water and rock—is “played” by the moon suggests music and dance, “tractive” motion, and a certain celebration. When Vanamee utters “a great cry,” he awakens to a state that Friedrich Nietzsche describes as “the nature of the Dionysian,” where not one, but many voices cry out along with his one exclamation.

In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1886), Nietzsche criticizes the “Apollinian” states of mind that reject the Dionysian music that excites both “awe and terror” (40). Dionysian music is a “collective release,” he writes, “of all the symbolic powers,” and can be understood only by those who are responsive to its rhythmic movements. “With what astonishment,” he indicates, “must the Apollinian Greek have beheld [the votary of Dionysus]! With an astonishment that was all the greater the more it was mingled with the shuddering suspicion that all this was actually not so very alien to him after all, in fact, that it was only his Apollinian consciousness which, like a veil, hid this Dionysian world from his vision” (41). Under the Dionysian impulse, consciousness acquires a different sort of “health” than that which is delineated as “health” by rational-minded, “enlightened” thinkers, who follow the intelligence afforded to “sunlike” perceptions and “measured restraint” (35). For Apollinians, the “dream image must not overstep” its boundaries, and the “calm of the sculptor god” must prevail, which eliminates the potentiality for dancing multitudes. However, when Dionysian emotions are roused, “singing and dancing crowds, ever increasing in number, whirl themselves from place to place.” Unfortunately, Nietzsche points out:

There are some who, from obtuseness or lack of experience, turn away from such phenomenon as from “folk-diseases,” with contempt or pity born of the consciousness of their own “healthy-mindedness.” But of course such poor wretches have no idea how corpselike and ghostly their so-called “healthy-mindedness” looks when the glowing life of the Dionysian revelers roars past them. (36-37)

The suggestion is that life and light has been drained from the Apollinians, and their bodies reveal their thoughts as still—as if only able to reflect the “fire or the light of the moon,” a light that M. Esther Harding describes as the “fertilizing power of the moon” (129-30). In *Woman’s Mysteries: Ancient and Modern* (1990), Harding indicates that the Moon Goddess has been, in both ancient and modern times, worshipped as a “sacred fire,” symbolizing the “spark or power of fertility” (131). The connections between the Moon Goddess and Dionysus are many and varied—derived from transformative myths—and although Nietzsche refers to Dionysus as a male god, his representation as male cannot be dissociated from the female principle.

Whenever one is involved in a study of Greek religion, William Allan indicates in “Religious Syncretism” (2004), one becomes embroiled in the “analysis of a ritual and cultic complex that is continuously, and in various ways, syncretistic, that is, a system which is predicated upon, and pervaded by, influences from ‘foreign,’ or non-established, religious groups and practices” (115). Thus, the fifth-century tragedian, Diogenes of Athens, provides descriptions that point to “the syncretism of the myths of Dionysus and Cybele, and perhaps even to a dramatic Chorus of Cybele’s devotees” (131). Cybele’s worshippers not only showed veneration through song and poetic expression, but, when she was worshipped by the Phrygians in the second millennium B.C.E., she was revered through the arts of spinning, weaving, earthenware formulation and design, metallurgy, and dance. The Greek Cybele was the principal deity of Phrygia—in ancient Anatolia, known today as Turkey—except that she was called, as Renée Cox explains,

the Great Goddess Kubile, Kubaba or Matar Kubile, Mother of all deities,

humans and beasts, Goddess of life, death and regeneration. Kubile was called Cybele or Cybebe by the Greeks, Kybele by the Lydians, Mater Deum Magna Ideae by the Romans, and was also worshipped in Lycia, Thrace, Syria, Phoenecia, North Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Germany. . . . The Goddess is both one and many . . . in her various manifestations of Maiden, Mother or Crone. . . . In some manifestations the Goddess is the earth or the universe itself, space and time and all within it, . . . beyond male and female, beyond all dualities . . . [and] is also seen and associated with birds, serpents or the moon. (395)

Although Apollo was the “son of the Moon Goddess Artemis,” he subsequently “appropriated her lyre, . . . laid claim to her powers of prophecy, music, poetry, magic and healing, . . . slew the Serpent who guarded the shrine at Delphi, the shrine that belonged to the earth Goddess Gaia or Rhea, and confiscated the shrine’s oracle for himself” (397). In other words, in his appropriation of the powers of the Moon Goddess, Apollo eclipsed and diminished those aspects that did not affirm and aggrandize the exemplary, abstract forms of beauty, balance, symmetry, tabulation, and light that are associated with rational, measured expression. Renouncing disentanglement with and alienation from the Goddess and instead becoming her consort, Dionysus, on the other hand, aligned himself both with the earth and the moon. Harding indicates that Cybele is “Goddess of Earth and Goddess of the Moon,” and, as such, represents the “ever-changing, ever-renewing character of both moon and snake”—a character united in its connections “with the underworld and with chthonic powers” (98, 53). Thus, expression inspired by Dionysus, although linked—by association with the Earth and Moon

Goddess—with the underworld and with death, nevertheless “represents the process of life,” as Cox clarifies, and of “breaking down barriers and ignoring restraints. . . . Dionysian art embraces existence in all its darkness and horror. It is constantly changing, and takes the form of music and tragedy” in its demonstration of the masteries of the Goddess: “great strength, erotic power, visions, the gift of prophecy, the power of healing, and collectivity” (Cox 396-97). In the myths of the moon, writes Harding, the “rhythm of creation and destruction, which together form the life process, are accepted as the basis for immortality,” rather than “an unending life in a golden city, where . . . everything continues for ever and ever, changeless . . . in a state of perfection.” Alternatively, the “immortality promised by the moon . . . is an ever-renewed life like the moon’s own, in which diminishing and dying are as essential as becoming” (212-13). When Vanamee discovers that he has been sustained by the “tractive motion” that influences and then shifts his consciousness, he utters the “great cry” that announces that he, being caught up by the forces of the wild, is ready to become.

Signifying the “spark or power of fertility,” the Moon Goddess, worshipped as a “sacred fire” (Harding 131), is emblematic of inspiration—insight that paradoxically materializes or surfaces from out of “the churning of the cosmic ocean,” where the waters of wisdom and comprehension do not quench, but enkindle awakening fires (Harding 226). As revels by worshippers of Dionysus are associated with drunkenness, excess, seizures, and mystical, wild dancing, so, too, are the ecstasies and transports arrived at through moon-quicken inspiration aligned with non-rational, unbalanced, delusional vision. When the surging forces that “play” the waters enkindle rather than quench fire—when they materially push together and pull apart Europe and North

America, accordion-like—then a certain “deterritorialization” takes place. Vanamee’s “great cry” occurs after a rhythmic force of the earth and a non-rational, inspired vision shift his perception of what it means to become. His “territorial” conceptions embrace, as it were, a new song—a new call—that he had yet to hear before that moonlit night.

Referring not to the “wild” nor to the forces of the moon, the theories of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the psychoanalyst and political activist Félix Guattari nonetheless are relevant and invaluable in terms of addressing and envisaging wild, “tractive” forces and their accordion-like movements. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the companion volume to *Anti-Oedipus* (1972)—where the two volumes together comprise *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*—Deleuze and Guattari use concepts tied to song and rhythm and to the underground, botanical, rhizomatic growth of tubers and bulbs in order to advance theories involving “extended definitions of terms,” as Ronald Bogue describes it, that pay attention to unstable identities, deterritorialization, schizoanalysis, and a philosophy of desiring-production.⁹ Deleuze and Guattari eschew psychoanalysis and the “imperialism of Oedipus” in favor of a deterritorializing theory of disjunction, which “does not closet itself inside its own terms” (*Anti-Oedipus* 58, 76-77). “Oedipus informs us,” they clarify, that “if you don’t follow the lines of differentiation daddy-mommy-me, and the exclusive alternatives that delineate them, you will fall into the black night of the undifferentiated, . . . into the neurotic night of imaginary identifications.” Because Oedipus can be applied to anything, it is “at the end, not at the beginning,” and so it has nothing to do with becoming (*Anti-Oedipus* 78-79, 101). In fact, it is more closely aligned with death and with territoriality, where the psychoanalyst uses the “perverted” artifice of the exalted couch—“a little island with its

commander”—to provide an artificial cure that, revived in the unconscious, tells us that “we are still pious.” Schizoanalysis, on the other hand, is movement that discovers “not a promised and pre-existing land, but a world created in the process of its tendency, its coming undone, its deterritorialization” (*Anti-Oedipus* 306, 322). The task of schizoanalysis is thus to destroy Oedipus and “the illusion of the ego,” and its method is that of destruction—“a whole scouring of the unconscious” and an extirpation of the “private and subjugated territoriality of European man.” Its aim is to “de-oedipalize the unconscious in order to reach . . . those regions of the orphan unconscious . . . where the problem of Oedipus can no longer even be raised” (*Anti-Oedipus* 311, 102, 81-81).

Whereas *Anti-Oedipus* is focused on oppositional arguments that impugn psychoanalysis, *A Thousand Plateaus* describes the positive functions of schizoanalysis. The movement that Deleuze and Guattari seek to describe in *A Thousand Plateaus* is the movement of “offshoots,” which they call the “rhizome.” Rhizomatic direction in motion, however, is not to be confused with root systems and their hierarchies. Roots are the foundations of trees, and the “principle of roots-trees” reflects the problem of Oedipus—of the family, of genealogy, of the “radicle solution, the structure of Power.” The “canal-rhizome,” on the other hand, “overturns the model” and operates as variations that are “put on the map”—that is, not already found on the map—and are “detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable.” The rhizome is “antigenealogy,” is nonhierarchical, and moves without an “organizing memory” (*Plateaus* 17, 20-21). The concept of rhizomatic memory, Rosi Braidotti explains, is related to becoming:

This intensive, zigzagging, cyclical and messy type of remembering does not even aim at retrieving information in a linear manner. . . . It functions

rather as a deterritorializing agency that . . . disconnects the subject from his/her identification with logocentric consciousness, and it shifts the emphasis from Being to becoming. (187)

Vanamee's consciousness, we might say, does shift from "Being to becoming" when he awakens from his visionary experience and recognizes that he has been enveloped within the wheat's growth. The "deterritorialization" that Vanamee becomes aware of is a recognition of a consciousness that abandons the driving force of the consumptive desire for death—that is, either for a termination or for some sort of resolution or "cure" in terms of loss. To use Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions, Vanamee abandons the "territory" of Oedipus and the "illusion of the ego" that suggests that a junction—a "closet[ing of] itself inside its own terms"—and a non-orphaned consciousness are the integrated formulations that lead to health. Indeed, when Vanamee utters his "great cry," he could be viewed as a schizo leaping onto an "offshoot" and becoming in consciousness like the "great artist" that Deleuze and Guattari celebrate—the sort of thinker and creator who "scales the schizophrenic wall and reaches the land of the unknown, where he no longer belongs to any time, any milieu, any school." To belong nowhere, of course, is a state that is generally linked to madness. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari point out that according to Proust, "[m]ore [so] than vice, . . . it is madness and its innocence that disturb us" (*Anti-Oedipus* 69). The "orphan consciousness"—not connected to the genealogy of the "tree," lacking a uniform memory, and "zigzagging, cyclical, and messy"—is a dark consciousness in that it cannot be placed or cured. Yet, those who possess an enlightened cognizance of their "healthy-mindedness"—that is, those who possess genealogical connections and a memory of the "tree" they are rooted

in—are described by Nietzsche as thinkers who are “corpse-like wretches” and who operate under the mode of an unhealthy, deathlike “contempt” and “pity” in their rejection of the “folk-diseases” spread by Dionysian revelry.

