Tyler A. Turcotte
R. Eric Tippin
Jill Darling
Demetrios V. Kapetanakos
Kaley Jemison
Joshua Adair
David Aworawo
Walter M. Young
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Sue Matheson

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the quint
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Canada R9A 1K7

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Sue Matheson

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EDITORIAL

This issue of *the quint* is dedicated to the memory of Valdine Clemens, a brilliant scholar and good friend.

It is late in March, and *the quint* welcomes snow, freezing rain, and a slow melt to begin this, the second issue of its ninth volume. The early birds, four geese and a bald eagle have returned North already. We are awaiting the arrival of the robins and the hummingbirds to join the anticipated advent