The problem that a consciousness dominated by “Apollo” or by “Oedipus” encounters in its consideration of the Dionysian—of the Kubilian, of the Cybelean, of the chthonic—is the problem not only of the orphan, but, as Proust illustrates it, of the innocence of madness. Because the Symbolic order’s “rational” view of Dionysian celebration tends to equate mad revelry with vice, its association with disease and non-health remains strong in the Apollinian mind.¹⁰ But Nietzsche links *Apollinian* thinking with death—or with corpse-like near-death. That is, the death drive, like a speeding train, remains secure upon the rails that lead to an ultimate goal or termination—unable to be lifted, as is the rhizome, off the mapped territory it has defined for itself. Such “security”—such genealogy, such non-modifiability—in rejecting the Dionysian, rejects not only madness, but the innocence of madness that is comfortable with the orphan-state.

Proust’s connection of innocence with madness focuses on its disturbing association, but writers of an earlier age—the age we have termed “Romantic”—heard a different sort of underground rhythm that interfused the disturbing aspects—that is, the split condition of the two concepts of “innocence” and “madness”—into a new alliance to be considered as part of becoming, rather than to be separated as antagonistic states of being and placed at distances from one another. Deleuze and Guattari point out that, as opposed to classicism and the age we describe as baroque, Romanticism sought new “assemblages” that created close propinquities and atypical kinships with “danger,

madness, limits: romanticism did not go further than baroque classicism; it went elsewhere, with other givens and other vectors” (*Thousand Plateaus* 340). Such “other givens,” they explain, involve a breakdown in pre- and post-Romantic conceptions of territory. Although Romantic territory “is haunted by a solitary voice,” that voice is a “subjective vocal element” that is subsumed under “an orchestral and instrumental whole” or a “deeper singing,” transmitted by the “pull of the Ground.” Deleuze and Guattari point out that “as an intense point in depth or in projection,” the earth “is always in disjunction with the territory; and the territory as the condition of ‘knowledge’ . . . is always in disjunction with the earth” (*Thousand Plateaus* 339-41). Thus, a male wren “takes possession of his territory and produces a ‘music box refrain’ as a warning to possible intruders” and as an invitation to an arriving female (323). In a territory, two parts are involved in the refrain, where each part seeks an answer or response. However, the Romantic artist—confronting the “subterranean, the groundless” and drawn by the “pull of the Ground”—sings a different sort of refrain since the addressee of the song is not solely a social counterpart. The Romantic refrain

addresses itself to a deeper singing that founds it, but also strikes against it and sweeps it away, making it ring dissonant. The refrain is indissolubly constituted by the territorial song and the singing of the earth that rises to drown it out. Thus . . . there are two coexistent motifs, one melodic, evoking the assemblages of the bird, the other rhythmic, evoking the deep breathing of the earth. Mahler says that the singing of the birds, the color of the flowers, and the fragrance of the forest are not enough to make Nature, that the god Dionysus and the great Pan are needed.

(Thousand Plateaus 339)

The Romantic solitary voice is therefore more “subterranean” than “territorial” and does not require an answering voice or response since it is “mediatized by the earth” and, “evoking the deep, eternal breathing of the earth,” it “rises up from the bowels of the earth and is apt to return there” (*Thousand Plateaus* 339-40). Although the Romantic voice may seem to disappear in the orchestral song of the earth, it, in its becoming, is not absent. Rather, inspired by the earth’s pull, it moves across territories, resonating with the deep, subterranean rhythms that are disjunctive or dissonant with surface terrestrial, territorial responses.

In contradistinction to the Romantic voice, the modern or post-Romantic voice, say Deleuze and Guattari, is not concerned with the deep forces of the earth but instead “opens onto the forces of the Cosmos,” which are molecular. The “Cosmos refrain” is *not* indissoluble, as is the Romantic refrain, and it deterritorializes by becoming so refined that it dissolves. The flight of the rhizome, escaping reterritorializations, or overcodings, is at its best, then, when it is able to “deterritorialize the refrain” itself. “Produce a deterritorialized refrain as the final end of music,” Deleuze and Guattari advise, and “release it in the Cosmos—that is more important than building a new system” (*Thousand Plateaus* 342, 347-50). In other words, the Cosmos refrain, disseminating itself not only into the galaxy, but into and through galaxy beyond galaxy, does not sing about genealogies or families, but creates and escapes through points of exit that open up not to the sun, nor to the moon, but to micro or molecular states of becoming outside of any systems that are defined by or hindered by gravity. Inauspiciously, Oedipus therefore continues to inform psychoanalysis because its “cure”

provides answers that keep a subject from falling “into the black night of the undifferentiated, . . . into the neurotic night of imaginary identifications.”

Although the rhizome provides an apt illustration for the wild in that its movements are not “railed” to the “map” of the Symbolic order, Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of the rhizome departs from wild consciousness in that their theory is dramatically driven by escape. Overcoded systems must not only be abandoned but destroyed, according to Deleuze and Guattari, so that the subject may be disconnected from, as Braidotti expresses it, “logocentric consciousness,” and so the emphasis may be diverted from “Being to becoming.” Yet while it is rhizomatic in that it abandons the “map” of logocentric consciousness, wild consciousness is not driven, as is the Cosmos refrain, by a search for points of exit that escape the earth and its forces. Rather, attentive to the subterranean rhythms that the solitary Romantic voice responded to, wild thinking, inspired by the “pull of the Ground,” falls “into the black night of the undifferentiated” by *moving through* the very overcodings it has abandoned. Not necessarily schizophrenic, wild consciousness approaches “danger, madness, limits” much like the Romantic voice—by disappearing into the model that it overturns and so appearing to be “drowned out” while, at the same time, remaining indissoluble—the “I am, nonetheless” in the midst of being the “I am not what is.” By “sheer force of *not*,” wild consciousness knows that it *is*, and it knows, as well, that becoming, as part of Being, involves falling.

Instead of a “Cosmos refrain,” it is perhaps better to describe wild consciousness as the sort of thought that resonates with a “Moon refrain.” In his discussion about the historical theories that have attempted to explain the origins of the moon, Dana

Mackenzie remarks that in terms of the moon's birth plot, "many of the details of the story are still uncertain" (6). "Where the moon is concerned," he writes, "hard facts have often been in shorter supply than entertaining theories," and part of the reason why the theories are entertaining is that the moon resists full, complete, rational comprehensibility (17). Physicists and astronomers who have studied the moon "for its own sake," rather than as part of other investigations of the cosmos, Mackenzie says, are thinkers who are "moonstruck," and so he calls them "'loonies'—in the friendliest possible way, of course." Such thinkers are the "heroes" in his tale, he writes, for the moon possesses a "shadowy air" that evades clear sense, and so theoretical speculations about its nature require courage (28). Many early theories concerned with the physics of light, for instance, would make sense if only the moon were a flat disk with a mirrorlike glossiness. However, Mackenzie points out that Plutarch, through his narrator Lamprias in *De Facie (On the Face)*, explains that the moon is "diffusely lit," where "diffusions of light . . . are multifariously reflected and intertwined and the refulgence itself combines with itself, coming to us, as it were, from many mirrors." Mackenzie points out that Lamprias/Plutarch "is right, although a modern-day scientist would say it more concisely: the light from the Sun is scattered from the Moon's surface" (29). The "many mirrors" of the moon, reflecting light through intertwinement and combining its own radiance with itself as it disperses it, reinterprets light itself. It is no wonder, then, that our earth-bound perceptions about its light have been mixed. While the moon has served as a guide "for life on Earth," it has also been regarded as a "harbinger of doom." It has assisted, explains Mackenzie, as "a torch for travelers, a timekeeper for farmers, a location finder for mariners." Yet it has also inspired fear and dread by "blocking the

Sun during a solar eclipse, or turning bloodred during a lunar eclipse.” Sometimes the moon “seems close enough to be part of the Earth, at other times it seems as remote as the cosmos.” It is “at once familiar yet mysterious, distant yet near, constant yet ever changing” (1). Its “many mirrors” reveal that it affects and is affected by the earth and its forces while they also reveal that the moon has its own outward-expanding agenda. At the same time that it is drawn to us, it is moving away from us.

The moon, Mackenzie explains, is moving outward—away from the earth. The tidal forces that cause the earth to “bulge” out—as if being pulled into the shape of a football—do not “make the Moon go faster” around the earth, but instead “make it retreat from Earth.” In fact, “tidal friction” has been causing the moon’s orbit to expand. Based on experiments from the *Apollo 11, 14, and 15* missions, scientists know that “the Moon is receding from Earth at a rate of 3.82 centimeters (about an inch and a half) per year” (78, 86). Yet at the same time that it is withdrawing from the earth, the moon, affected by the earth’s gravitational pull, is falling towards us. Just like Newton’s apple, the moon “is freely falling under Earth’s gravity.” However, Mackenzie points out, “there is a big difference between *falling* and *landing*. The Moon is always in a state of free fall, always bending its course toward Earth, but it will never land. . . . Though the distinction between falling and landing seems simple, one might argue that this is precisely what confounded Aristotle, Kepler, and centuries of physicists between them” (55, 58; emphases in original). The rational mind understands freefall to an extent. It is exhilarating to freefall in the sky and float on air, but such exhilaration turns to terror if the apparatus that eases the fall before landing malfunctions or is absent. Moreover, to think—without contradiction—of freefalling as a means of both attraction towards and a

pulling away from a subject is to thwart reason. The rational mind conceives that a falling object must, at some time or another, land. Wild consciousness, however, inspired by the “pull of the Ground” that occurs due to tidal friction and the influence of the moon’s forces or “refrain,” willingly freefalls, letting go of established, known experience, and so reinterprets that prevailing experience—following, as it were, moonlike reflectivity in its act of diffusing and reinterpreting light.

The consideration of the un“lawful,” then, requires a consciousness that does not seek to destroy the law—as Deleuze and Guattari promote—but instead plays with or interprets the law in an unconventional way, perceiving, for instance, that forces may wield a certain gravitational pull that draws one’s gaze outward so that one might discover inward recognition. Wild texts follow, we might say, the upward-tugging gravitational forces of the moon—forces that are stronger in their transformative or shaping powers than the distant sun’s.¹¹ Mackenzie points out, for instance, that “[b]oth Descartes and Kepler were under the impression that a planet [such as the earth] moving in a circle (or an ellipse) needs a force to push it in the direction it is moving. That is wrong, by exactly ninety degrees. The planets do not need any force to propel them *forward*, but they do require a force to pull them *inward*, toward the Sun” (56; emphases in original). The force that pulls them inward, of course, is the force of gravity that pulls an apple to the ground—the same force that keeps the moon in orbit so that it does *not* escape into the cosmos. Nevertheless, the moon *is* expanding outward and away from the earth, even as it is pulled in by the earth and as it influences the shaping of the earth. The same attractive forces from the moon’s gravitational pull that generate tidal movement on the earth also mold the earth itself by creating “bulges in the solid body of

Earth.” Mackenzie remarks that one might compare the earth “to a giant glob of silly putty, which only grudgingly changes its shape when you squeeze and knead it” (78). Wild forces that emerge in narrative, kindred to the moon’s forces, mold consciousness by drawing that which would move forward inward, even while the wild forces themselves move forward or outward in the process of shaping and transforming the minds that draw them in. When one is, as it were, “drawn in” by such forces, one begins to reach a certain level of consciousness that transcends the laws of gravity—which tend to be weighty and unplayful—as they are discerned from the perspective of being “railed” to the earth. As a moving subject-in-process, falling without landing, one learns to appreciate different plots as they are ambiguously revealed through scattered diffusion and the “shadowy air” that eludes unclouded sense.

Consciousness that is in a state of freefall is thus not concerned with “landing” or with terminations. As Mackenzie points out, “there is a big difference between *falling* and *landing*.” Though the moon “is always bending its course toward Earth,” it will never land. Though Vanamee bends his course towards personal will and the filling of a loss, he learns, when the wheat emerges, that he will never “land” in a place or in a space that completely fills gaps or that is defined by non-loss. Yet he is delighted in his newfound consciousness, which allows him to look outward, even while he is drawn downward and inward by the refrain of the earth—a resonating wheat-whispering refrain that drowns out his solitary voice even as his voice—expressed through a “great cry”—garners strength by joining in with the refrain’s orchestration. It is no mere coincidence that Vanamee’s vision—a dream-like apparition of a sleeping child in the state of dreaming—withdraws by *descending* the slope. Bending its course toward Vanamee’s

stalled consciousness, Vanamee's vision impels him to learn to fall without landing, and so Norris, through Vanamee, exposes, under the "saffron sheen of the new-risen moon," the diffuse, instrumental intrigues of the wild.

Yet while Vanamee and Annixter experience wild encounters, Norris's protagonist, Presley, remains deaf to any wild intimations that might cause the wild to become accessible to his consciousness. Presley's main intention in travelling to California is to write the "Song of the West." Such a song, he conceives,

should embrace . . . the voice of an entire people, wherein all people should be included, . . . gathered together, swept together, welded and riven together in one single, mighty song, the Song of the West. That is what he dreamed, while things without names—thoughts for which no man had yet invented words, terrible formless shapes, vague figures, colossal, monstrous, distorted—whirled at a gallop through his imagination. (Norris 8)

At the beginning of his journey, Presley, rather like Stevenson's galloping rider in "Windy Nights," appears to be on the verge of hearing the call of the wild. Directionless in terms of the language of the Symbolic order, Presley wishes to express the unformulated words that "gallop through his imagination"—formless, "monstrous," and "distorted." He is at the wild point of beginning to lose his world—that is, the world that the habitus defines and internalizes—and of discovering moonlike freefalling—of transcending the laws of gravity while simultaneously mingling with those laws—but, instead, Presley falls and lands, like Newton's apple, and his "Song of the West" is never conceived. Drawn into the ranchers' battles against the railroad-as-octopus, Presley

writes a poem called “The Toilers,” which is published in a collection of his poetry, *The Toilers and Other Poems* (316). Instead of “sweeping” or merging together the nameless, or the moving semiotic, within the Symbolic language of a mighty Song of the West, Presley ends up focusing merely on the social order—that is, on the territorial song and its overcodings. His expression becomes the “wren’s” territorial voice, seeking a response from the “intruder”—the challenger and predator that survives and flourishes due to the work of the oppressed—and receiving that response by being caught in the toils of the “octopus,” or in the red tape of the regulations of the railroad. In other words, Presley’s voice does not seek the groundless “pull of the Ground” and does not find expression in the wild refrain since his focus on the Symbolic order becomes his sole focus; he never seeks to become the “necessary lunatic” and allow the wild to become accessible. In his journal, Presley writes: “Ah, you people, blind, bound, tricked, betrayed, can you not see . . . how the monsters have plundered your treasures? . . . You give your babies to Moloch for the loaf of bread you have kneaded yourselves” (370). He thinks of the children who will carry on the next generation after the “affair at the ditch” and laments how “another baby girl was to be started in life, through no fault of hers, fearfully handicapped, weighed down at the threshold of existence with a load of disgrace” (434). So Presley finds a point of exit and leaves California and the ranchers, unable to perceive that in the “not what is” there still *is*, nonetheless, a subject-in-process. Presley succumbs to the split consciousness that dominates the Symbolic order. He acknowledges and rails against the death drive that pulls that consciousness forward, without acknowledging that other forces exist that pull inward while at the same time move, as does the moon, outward, and so merge and intertwine together oppositional

perspectives. Presley does not reach that “moon-effected” level of consciousness that is able to converse with, within, and through a refrain that evokes “the deep, eternal breathing of the earth” as it is “played,” accordion-like, by gravitational—or, we might say, Dionysian and Cybelean—rotations, protractions, expansions, and attractions.

When Presley, at the end of Norris’s novel, rationalizes that “Annixter dies, but in a far-distant corner of the world a thousand lives are saved,” he feebly adopts a notion of “Truth” that does not convincingly assist in amending the overwhelmingly despondent conceptions he has formed about injustice and oppression in the social order (448). He splits the concepts of good and evil and resolves to believe that good will always prevail, but he gives up on his *Song of the West* and on the West in general and embarks on “a long ocean voyage”—leaving the land, the ranchers, the ranchers’ children, and the railroad-monster behind (432). For Presley, no song could be inspired by “another baby girl” born under the weight of oppression, and the railroad-as-octopus smothers, for him, any inkling of a wild refrain he once dreamed about. Solely adopting the “sun” and a belief in its goodness, Presley never learns to value the “wild night” that once galloped through his imagination.

What Presley misses is the courage and “madness” to attempt to freefall in such a leisurely manner as to make unusual associations among concepts—especially, for instance, between notions of the dualistic, antagonistic conceptions of “good” and “evil.” He does not attempt to hold a conversation outside of the Symbolic order—outside of socially defined communications. In her analysis of a poem by the Romantic writer Ann Yearsley, a contemporary of William Wordsworth, Madeleine Kahn illustrates how Yearsley’s poetic impulse is engendered by a “conversational model” that involves more

than an expression of meaning designed to convey a poet's state of mind to his readers. It is a model that Presley never quite grasps. In her poem, "Night: To Stella," Yearsley, says Kahn,

does not simply confer meaning. At times it seems meaning is already inherent in the experience—the poet's or the others'—that the poet contemplates. Indeed, the poet may be inadequate to the task of expressing that meaning, even when it is the mingling of [aspects] . . . of her own experience. The poet converses with the material instead of mastering it, even when that material is her own experience. (145)

Kahn explains that meaning in Yearsley's poem is not provided in a hierarchical fashion—that is, from the poet, who possesses the meaning, to the reader, who is meant to apprehend it. Rather, her "conversational model" involves a sort of communication that does not seek a "wren-like," territorial response from the Symbolic order but instead is involved in "mingling" her own experiences, where meaning is somehow "already inherent" in them. The conversational mingling of material is what provides "better plots" that incorporate multiplicities of associations, where the laws of dualistic thinking can be transcended and where tractive, as opposed to perpendicular or hierarchical, rhythms can be acknowledged and played without antagonism or contradiction. Writers who think wildly demonstrate—many times in a playful manner—that, simply, there is value in the conversations we have outside of the Symbolic order. The mastery of material, of loss, of death is not always within our best interests. What may be more worthwhile is the capacity to wonder. To wonder about and then discover in oneself the ability to see nobody at a great distance down the road is not an inconsequential musing

or trivial observational skill. Forms of matter that are visible and forms of matter that are not are within our experience, as are millions of other forms. Anthony Weston points out, for example, that bacteria, very much a part of our everyday experience yet invisible to the naked eye, weighs more than we think. “Subterranean bacteria,” he explains, “and other forms of life feeding on the planet’s chemical and thermal energy . . . actually outweigh all life on the surface” (54). In addition “wholly unbelievable life forms” emerge from the earth and seas as if to confound any “mastery” we have established in defining our world and the organisms we share it with. The “coelacanth, a prehistoric, dragon-like fish, believed extinct for seventy million years,” writes Weston, was “rediscovered off South Africa in 1938, [and] brought to attention by an eccentric British scientist—a story that sounds like something out of a Gary Larson cartoon, except that it is true.” And dinosaurs “are not extinct either, by the way: it turns out they evolved into birds. . . . What new coelacanths must still swim below the waters we think we know so well!” (52).¹² When we consider the wild, we recognize how many new plots have yet to be pondered and written.

The “new plot” that emerges in Nesbit’s *The Railway Children*—as opposed to Norris’s plot in *The Octopus*, constructed so as to raise questions about the ills of social, political, and economic oppression—demonstrates a wild agenda in that the children and mother in Nesbit’s novel creatively name and rename the injustices that define their dismantled economic condition. They exercise another language that is similar to, but different enough from the language of the Symbolic order. That is because Nesbit abruptly removes the representation of the Symbolic order—the father—from her story and so is able to illustrate both the female principle and a child-minded aesthetic

working together in exile away from, as well as in response to, the structural existence they quit. In Nesbit's novel, set in England, the train and the oppression it represents is just as smothering as Norris's depiction of the Southern Pacific Railroad in California. The children's initial experience of the railway as the story commences is a trip they take into the night that transfers them away from their suburban villa and deposits them in the country—away from the comfort, wealth, and social interactions that did and would have continued to define their existence had they not been forced to move. Nesbit deliberately makes the political and judiciary aspects of her story nebulous in order to convey a child's indeterminate comprehension of the corrupt social world. So, Mother does not explain why Father has been taken away, nor why they must live in a house with three chimneys in the country and not use the coal in those chimneys, except to explain that their circumstances have changed and that coal, once plentiful to them, has become too expensive. However, the children are present on the night in the villa when Father is taken away by strange male callers, and they know that the train has removed him from them, even though they do not know where he has gone. The children are not unlike the ranchers in Norris's novel, who do not comprehend the fine print of the railroad's regulations. The children later discover that their father has been falsely incriminated, charged with espionage, having been suspected of providing classified information to the Russians. Unaware of their father's predicament throughout most of the tale, however, and in his absence, the children befriend several people who require some form of assistance, including a Russian refugee who has fled his country due to political oppression. Capable of speaking French, the Russian is able to communicate with Mother, who explains that he is a writer: "In Russia at the time of the Tsar one

dared not say anything about the rich people doing wrong, or about the things that ought to be done to make poor people better and happier. If one did one was sent to prison.” Peter’s response to his mother is to argue that someone should not be thrown into prison for simply writing about injustices. “People only go to prison when they’ve done wrong,” he says. And his mother responds: “Or when Judges *think* they’ve done wrong” (97; emphasis in original). The Russian and the injustices that plague him enter the children’s lives by way of the train. They had found him, unable to communicate due to language barriers and therefore in danger of being brought to the police, at the train station.

Although Nesbit’s plot could have included an inference to the railway as an “octopus” since it represents predatory social oppression in her novel as it does in Norris’s, it does not make such an allusion. Instead, Nesbit has the children provide their own names for the various trains that they see pass by near the house in the country. B.A. Botkin and Alvin F. Harlow explain that it became quite popular in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries for locomotives and passenger trains to be given names. Sometimes the names reflected the “smoke-blackened giant” of the locomotive, such as *Vulcan*, *Spitfire*, *Firebrand*, and *Firefly*. Sometimes they acquired the names of political or historical figures—such as *Governor Bradford*, *Gen’l Washington*, *Andrew Jackson*, *General Putnam*, *John Quincy Adams*, and *Davy Crockett*—or of female figures and images such as *Princess Anne*, *Lady Washington*, the *Empress*, and the *Witch*. In England, Botkin and Harlow point out, “locomotives named after characters in classical mythology were common,” such as *Cyclops*, *Apollo*, *Cybele*, *Midas*, *Minerva*, *Juno*, and *Hecate*. And in America, some were named after characters in Dickens’s

novels, including *Mark Tapley* and *Micawber* (471, 479-83). Yet in the list upon list that Botkin and Harlow provide of names for classifications of engines—of which one was the *Monster*—and for locomotives, passenger trains, and sleeping and parlor cars, none seemed to have acquired the names of either “dragon” or “worm.” The three children in *The Railway Children*—Roberta, a.k.a. Bobbie, Peter, and Phyllis—decide to call the “9.15 up” the *Green Dragon* and the “10.7 down” the *Worm of Wantley*. The names of the trains as they may, perhaps, have been popularly known are not provided in the novel, for the names the children give them are as valid, Nesbit suggests, as any other names that could be bestowed on them. Nesbit then informs us that “[i]t was by the Green Dragon that the old gentleman travelled” (42-43).

The Green Dragon thus takes on a central role in the plot of the novel. Instead of viewing it, as Norris views the Southern Pacific, as an annihilator of life itself, “stamping out the spark ordained by God to burn through all eternity,” the children decide to find “sparks,” as it were, both in and around the dragon itself. One morning, Phyllis, the youngest, lacking any concrete, informed knowledge about the train’s agenda, announces: “The Green Dragon’s going where Father is; . . . if it were a really real dragon, we could stop it and ask it to take our love to Father.” Peter accepts Phyllis’s authoritative intelligence about the destination of the train without question, as does Bobbie. What Peter objects to, possibly because he is older than Phyllis, is the idea that dragons would be a vessel in which love could be carried. “Dragons don’t carry people’s love,” he tells Phyllis, but Phyllis asserts: “Yes, they do. . . . [L]et’s all wave to the Green Dragon as it goes by. If it’s a magic dragon, it’ll understand and take our loves to Father. And if it isn’t, three waves aren’t much. We shall never miss them”

(43). If Phyllis were P.L. Travers, who describes herself as being attentive to and ready to catch wild “intimations,” we might imagine her saying something like: “Let’s be lunatics and attempt to converse with a dragon that we have so named and created as possibly magic and so believe it to be lawful that such communication is possible with an entity that appears to exist outside of our experience but actually is quite involved in it.” In other words, Phyllis attempts to see if the wild may just happen to be accessible to them. When the children wave at the Green Dragon as it shrieks “out of the mouth of its dark lair, which was the tunnel,” they see that

out of a first-class carriage a hand waved back. . . . It held a newspaper. It was the old gentleman’s hand. After this it became the custom for the waves to be exchanged between the children and the 9.15. And the children . . . liked to think that perhaps the old gentleman knew Father and would meet him “in business” . . . and tell him how his three children stood on a rail far away in the green country and waved their love to him every morning, wet or fine. (44)

Thus, the initial waves on the first morning by the three children “spark” a new sort of wordless communication with a wild, shrieking dragon that seems inaccessible since it appears to be following its own agenda, but which ends up becoming quite accessible. Like Ann Yearsley, who converses with her poetic material instead of mastering it, and much like Carroll’s Alice conversing with herself as she falls down the rabbit hole, the railway children converse with the material of their own experience—of a 9.15-as-dragon—and so freefall, as it were, without landing, anticipating each day to converse

with the wild unknown and wondering if the old gentleman might possibly be at a vantage point to be able to see and communicate with their father.

When Travers describes the role of a writer as one which involves the ability to be present and ready, “all disbelief suspended,” to catch the sort of intimations that inspire one to write stories where, for instance, “nursemaids, against all gravity, slide up the banisters,” she suggests that there are times when the wild is not immediately accessible, but she also indicates that there are times when it *is* accessible, and such times involve both play and lunacy. During those playful, lunatic times, laws shift and change so that wild “laws” determine the courses where connections and associations are made. Thus, Nesbit’s description of the children’s wonderings about the old gentleman provides access to wild consciousness, if we “lawfully” allow ourselves to apprehend its message. From the perspective of the wild, then, we may envision ourselves “on a rail far away” in a borderland state of consciousness (in “the green country”), looking upon the Symbolic order (where the “business” of language makes its meaning) and waving to it, never missing our waves if they are not returned, but knowing, somewhere, as it rushes toward its goal, an element within that dominant order will recognize that it somehow possesses a wild connection to something outside of itself and will turn sideways, having been suddenly pulled by a rolling, tractive force in the rising, undulating green country, and will look out the window, and “logos” in hand, will wave. Then, wild consciousness recognizes that rapport can begin with that small, awakening element in the realm of the internalized habitus because that quickening intimation is the point of recognition that the “nobody at a great distance down the road” actually speaks well and loudly about needs and desires that involve a large network of

communications—especially those that are attentive to tales associated with care. “Late in the night when the fires out,” asks Stevenson, why does the rider on horseback “gallop and gallop about?” Because, says wild consciousness, he saw a flash of a wave—he heard a call—and he’s wondering, am I riding on a magic dragon or not?

While Botkin and Harlow do not record the naming of a train in England or America as a “dragon,” the railway children’s naming of the 9.15 as the Green Dragon actually reflects an ancient and universal cultural impulse. David E. Jones, in *An Instinct for Dragons* (2002), points out that in cultures throughout the world in the twenty-first century, dragons are prevalent—appearing in books, on screen, on stage, and in artistic images. Such occurrences of the dragon’s presence “in modern life,” he says, are “reminders that the tales of the dragon are not merely fascinations reserved for children and ancient nonliterate peoples. It may be that more images of dragons exist in our skeptical society’s contemporary art, lore, and cinema than ever existed among the ancients who embraced the dragon as real” (6). Jones argues that the concept of a dragon, which he calls the “brain-dragon,” has spanned time and the emergence and decline of sundry human cultures and societal systems.¹³ Dragons, he says, “are universal,” and their characteristic image, “whether presented in Polynesia as *mo-o* or among the Cherokee Indians as *uktena* or among the peoples of India as *makara*, is easily recognized” (19). We all perceive the dragon’s form “as fundamentally the same from one culture to another . . . [and] find that our psyches are stalked by a fabulous creature whose outlines . . . remind us that we are still ancient beings possessed of an instinct for dragons” (117-19). Though dragons sometimes have purple, bat-like wings and are rendered in divers colors, the railway children’s choice of green for the 9.15 is

representative of wild thinking, for whereas the idea of the 9.15-as-dragon suggests that sparks of organic life exist in an iron, mechanical travelling apparatus, the color green further suggests that the earth, the moon, and their forces are not so far divorced from the symbol of industrialized power and monopolized dominance as we might think.¹⁴ Whereas the “brain-dragon,” both in Western and Eastern cultures, emerges in “state development”—that is, in “political centralization and control”—Jones points out that it is also connected to another universal motif: that of the earth-quickening tree of life (111). Like the dragon, he explains, “the tree of life concept and design is . . . variously rendered from culture to culture, . . . is universally recognizable and carries everywhere a complex of ideas that associate the sacred tree (pillar/pole/obelisk/grove) with fertility, life, and birth: the future” (128). The dragon generally takes on the form of the tree, such as the pine, which is covered with “scales” of bark, or else sends messages up from the base of the tree to squirrels or eagles, which carry the messages upward and outward. In Norse lore, for example, “the great ash Yggdrasil, the World Tree, was believed to join the underworld [where dragons and snakes fed among the roots of the tree] to the world of men and then move up to the home of the gods,” and the “Or-Danom Dayak of Borneo believe that the tree of life grows from the belly of a giant serpent that lives in the underworld” (121-23). In the winter, the physical appearance of a deciduous tree, such as an ash tree, lacks the color green, for the leaf loss puts the tree into a state of dormancy. Yet while the tree in winter appears dead—or, we might say, appears to be consumed by the death drive—it possesses, even in that state, an underground “greenness” that sends upwards and outwards messages about “fertility, life, and birth,” or about the future. When the railway children determine to believe that the “spark” of

the wave from the old gentleman riding the Green Dragon will somehow join with their responsive wave and be conveyed to their father, who will know about “how his three children stood on a rail far away in the green country and waved their love to him every morning, wet or fine,” they are operating under the influence of the Yggdrasil and its cultural counterparts. They are permitting conflict, whereby a destructive dragon—or, we might say, a smothering octopus—is perceived as a possible source for the emergence of a wild, communicative, germinating, “green” agent.

What is important to note about the old gentleman—as he works his “magic” in assisting the children’s father so that their father is released from the injustice that plagues him and is carried, by train, to the country house Mother has acquired—is that the old gentleman is nameless. In fact, Nesbit’s narrator makes it a point to announce the fact that he is nameless and will remain so. Although by the end of the story the children learn his name, they “never spoke of him by it,” says the narrator, for it “wouldn’t make him seem any more real to you, would it, if I were to tell you that his name was Snooks or Jenkins (which it wasn’t)?—and, after all, I must be allowed to keep one secret. It’s the only one” (251). The old gentleman—that is, the wild “element” that moves through the Symbolic order and elicits transformation—is not to be named because calling him Jenkins or Snooks would establish his presence as if it were a solid, stagnant part of the Symbolic order, which is marked, says Lacan, by “inertia.” Whereas the railway—the symbol of that inertia, since its movement is motivated by the death drive, by the goal of reaching terminations, and by an impulse to split and divide its “political centralization and control” from those it controls—may be named the “Octopus” or the “Green Dragon,” the wild must remain nameless. That is

because its communications are mysterious; its “waves,” perchance, may not be recognized; its mad associations, as well as its connections to “care” or to love, may be perceived as sappy or even lunatic. Name the old gentleman, and he becomes that eccentric old Jenkins, or that quaint old Snooks who had the sweet experience with some “unfettered and tenacious children,” as Lyn Garner puts it, who live in “the rural idyll of an England that never existed.”¹⁵ By pointing out that a place or space does not exist, a critic encumbered within the Symbolic order and its overcodings may then devalue its lack of “real” substance in the rational world, for good ole Jenkins, or Snooks, could only exist, of course, in the idyllic setting of a children’s novel and not in the “real” world. Such a rational consciousness goes ahead and names the old gentleman even though the narrator says that he will remain nameless. He is that “Jenkins”—that fictional character—who is part of the “rural idyll” landscape that is split, or separated, from reality. Rationally speaking, no setting in a novel “really” exists, for even existent, known places are altered by the fictional characters who traverse them. So, in the world of reason, a reminder about a setting’s distance from “reality” is a moot point. Yet the rational mind desires to stress that notion, for it, frankly, resists catching sight of the “wave” and so refuses to hear the unnamed call. The rational mind, driven by the death drive, wants to fill gaps with “real” substance or palpable, objectified persons or things; seeks that comfortable “womblike” or corporeal experience that will “restore amends” when sylvan scenes “offend”; and, at every point, desires some termination, where Puck/Robin, for instance, must be either Puck or Robin, but not both. Wild consciousness, however, inspired by the female principle, is content in its permission of conflict, for its agenda is to move through the closed systems that regulate the

establishment of binary opposites and inert ideas and encourage “lunatic” and ludic associations and communications, even while it moves on—voyaging outward—where waves of Gipsy roses and St. John’s wort rise and fall on the tidal earth, and disturb the distances between the established “knowns” and the yet-to-be-knowns.

The mysterious old gentleman, in ways we are never told, is able to free Father that he might return home, but the “home” that he returns to is not the same one that he left. Once Father is taken away, new situations are created—situations generated by the children and by Mother. Mother finds the house of the Three Chimneys, brings the children and only the furnishings that are necessary, and relocates. The place they move to is a borderland place—in the country yet near the railway—so that they are no longer enmeshed within the social order but watch it, from a distance, as it passes by, or, more to the point, as they pass by *it*—rather like Alice who, while falling down the rabbit-hole, passes by cupboards, book-shelves, and maps. In their state of freefall in the borderland of the wild, Mother begins to write. Although the practical understanding about her writing is that she is providing an income for the household by publishing her stories, her writing—or her “spinning” of tales—generates a new mode of existence for herself and the children. The cupboards, book-shelves, and maps of the Symbolic order lose their significance in and about the house of the Three Chimneys, for Mother’s spinning, although it seems divorced from the children and their activities, weaves its way through their thoughts and adventures, creating, by its apparent disassociation with the children’s lives, the means by which they demonstrate their desire to care. As Mother writes—or “spins,” almost like a devoted worshipper of Cybele—the children are allowed to explore on their own. Mother seems to have her own agenda and appears

to be too busy to be involved in the children's adventures; however, Mother is very much preoccupied with her children's explorations. Although we do not know exactly what Mother writes, we are offered clues and discover that she is busy writing stories that appeal to children. Whenever an editor accepts her work, the narrator tells us, Mother celebrates by saying, "Hooray, hooray. Here's a sensible Editor," and the children discover that "[w]hen an Editor was sensible there were buns for tea. One day Peter was going to celebrate the sensibleness of the Editor of the *Children's Globe*, when he met the Station Master" (45). A "sensible" publication, the *Children's Globe* works its own magic in that Peter's trip to the village to buy the buns creates an encounter with the Station Master, which opens up the door for the children to visit the station freely, which provides the meeting with the Porter, which creates a trustful relationship between the children and the railway workers, which allows their voices to be heard when the Russian refugee is misunderstood, etc. Mother does appear from out of her writing room—making a cake with a map of the railroad on it for Bobbie's birthday and including a sugar pansy to represent the old gentleman on the train, playing games with the children, and afterwards reading new stories (apparently ones that she is writing) to them. Seemingly unaware of the children's pursuits, we find, if we read carefully, that Mother is very much aware of their activities. It is as if she is in her room weaving their adventures as they encounter them, but retreating that they might experience the state of freefalling on their own. Just as Carroll sends Alice down the rabbit-hole by herself, so, too, does Nesbit create a space where conversations can freely take place outside of the Symbolic order, even, that is, when the Symbolic order becomes the means through which such conversations take place. Father is removed

completely and Mother appears only to be on the outskirts of the plots and conversations that the children engage in, but Mother's weaving and spinning of tales, as well as her choosing the house of the Three Chimneys, indicate that she is very much a part of the wild and its workings.

When Father, after his release, is taken up to the house from the train station by Bobbie, the two cross a field that leads to the "borderland" house of the Three Chimneys. When they reach the house, Bobbie goes in to tell Mother of his arrival, and Father waits outside in the garden. His waiting, of course, is not insignificant. Much has changed in his life, and his perspectives about life have altered. After waiting in the garden, he approaches the house and "goes to stand outside the nearest door. It is the back door." Father, of course, is in unfamiliar territory, no longer master of the household. He is drawn to the back door not because Mother, as we might think, is the new "master" at the front door, but because he seems to be able to grasp, after his long time away from the people he loves the most, that the best way to approach his new existence is through communication that invites multiple meeting points, where the children, for example, know more about accessibility to freedom and wild service than he does. The back door, the door used most often by servants, is the door Father chooses as he embarks upon a new state of consciousness, and, as if to celebrate his choice, swallows begin to circle while Father "goes to stand outside the . . . door." While he waits to be taken inward, Father looks outward, and, we surmise, he sees the swallows circling. "They are getting ready," the narrator informs us, "to fly away from cold winds and keen frost to the land where it is always summer. They are the same swallows that the children built the little clay nests for" (266). By building the nests when they first

arrive at the house of the Three Chimneys, the children invite the swallows into their lives, and immediately afterwards, they begin their wild communication with the “spark” of the old gentleman on the train. The circling of the swallows at the close of the novel suggests that Father is ready to invite the wild into his consciousness, and so it suggests that the wild does find entrance in and through the most rigid structures—through the most smothering and deadly forms of drives. Released from a life-in-death that would have provided the view of “flag-stones and gravel and a little grudging grass,” Father recognizes that the “flag-stones” of the Symbolic order—of the “master model”—are not enough. When he steps through the back door at Bobbie’s invitation, we know that he is beginning a new journey following a different plot—a plot involving newfound abilities to see nobody at a great distance down the road and to discover ways to be of service to others. The narrator then turns us away from the house and invites us to traverse wildly across the field into a new borderland space, where we, too, might discover—as we pass through the rolling, “sea-tossed” St. John’s Wort—the tides that, having multiple voices, can teach us, through dynamic interaction, unrestrictedly to serve.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, vol. 2, 10 vols. (1595-96, 1600; Bath: Robert Frederick, 1990) 1-78.

² K.M. Briggs informs us that Brownies

are ready to do any of the work about a house or farm; sweeping, churning, spinning, weaving, mowing, thrashing and herding are perhaps the chief. They are moved by personal friendships and fancies, . . . and will readily change from one place to another if they are dissatisfied. There is even a case of a Brownie who left with the servants when the miserly housewife dismissed them because the Brownie was doing all the work, and would not return until they were all reinstated. The dual nature of the Brownie is apparent in most of the tales. In some he is merely tricky, touchy and easily driven away, in others he turns to active mischief, and can be really dangerous. His relationship with Puck and the Hobgoblins, with the Brag, the Brash and the Bogey-beast, is very apparent.

See Briggs, *The Fairies*, 38-39.

³ See the Monterey Bay Aquarium's description for "Red Octopus: *Octopus rubescens*" and for "Giant Octopus: *Enteroctopus dofleini*" in their *Online Field Guide*, 1999-2008, Monterey Bay Aquarium Foundation, Monterey, CA, 10 July 2008 <http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/efc/living_species/>.

⁴ Some nineteenth-century law-makers, educators, and others who sought social reforms—such as "reform of the law, universal suffrage, and educational reform"—were

Benthamites and some, strictly speaking, were not; yet many, whether “Philosophical Radicals” of his principles or not, as John Troyer explains, believed in Bentham’s claim that “[o]nly Utilitarianism can offer a systematic and coherent guide to legal and social reform.” In Utilitarianism, the basic philosophical tenet is that a general good can and does exist, and it consists of “the sum of the happiness of the individuals composing it.” Both Bentham and John Stuart Mill sought to provide such an account of the good as it is maximized into the general good. Troyer points out that their “attempts to illuminate this basic Utilitarian vision, and to trace its practical implications, continue to attract followers in philosophy, economics, and public choice theory, and to inspire many to elaborate and defend their theory.” See John Troyer, ed., *The Classical Utilitarians: Bentham and Mill* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003) ix, xi, xxiv, xxvi.

⁵ Emphases are in the original. See Bentham’s July 1822 notes to his text in Troyer, 63n4.

⁶ By “historically accepted,” I mean to imply that logical systems themselves are authenticated and affirmed, as they are a part of the internalized habitus. Troyer points out that “the continuing vitality of the greatest happiness system is not difficult to understand—it embodies a very natural and compelling model of rationality.” Models of rationality have been perceived as “natural,” to use Troyer’s term, because they have so ingrained themselves in the collective consciousness of the western world. Indeed, Bentham’s rationally-based principles can be traced back “(at least) to Aristotle.” Troyer explains that “[i]f we assume, with Aristotle, that happiness is ‘the highest good attainable by action,’ and hence the aim of politics, we get something very like Bentham’s view.” See Troyer, vii.

⁷ In his reference to the American railroad as a “friend,” Harlow quotes an English tourist who visited America in the 1850s, whom he simply refers to as “Mrs. Houston.” “As she rode around on American trains,” Mrs. Houston, specifying “Yankee” phraseology, remarked that “[i]t is certain that the ‘humans’ seem to treat the ‘ingine,’ as they call it, more like a familiar friend than as the dangerous and desperate thing it really is.” See Alvin F. Harlow, introduction, *A Treasury of Railroad Folklore*, eds. B.A. Botkin and Alvin F. Harlow (New York: Bonanza, 1953) 2.

⁸ Praising the working-class “railroad man,” Harlow refers to his courage and devotion. A chapter of the book he has co-edited, entitled “Headlines and Heroes,” says Harlow, “runs the gamut of the railroader’s courage and ingenuity, from steel nerves and lightning-quick thinking to daredevilry and the sporting instinct, in grappling with danger and sticking to his post.” I am quoting John Gurley in my reference to a “ruling class capitalist.” Some textbook writers, Gurley remarks, use a “radical” approach by drawing attention to the conception that economic theories concerning capitalism are simply “rationalizations of advantages held by ruling classes.” See Harlow, introduction, 2-3; and John Gurley, “Some Comments on the Principles Course,” *The American Economic Review* 65.2 (1975): 431.

⁹ In their writings, Deleuze and Guattari seek to convey a “liberation of desire,” says Philip Goodchild, through remonstrations, especially in *Anti-Oedipus*, against psychoanalysis. Such a liberation of desire

allows the development of a phantasy not normalized or inscribed by the dominant structures of society. Schizophrenia, for Deleuze and Guattari, is above all a process—the process of desiring-production. . . . The real

schizo, for Deleuze and Guattari, is someone who temporarily enters a process, a transition, or a voyage in intensity. Schizophrenia is a move to a different quality of consciousness: the fantasy of desiring-production.

Schizoanalysis “is a theory that produces images” designed to demonstrate “deterritorialized flows,” which serve as “the escape route from the oedipal repression.” Producing images of diverging lines, rhizomic thinking cannot be disassociated from escape. It is, as Rosi Braidotti further explains, “an overcoming” and a “point of exit.” It is flight “escaping any reterritorializations or overcodings.” See Philip Goodchild, *Deleuze and Guattari: An Introduction to the Politics of Desire* (London: Sage, 1996) 90, 104; Rosi Braidotti, “How to Endure Intensity: Towards a Sustainable Nomadic Subject,” *Micropolitics of Media Culture: Reading the Rhizomes of Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. Patricia Pisters (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2001) 178; and Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) 159.

¹⁰ In his discussion about violence in pornography, Richard B. Miller also makes a distinction between Dionysian revelry and the “pornographic speech-act.” The difference between the two is a distinction, quite simply, between an aspiration for life or for death. The Dionysian festival, he explains,

at its core, celebrates fertility, life, and perhaps even the pursuit of immortality, while the latter [the pornographic speech-act] refigures structures of servility and death—fantasy as an end in itself. This difference is not trivial and constitutes a difference in kind, not degree, between the Dionysian festival and the world of violent pornography. The former represents a furious violation of conventions within life, while

the latter denies the conditions of life itself and thus denies the conditions for boundaries *and* their violation.

Because it is concerned with domination and the “proof of one’s superiority over another,” violent pornography is devoted to depicting “the annihilation of others and [it] ‘elevates’ such nihilistic visions by suggesting that the death of another can be a source of amusement.” On the other hand, Dionysian celebrations incorporated death into the life cycle so that “the presence of death did not serve to annihilate distinctions between life and death, but to reaffirm them.” Miller’s distinction between violent pornography and the Dionysian festival helps to explain the point I am making about Dionysian revelry as a vice. It is assumed to be a “vice” by the Symbolic order in that it is a “violation of *conventions*.” Indeed, the Dionysian celebration of life and fertility can be viewed as an instance of a “better plot,” where the “annihilation of the conditions for enjoyment, pleasure, or intimations of love,” as Miller describes violent pornography, is not an option. See Richard B. Miller, “Violent Pornography: Mimetic Nihilism and the Eclipse of Difference,” *For Adult Users Only: The Dilemma of Violent Pornography*, ed. Susan Gubar and Joan Hoff (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989) 157, 161n6.

¹¹ The sun’s gravitational force on the earth is “only 46 percent as much as the Moon’s,” explains Long, even though the sun’s mass “is 27 million times larger than that of the Moon.” The sun’s distance from the earth, “390 times farther away from the Earth than the Moon,” is what makes the moon’s gravitational pull “the most important factor for tides.” Tractive forces that lift both ocean tides and the solid earth cause the earth to “bulge” or “stretch.” Paul Katzeff describes the earth as an expanding and

relaxing “sponge” that becomes porous for water to retreat into and then compresses itself so that subterranean waters “ooze up through fissures and wells.” The moon, with “only one-sixth of the earth’s gravity, manhandles the earth’s oceans,” says Katzeff. “It does this despite the fact that, on earth, the earth’s gravitational pull is 280,000 times stronger than the pull of the moon overhead.” With such a strong influence, the moon’s gravitational pull affects the shape of the earth by creating “rising, twisting land [that] wring[s] water up and out of itself.” See Kim Long, *The Moon Book: Fascinating Facts about the Magnificent, Mysterious Moon* (Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 1998) 57 and Paul Katzeff, *Full Moons* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, 1981) 94, 102.

¹² Weston directs us to Michael Lemonick’s article, “Rewriting the Book on Dinosaurs,” in *Time*. There, Lemonick points out that some paleontologists believe that “the rich blood supplies within dinosaurs’ bones, as evidenced by the channels left behind in fossils, were more like those of fast-growing (and warm-blooded, or endothermic) birds and mammals than like those of reptiles.” Though researchers continue to debate “whether *Mononychus* should be considered a primitive flightless bird or a dinosaur,” Lemonick points out that there seems to be “really no essential distinction: it was both.” See Anthony Weston, “Is It Too Late?” *An Invitation to Environmental Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 43-68 and Michael Lemonick, “Rewriting the Book on Dinosaurs,” *Time* 26 April 1993: 42-49.

¹³ The dragon, Jones points out, is the oldest monster in the history of humankind, and although it has different names, the “brain-dragon” has retained the basic form of being a composite of three predators: the bird or raptor, the reptile or snake, and the large cat or leopard. The Chinese have called such a creature

lung; the Hawaiians, *kelekona* or perhaps *mo'o*. It is *zmaj* to Croats and Serbians, *lohikaarme* to the Finns, and *unktena* to the Cherokee Indians of North America. The Polish tell of *smok*, the Turks of the *ejderha*, the Maori of New Zealand of the *tarakona*, and the Hungarians of *sarkany*. The Japanese say *tatsu*, the Welsh *draig*, the Germans *lindwurm*, the Dutch, *draak*, and the Lakota Sioux *unhcegila*. The creature is named in Aztec, Arabic, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, Greek, Hebrew, Icelandic, Rumanian, Russian, Turkish, and others. English speakers call it *dragon*.

See David E. Jones, *An Instinct for Dragons* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002) 1-2, 60.

¹⁴ The notion that the moon is made of green cheese, Paul Katzeff explains, is not a reference to its color: “It means a cheese that is new, one that has not had time to age. In the early days of cheesemaking, such a new cheese might resemble the moon in shape and mottled color. And a new cheese is almost certainly uncut, still whole and round. Like the full moon.” However, the moon is indeed green—both on and underneath the surface. *Apollo 15* astronauts Dave Scott and Jim Irwin brought back samples of moon rock from a boulder during their mission to the moon, as well as some green soil. The lunar surface, explains Dana Mackenzie, is composed of “lots of crushed rock, glass beads, and even grains of pure metallic iron.” Scientists have discovered that the soil on the moon is “full of tiny spheres of green glass, the frozen remnants of a ‘fire fountain’ that erupted three and a half billion years ago, near the edge of the Imbrian Basin,” where the quickly cooling lava “rained back down in the form of glass beads.”

According to “a new (as of 2002) theory of John Longhi, a geologist at Columbia University,” the green glass, “a special-delivery package from deep in the Moon’s mantle,” could “only have been formed at the bottom of a very deep, worldwide magma ocean.” Thus, although prevalent, historical lore has been incorrect in implanting the idea that the moon is made of cheese—since it is, in fact, composed of rock, dust, sand, and glass—the tellers of such lore have not been not wrong in terms of informing us that the moon is, indeed, green. See Katzeff, *Full Moons*, 6; and Dana Mackenzie, *The Big Splat, or How Our Moon Came to Be* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003) 134-35, 138, 141.

¹⁵ Gardner makes it a point to illustrate how Nesbit’s life experiences did not duplicate or complement the plot she devised in *The Railway Children*. The children are “unencumbered by school,” and Bobbie, since she “is not allowed to be bad,” is “doomed to play the role of [the Victorian] ‘little mother.’” According to Gardner, Nesbit’s novel is “an idealized celebration of Victorian family life,” that, she points out, has little connection to Nesbit’s “unhappy” childhood or adult life experiences, except that it draws upon a single place in time—her “happiest period of [her] childhood,” when she lived “at Halstead in Kent.” Although Gardner does not refer directly to the old gentleman, her article suggests that all of the characters, except for the father and his unjust conviction, which was “clearly inspired by the Dreyfus case,” are too far removed from actual experience. See Lyn Gardner, “Golden Age,” *The Guardian* 26 March 2005: 18.

Epilogue

That was a very happy breakfast, though they didn't get any of it; and when they went away, leaving comfort behind, I think there were not in all the city four merrier people than the hungry little girls who gave away their breakfasts.

—Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*

One morning . . . the little stool stirred on its three legs and said, “Why should I let you carry me to the barn every day when I am able to carry myself?”

“What’s that?” said the little old man. But before he could say another word, the little stool danced away on its three legs and sat itself down by the brindled cow.

“Now that is very kind of you,” said the little old man. . . .

“Not at all! Not at all!” replied the little stool. “I haven’t had so much fun for a long time.”

The next morning the stool said to the milking-pail, as they stood side by side in the kitchen, “Why should you let the little old man carry you to the barn? Why not carry yourself?”

“A fine idea!” said the milking-pail.

“What’s that?” inquired the little old man. But before he could say another word, off whisked the milking-pail with the little stool, and sat itself down under the brindled cow.

“Now that is very kind of you,” said the little old man as he sat down to milk.

“Not at all! Not at all!” laughed the milking-pail. “I haven’t had so much fun for a long time.”

—Isa L. Wright, “The Three-Legged Stool”¹

When Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy give away their breakfasts in *Little Women* and when the stool and the milking-pail in “The Three-Legged Stool” begin to act in ways that are generally considered unusual for three-legged stools and milking-pails, we could say that such characters are not only “leaving comfort behind,” to use Alcott’s words, but are also leaving behind what they have, up until the point of redirection away from

the customary course of events, routinely identified as “home.” They are becoming, to use Homi K. Bhabha’s term, “unhomed.” To be “unhomed,” explains Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994), is not to be confused with being “homeless” (13). Locating culture in an “alien territory,” a place he calls a “Third Space,” Bhabha argues for a certain “hybridity” that celebrates instability—an unstableness that, as it is created, “presages powerful cultural changes.” Bhabha contends that “by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity” (56). Postcolonial narratives explore this Third Space, Bhabha indicates, for the writers of such texts present “other forms of enunciation” that do not merely “oppose the idea of progress with other ‘ideas’: the battle has been waged on hybrid territory” (365). That hybrid, “alien territory” is created by postcolonial writers when they project the past into the present so that the “dead” symbols of the past may become part of the “circulatory life of the ‘sign’ of the present, . . . the quickening of the quotidian” (364). With Bhabha, there is an “insistence” that “power must be thought” of in terms of the “hybridity of the colonial space” and therefore reconceived “liminally” (359-360). By bringing time-past into a space in the present, we may, by looking in upon that unusual, presumed-as-past space and by observing the *internal* narrative of history, “emerge as the others of our selves” (9, 56). The problem with looking at the past as progressive time instead of as current space, Bhabha points out, is that in the collective consciousness, marginal groups are positioned outside of history. Such placement, Bhabha contends, is a “kind of evasion” (357), where the “outside” placement ignores the necessary turning inward toward the past-as-present Third Space that determines our culturally hybrid ontological “unhomed” state of being. Thus, as we relate to successful postcolonial narratives, we find that none of us

are homeless, even though we may be “unhomed” as we move textually from place to place on the surface of the culturally rich earth, where “the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other,” and where “the unspoken, unrepresented pasts . . . haunt the historical present” (13, 18).

Bhabha speaks eloquently and persuasively about the unstable space where hybridity determines the ability to hear—where those voices that have been buried alive, as it were, speak forth, or project “enunciations” (56). Yet, in seeing the “outside” position as “evasion,” Bhabha does not consider that element of the “wild” that haunts the *outer* spaces—those spaces, that is, that find new responses outside reason. Indeed, by tracing the term “outer” in an attempt to seek its arcane, etymological “borders,” we discover that it emerged in the 1380s as a variant of the Old English “úterra.” Thus, the adjective we know today as “utter,” before it developed the meaning of “complete” or “total,” referred to what we now regard as “outer”—that is, to that which is remote, “forming the exterior part or outlying portion,” and to that which is separate or distinguished from “inner.” For instance, as the *OED* tells us, “utter-wit” referred to the “knowledge of things external to one.” As a verb, “utter,” constructed partly from “out,” meant “to drive away,” “put out,” “show,” “announce,” “make known,” and “speak”—that is, to enunciate. When one would utter in the sense of driving something away, one might, for example, be “uttering clouds of tobacco smoke,” or, perhaps, conveying something away from a store, such as goods or victuals.² When marginal groups are positioned outside of history—in terms of Bhabha’s conception of what is “outside” and territorially non-hybrid—that which is “put out” and evaded could be likened to Bilbo

Baggins's enunciation of "Good Morning!" in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1966), directed toward the wandering wizard Gandalf, when he wishes Gandalf to leave. By "Good Morning!" Bilbo means, says Gandalf, "that you want to get rid of me, and that it won't be good till I move off" (13). Such is the utterance that "drives away"—or "evades," to use Bhabha's conception. Yet, in envisaging alternative understandings of "outer" and "utter," wild consciousness perceives that that which is "outer"—such as the too-adventuresome, too-uncomfortable, too-"strange and sorcerous" Gandalf and his entourage of dwarves who invade Bilbo's domesticity—is the sort of utterance that does not necessarily announce a hybrid form of ontological insight and being, but which *moves through* spaces, transforming without soliciting acknowledgement that something hybrid has been formed and without seeking to portray some necessary "battle" being "waged on hybrid territory." Whereas Bhabha wants to slow down the linear "performance" of time to create a "staging" marked by "astonishment" at the staging itself (364), wild consciousness moves through the "staging," recognizing its weaknesses and re-directing perception outwards—toward the darkly mysterious, non-rational, yet transferable parts of utterance. Thus, two figures who represent difference in Bilbo's life *utter* transformative power by driving away Bilbo's inclinations to turn inward rather than outward. Smoking a pipe, the dwarf Thorin utters forth tobacco smoke in rings, and "wherever he told one to go, it went—up the chimney, or behind the clock on the mantelpiece, or under the table, or round and round the ceiling." The rings are "put out," or uttered into outer spaces, where Gandalf's smoke rings are also projected: "Pop! he [Gandalf] sent a smaller smoke-ring from his short clay-pipe *straight through* each one of Thorin's. Then Gandalf's smoke-ring would go green and come back to hover over

the wizard's head. He had a cloud of them about him already, and in the dim light it made him look strange and sorcerous" (21; emphasis added). Or, we might say, it made him look strange and enigmatic, as if he has arrived in Bilbo's life from somewhere outside of the safe, rational spaces that are defined by reason.

To possess "utter-wit"—that is, the "knowledge of things external to one"—is to recognize the forces that haunt the *outer* spaces, to find new responses outside reason, and to desire to "haunt" as well. In *The Hobbit*, the dwarves who "haunt" Bilbo's peace of mind know exactly where to find Bilbo because Gandalf places a mark on Bilbo's door—unbeknownst to Bilbo. The space that is marked is a liminal space, for the adjective "liminal" is derived from the Latin "līmen," which means "threshold." "Līmen" is connected to "limit," for it is associated with a space "below which a given stimulus ceases to be perceptible," and is understood as a boundary or a border, and even an embankment between fields.³ If one finds oneself in a liminal space—standing in a doorway, as it were—one's perspective is affected by that space. For Bhabha, the best perspective seems to be that which looks inside and backward to the past. Those in marginal spaces look in toward the "in-house" culture that has banished them to the threshold space; find another, previously unobserved place in, under, or above the room from which to present their past; and enunciate or project forward that place so that it might be acknowledged—so that those in the heavily-frequented places can perceive what has been ignored and therefore recognize that that aspect shapes and forms their experiences and states of being as much as the acknowledged spaces do. When Bhabha refers to the postcolonial success of portraying liminality, he describes it as an "enactment" from the border that displaces and "limits the 'idea' of progress" and so

imparts a “caesura” that occasions an “overlapping” of boundaries (364-65). In Tolkien’s story—even though it is not a postcolonial narrative per se—this picture of cultural, “overlapping” hybridity is apparent. The dwarves come to Bilbo’s door, enter, and both facing inward and moving inside, they suspend time for a bit—or present a “caesura” in Bilbo’s life’s narrative—and describe a past that is foreign to Bilbo. When the room becomes dark, the dwarves begin to play music and to sing the “deep-throated singing of the dwarves in the deep places of their ancient homes; and this is like a fragment of their song: . . . ‘The dwarves of yore made mighty spells, / While hammers fell like ringing bells / In places deep, where dark things sleep, / In hollow halls beneath the fells’” (22). Affected by their singing, Bilbo’s consciousness “overlaps” into theirs, and as he is “swept away” (22), he can envision himself and his past as being connected in the present with the dwarves’ ancient narratives—especially since the Took side of his family was once a cultural part of the adventures and sorrows the dwarves relate.

While Bhabha’s model of cultural hybridity is both powerful and persuasive, those writers who illustrate the wild in their narratives do not stop, as it were, with Thorin’s smoke rings. Indeed, Bhabha’s theoretical approach is designed based on the approach and attainment of *circularity*, where the newly discovered past “gives its ‘dead’ symbols the circulatory life of the ‘sign’ of the present.” On the other hand, when Gandalf’s smoke rings find each one of Thorin’s, move straight through them, and then become a cloud hovering over Gandalf’s head, the smoke rings are transformed—both Gandalf’s and Thorin’s—into an inscrutable articulation that defines Gandalf as the “outer,” wild force to be observed. Whereas the model of cultural hybridity in Tolkien’s narrative can be represented by the dwarves, who have been “unhomed,” and by their

desire to recover their ancient homes, the model of wild consciousness can be found in Gandalf, whose perspective is not the liminal one of looking *inward* toward a forgotten, lost past that must be made present, but is, rather, of the liminal one of looking *outward* toward ambiguous, uncanny connections with others. In other words, the plot that Gandalf weaves extends beyond the dwarves' desire for their ancient culture to be acknowledged in the present. Gandalf chooses Bilbo to assist the dwarves, but he also chooses Bilbo for further purposes.

What Bilbo learns by the end of Tolkien's story is that he is not a homebody but is, in fact, brave and adventuresome. To his surprise, he discovers that he is not unlike the "outer," strange figures who invade his hobbit-hole under The Hill and convince him to travel with them on their adventure. Thus, we could say that Bilbo has, to use Bhabha's approach, waged a battle on the hybrid territory that is himself—discovering the outside in the inside—and so emerges as the "other" of himself. However, if we go a bit further and think with a consciousness that is wild, we know that Bilbo has not only figured out that he is stouthearted and adventurous, but that he, like Gandalf, has learned how to look outward in order to learn, through a spirit invested in haunting, how to serve. Like Gandalf, whose smoke rings muddle up and implicate Thorin's in a mission involving a larger undertaking that Thorin cannot initially or perhaps ever understand—that of Bilbo's self-recognition—Bilbo, too, becomes enmeshed in the activity of extended service. When he returns home after his adventure, Bilbo discovers that he has been declared dead, and he legally remains "dead" for a good length of time. Many of his belongings have been auctioned off, and he discovers, too, that he has lost his reputation in the hobbit community. Before his adventure, Bilbo *considers* himself to be

quiet, comfortable, and perhaps even rather invisible, but he is a significant member of the “in-house” hobbit culture and is therefore recognized and established in the community. During his adventure, his main actions rely upon his skills at being invisible or undetected. After his adventure, although he regains his hobbit-hole, he remains “unhomed” in that he is “buried alive” in the hobbit community. Yet he is content in that new invisibility, for he knows that other outer lands have been and continue to be affected by his actions—as well as the actions of others—that were motivated by the desire to alleviate others’ dreadful, hurtful, unjust circumstances. Once one such serviceable action is performed, others may and do follow. A smoke ring, like Thorin’s, that is noticed and acknowledged by the “in-house” community is one thing. But when it loses its shape—having been infiltrated by a wilder, outer purpose—it becomes an invisible part of a mysterious project that connects one’s service with another’s and another’s and another’s. When Gandalf visits Bilbo in his newly acquired, buried-alive, marginal-but-contented state in the hobbit community years after Bilbo’s adventure, Bilbo asks Gandalf about the lands of the Mountains, and is told about the feasting, prosperity, and amiability between elves, dwarves, and men. “You don’t really suppose, do you,” Gandalf then asks him, “that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, for your sole benefit? You are a fine person, Mr. Baggins, and I am very fond of you; but you are only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all!” And Tolkien writes: ““Thank goodness!’ said Bilbo laughing, and handed him the tobacco-jar” (317).

The invitation of the tobacco jar is significant, for it implies that new smoke rings will petition new needs and opportunities for service. In *The Gift*, Lewis Hyde asks us to

imagine a scene where an “Englishman comes into an Indian lodge, and his hosts, wishing to make his guest feel welcome, ask him to share a pipe of tobacco,” giving the Englishman the pipe when he leaves. The Englishman places the pipe on his mantel, time passes, and

the leaders of a neighboring tribe come to visit the colonist’s home. To his surprise he finds his guests [expect that] he should offer them a smoke and give them the pipe. In consternation the Englishman invents a phrase to describe these people with such a limited sense of private property: . . . “Indian giver.” . . . [Yet] the Indian giver . . . understood a cardinal property of the gift: whatever we have been given is supposed to be given away again, not kept. Or, if it is kept, something of similar value should move on in its stead, the way a billiard ball may stop when it sends another scurrying across the felt, its momentum transferred. . . . In fact, it is better if the gift is not returned but is given instead to some new, third party. The only essential is this: *the gift must always move.*

(3-4; emphasis in original)

When Bilbo offers Gandalf the tobacco jar, he implies that he understands the power, we could say, behind being an “Indian giver,” as well as his role—a role Gandalf shares and has passed on to Bilbo—of being only one of many “billiard balls,” transferring the momentum of the gift through service. Once returned home and finding himself culturally buried alive, Bilbo, I contend, is actually more of a wild figure than he is on his adventure, for although he becomes intermittently invisible on his journey, the space where his invisibility becomes wild is at that space that designates the “double negation”

of “not” and “nonetheless”—that is, his gutted home and dislocated status—where he has learned the value of service. He is “unhomed” on the adventure—and so becomes conscious of his cultural hybridity—but he is “unhomed” again when he returns home—his transformed consciousness wildly directed outward where, through his memoirs, he will continue to haunt and transform not the inner, but the outer spaces.

When acts of service metamorphose from defined, articulated “smoke rings” into a gathering smoke of interdependent, commingling rings that transform into an indistinct haze, then service becomes “haunting” and wild, where the servant is only rarely detected or acknowledged, but the spiraling, spreading, broadening, empowered acts are felt and transferred. “Service” has in many ways become a “bad” word, unfortunately, because it has lost its wild, non-rational connotations and has become aligned with “servitude.” To illustrate, in Juliana Horatia Ewing’s “The Peace-Egg” (1873), a servant’s role is clearly portrayed as “less than.” An old gentleman who has held a grudge against his daughter for years has resentfully retired into his estate, where the townspeople have learned to stay away. The housekeeper knows that her master does not welcome visitors, and when some children performing as mummers arrive at the front door, the housekeeper, “an elderly timid-looking woman,” asks them: “[D]on’t you know better than to come here? . . . Be off with you, as fast as you can.” The eldest child responds by saying: “You’re only the servant. . . . Go and ask your master and mistress if they wouldn’t like to see us act.” When the housekeeper calls the boy “impudent” and tells him that her master would never let them “set foot in this house,” she is interrupted by the master himself, who, standing behind her and surprising her, “as if she had been shot,” shouts:

Woman! . . . who authorizes you to say what your master will or will not do, before you've asked him? The boy is right. You *are* the servant, and it is not your business to choose for me whom I shall or shall not see. . . . [I]f I had wanted somebody to think for me, you're the last person I should have employed. I hire you to obey orders, not to think.

(136; emphasis in original)

The housekeeper apologizes and asks the master if she should bring the children to the kitchen, and he responds by snapping: “—for you and the other idle hussies to gape and grin at? No. Bring them to the library.” And then he “stalk[s] off, leading the way” (137). Ewing’s portrayal of the housekeeper in “The Peace-Egg” has been adopted, symbolically, as the meaning for service in western culture, where servants—that is, mothers, housewives, employees, volunteers—still possess roles that are either undervalued or not valued at all. Though she tends to and cares for her master’s house, the housekeeper is reminded that she has no authority and that she is not to think but only to obey. She is violently shouted at, and she is called, along with the other female servants, a hussy. Whereas in the 1530s, a hussy once referred to the “mistress of a household” and to “a thrifty woman”—as well as to a physical “case for needles and thread,” representing the industry and creative, intricate techniques required for sewing, spinning, and weaving—the term’s meaning degenerated so that by 1650 it had come to signify a “female of the lower orders,” possessing a “worthless character.” By the 1800s the term had acquired solely derogatory connotations, its reference to a household mistress or housewife completely lost.⁴ Based on Ewing’s depiction of a servant, we may perceive that the idea of service in western culture has been aligned with timidity, a

lack of command or influence, an unauthorized ability to think, and compliant acquiescence with being a victim of abuse. Service is also linked to a female's social role, where the authority of children has precedence over the one who serves.

Ewing's nineteenth-century housekeeper is a servant who is not involved in haunting service and its wild movements but who is bound, rather, in servitude.⁵ Like a railed train hurtling towards a decided destination, servitude is a terminus. It remains operative in western culture, which, as Plumwood points out, has "conceived the central features of humanity in terms of the dominator identity of the master" and so has translated those "central features" into a belief system. In *Dwellings* (1995), Linda Hogan remarks that

the Western tradition of beliefs within a straight line of history leads to an apocalyptic end. And the stories of the end, like those of beginning, tell something about the people who created them. . . . Without deep reflection, we have taken on the story of endings, assumed the story of extinction, and have believed that it is the certain outcome of our presence here. . . . We need new stories, . . . a new narrative that would imagine another way, to learn the infinite mystery and movement at work in the world. (93-94)

Like Plumwood, Hogan recognizes the need for new plots—narratives that involve mystery and movement and that are preoccupied with deeper reflections than the "stories of the end." Sometimes those "deeper reflections" lead to places that reflect non-sense, where servitude, for example, is disowned in favor of service—that is, service that utters its expression from outer realms, unencumbered by the Symbolic order as it first moves

through, like Gandalf's smoke rings, and then transforms conceptions within the Symbolic order.

In another story involving servants, "Lob Lie-By-The-Fire" (1873), Ewing presents a different perspective of servants involved in both servitude and service, and through one character, a gipsy, Ewing portrays the wildly moving female principle at work as it moves through the figure who becomes the Luck of Lingborough—an "Indian giver" who understands and initiates the momentum of transference. The plot Ewing constructs is impelled by a female character—a servant, Thomasina—who is actually a "hussy" in the non-degenerative form of the word, for she is well-skilled in sewing and knitting and in spinning tales. The story goes that Lob Lie-by-the-fire, a "rough kind of Brownie or House Elf," had long before quitted the old Hall at Lingborough—an "old stone house on the Borders"—which he used to haunt: "Why and where he had gone, Thomasina could not tell. She had heard that he had originally come from some other household, where he had been offended. But whether he had gone elsewhere when he forsook Lingborough, or whether 'such things had left the country' for good, she did not pretend to say" (5, 26). Two sisters of appreciable but unsteady fortune who rely upon the productivity of their farm discover a gipsy child—a foundling—under a broom-bush one day. After an unsuccessful search for the baby's parents is conducted, the parson carries the baby to Lingborough that he may be brought up under the care of the household of the two sisters. The parson gives the child to Thomasina, while he cautions the two sisters: "If you ask me . . . whether it is your duty to provide for this child because you found him, I say that there is no such obligation. . . . Vagabond ways are seldom cured in one generation, and I think it is quite probable that, after much trouble

and anxiety spent upon him, he may go back to a wandering life” (18). The baby is named John Broom, after the place where he was discovered, and he is raised not as a child possessing familial bonds but as a servant, where a rule is adhered to that “he should not be admitted to the parlor” (23). Although he is sent to the village school, he will not be industrious, and though one of the sisters attempts to teach him to read at home and to learn scriptures, he does not apply himself. Instead, he listens to Thomasina’s inspired stories about “the history of Elisha, the adventures of the Judges,” and the history of the lost Luck of Lingborough (24).

Thomasina relates that before he left many years before, the “Lubber fiend”—a “rough, hairy Good-fellow”—would work at night so that “others might be idle by day.” Porridge would be left for him in the corner of the cowhouse, and sometimes he could be heard at his work, but he was “rarely seen, and then only lying before the fire” (26). John grows up never tiring of listening to the stories about the “Lubber fiend.” By the time John reaches eleven years of age, all in the house, farm, and village expect him to “eat dreadfully, wear out his clothes, and be useful on the farm,” but “the last condition was quite unfulfilled” (27). He is thus put under the care of the farm-bailiff, whose commands John thwarts, and so he falls into disfavor with his employer. Feeling rejected by the sisters, John views himself as an unwanted figure in the household, farm, and community, and perceives that the farm-bailiff has become “prejudiced against him beyond any hope of propitiation. The village folk taunted him, too, with being an outcast, and called him Gipsy John, and this maddened him” (34). True to the predictions made by the village folk, John decides to embark upon the “wandering life,” and he stows away on a ship bound for London. His journey, like Bilbo’s, provides him

with experiences that require skill, speed, and invisibility. After dodging dangerous seamen, he runs away, lives from “hand to mouth” in a seaport town, sleeps “in holes and corners,” ends up running errands for soldiers, and eventually strikes up a friendship with a tall, rough-looking Highlander, McAlister, who is a noble man but a hopeless alcoholic (38-40). When McAlister is hospitalized, he tells John that he, too, had run away from home. “Listen to a dying man, laddie,” he tells him, “and gang home!” John tells McAlister that he would never be welcome again in the village where he grew up, but McAlister’s final word before he dies is “Hame!” (47-49). Not long after McAlister’s death, the cowherd who serves on the farm of the two sisters awakes to find the stable “freshly cleaned,” the wood neatly piled, and a barrel of potatoes “newly-dug.” He says nothing about it, taking credit for the work, but “when on the morrow the farm-bailiff [is] at a loss to know who had thinned the turnips, . . . and Annie the lass [finds] the kitchen-cloths [cleaned], the cowherd [tells] his tale to Thomasina and beg[s] for a bowl of porridge and cream to be set in the barn. . . . ‘For,’ said he, ‘the luck of Lingborough’s come back, missus. *It’s Lob Lie-by-the-fire!*’” (51-52; emphasis in original).

When the news spreads throughout the village that the luck of Lingborough has returned, the crops produce high yields, the ducklings are not eaten by rats, “no fowls [are] stolen,” the “tub of pig-meal last[s] three times as long as usual,” everyone “work[s] with more alacrity,” and Annie remarks that “the butter came in a way that made it a pleasure to churn” (53-54). When John Broom is discovered sleeping by the fire with the sheep dog, the parson blesses him in his sleep, and John grows afterwards to become a “good scholar,” who, in middle age has a wife and children, but is always

drawn toward the sea. He shares his tobacco with sailors and fishermen, in a Gandalfian/Bilboan fashion, enlarging the area he haunts—facing outward, toward the sea and other lands beyond the village where he lives. Having taken on the mysterious role of the Brownie, John, of course, does not appear in fine, respectable clothing, as would a mayor or parson. Brownies, offended by offerings of clothing in exchange for their services, quit the places that attempt to invest them with human roles. Clothing identifies a person's status, means, and gender within the social codes of a community. The Brownie, we might say, represents gender as that "border concept" that Judith Butler has presented concerning sexual difference—a perception that embraces the notion that it "is neither fully given nor fully constructed, but partially both." If sexual difference is, as Butler interrogatively points out, "a demand for rearticulation that never quite vanishes—but also never quite appears," the Brownie acknowledges that demand by never quite appearing, and also by never quite disappearing either (Butler, "End" 427). Brownies, as K.M. Briggs has indicated, are "moved by personal friendships and fancies," are "ready to do any of the work about a house or farm," and will, at times, follow a family rather than remaining in a house. They are therefore not bound "to a locality," but will continue to haunt a space or place if they so choose. "As a rule," Briggs explains, "they seem to have the power of invisibility, but are so expert in hiding and lurking that they hardly need to exercise it" (38-39). Brownies are "liminal" or threshold beings, who are not confined by history, by place, by gender, or even by legend. They are marginal figures who are content in their existence as outwardly alert, borderland presences. They are wild givers who reject the clothing that would pinion them into a role and so immobilize the power of the gift. The Brownies' departures

imply that when invested remuneration is provided for a service, then the gift of service is paralyzed. When givers are recognized because of their clothing, status, or means, then the wild aspect of service disappears. John Broom is so expert at disappearing that, when he gravitates to the seaside and the outer, “other side of the world,” no one is able to “say what he had been doing” (58-59). He never quite vanishes from the village, but he also never quite appears as an established “villager” in it. He gladly performs the services of domestic servants, many of them traditionally defined as “female” responsibilities, while at the same time he is drawn by the mist of the sea and enlivened by the tobacco-sharing relationships he strikes up with voyaging seafarers. He is “moved by personal friendships” in that we are told that he converses with “the ragged boys” who, as does John, “haunt the quay.” And years later, “when his dark eyes were dim in an honored old age, the village children would point him out to each other, crying, ‘There goes Lob Lie-by-the-fire, the Luck of Lingborough!’” (59-60).

Although the children recognize John Broom as the bodily presence of the luck of Lingborough, he does not become a legendary figure, for John himself does not become “larger than life.” Rather, he remains a quiet figure demonstrating wild consciousness, for the female principle moves through him, inspiring his acts of service, which transmit the power to transform others. The domestic services he renders are not claims for recognition, and, without having to request them, John receives a humble but warm place to sleep and what most would call unexceptional food—porridge and milk, or cream—to eat. Whereas calls to service for legendary figures are grand calls to serve countries and countrysides, where the motivations to serve are based on grand, chivalrous, memorable causes, John’s call is the call of the work delegated to servants in

servitude—the daily, domestic work that is repeatedly necessary and carries no glory. The orderly freshness of a stable lasts only for a short time before the stable has to be cleaned again; potatoes in a barrel are eaten and forgotten, and such a container always requires refilling; and kitchen cloths, when clean, never remain so for long. Before John returns, although Thomasina and the rest of the villagers lament the long past day when the luck of Lingborough left, none of them has the idea or the motivation to do what John does when he returns. That is because they naturally view, as did John when he was younger, such acts of service as servitude. Before the cowherd awakens to discover his chores have been done for him, for example, he has been “low in spirits” and has been to the ale-house, attempting “to refresh his energies for this [the stable cleaning] and other arrears of work.” His hands feeble when he returns from the ale-house, he sits down on some straw and promptly falls asleep (51). When one is placed in a position of servitude, no matter how kind the “masters” are—for in this case, the benevolent-but-class-conscious sisters represent the “master”—the energy to serve is difficult to muster up. But wild service is not aligned with servitude. The three-legged-stool in Isa Wright’s story for children is constructed to function under the burden of servitude—to bear the weight of others—but it awakens one morning, having been “stirred” by something mysterious, and decides to search for other ways to assist the old man and his wife. Its animated joy in being of service is both frustrated by inertia and contagious in its innovative displacement of what has been customary. The three-legged stool and the milk-pail end up canvassing outward and journeying beyond the homestead in order to engage others in serviceable acts, and all of the characters they affect discover that they “haven’t had so much fun for a long time.” In a similar fashion, what John does through

his acts of service is to re-direct perception outwards—toward mysterious, nonsensical, transferable, transformative utterances. Once the cowherd announces that the Luck of Lingborough has returned, the entire consciousness of the village is transformed, including the non-human creatures and the terrestrial landscape, where the earth is ploughed and fruitfully harvested. Having been oiled, the cart-wheels and gate-hinges no longer whine, symbolically representing the village's transformation from depressed lethargy to sprightly movement. What makes the butter change so that it becomes a "pleasure" to churn? Why is the cow milk "as sweet as the new-mown hay"? It cannot be a human who can cause such transformations, the villagers reason, for the sheep dog is an excellent watch dog, and since it "never barked at Lob," it had to be "plain proof that he was more than human" (54).

To be "more than human" in Lob's case is not to be legendary but to be, alternatively, rather like a three-legged stool—crazy enough to enjoy performing menial, back-breaking tasks, repeatedly, without receiving recognition or itemized remuneration. In fact, John, by becoming Lob, haunts the community and seeks non-recognition, doing much of the work at night and in secret, and enjoying watching the gift, in an Indian-giver fashion, spread. When the previous "Lubber fiend" had withdrawn from haunting the Hall at Lingborough, no record provided the reason why. To know "when and wherefore he withdrew his valuable help, which, as wages rose, and prices rose also, would have been more welcome than ever," Ewing writes. The villagers fail in figuring out the reason why Lob has left because they have not looked at themselves as possible causes for the end of their luck. "Stories of the end," to refer back to Hogan, "tell something about the people who created them." To demand higher wages for the same

services rendered over the years and to follow that with rising prices is to follow a rational mode of thinking in terms of economic calculations, but that mode of thinking also ignores or has no insight into the nonsensical, wild mode that trusts in the momentum of transference, where a consciousness inspired by an outer recognition of the powers of double negation commits itself to the gift-still-freely-given—knowing that the mysterious, transformative power behind such a gift always broadens, for it is inscrutably communicable, even as it is forgotten. An orphan without a name, John Broom acquires a name, only to lose it for another name that is not well-remembered. As Ewing explains, Lob’s history—that is, the history of the Brownie and of unforced, freely-given, restorative domestic service—is “less known than that of any other sprite. It may be embodied in some oral tradition that shall one day be found; but as yet the mists of forgetfulness hide it from the story-teller of to-day as deeply as the sea frogs are wont to lie between Lingborough and the adjacent coast” (5-6). The deep, borderland spaces seem to keep wild figures such as the Lubber fiend misted in forgetfulness, buried alive, and rationally defined as the “I-am-not-what-is,” but, nonetheless, the wild cannot be contained. Attempt to provide clothes—symbolic of the habitus—to a Brownie, and that puts an end to that sprite’s labors at that space. “Luck Goes,” writes Ewing in a heading for a section of the story, “And Comes Again” (49). Always elusive, the wild is also very present, for threshold experiences are a given in life and in narrative. To know a wild text or to create one—to search for plots that are new—one must simply be willing to face outward, watch for a drifting smoke ring, listen for the current of an unspoken language moving through space, in the shadows, and transmitted through the many reflective mirrors of the moon, and become the “necessary lunatic” who delights

in becoming creatively interdependent and wildly imperceptible by catching, transforming, and sending forth the gift-still-freely-given—that haunting, mysterious utterance of inexplicable wonder.

Notes to Epilogue

¹ Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women: Or Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy* (1869; New York: Macmillan, 1962) 27; Isa L. Wright, “The Three-Legged Stool,” *Stories for Little Children*, comp. Susan S. Harriman, vol. 1 of *The Kindergarten Children’s Hour*, ed. Lucy Wheelock, 5 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920) 330-32.

² See “outer” and “utter” in the *OED*, as well as in Robert K. Barnhart, ed., *The Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995) 531, 849-50.

³ Once again, the definitions of liminal, līmen, and limit are taken from the *OED* and from Barnhart, 434.

⁴ See the *OED* and Barnhart, 366.

⁵ In defining the term, “servant,” Giles Waterfield indicates that the “word is difficult” since its use varies throughout the centuries and because “today [it] is seldom applied.” Although upper servants might be “better dressed,” “better fed,” and “enjoy a particularly privileged and close relationship with their male employers,” nevertheless a servant’s role, Waterfield points out, can generally be described as “not an easy one.”

He explains:

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries servants were often looked on with coldness and contempt by their employers, and with suspicion and even hostility by other working people. In the eighteenth century women servants tended to be regarded as little better than prostitutes; in the early twentieth, their relations and friends would beg them to conceal their occupation when meeting strangers. As the male franchise was extended,

servants were among the last men to be given the vote. . . . In many households, large or small, . . . a servant was often deprived of individuality, expected to wear a uniform, not allowed (particularly if female) to have a relationship with the opposite sex or get married, and called not by his or her own name but by the name associated with their position.

See Giles Waterfield, Anne French and Matthew Craske, *Below Stairs: 400 Years of Servants' Portraits* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2003) 10-12, 14.

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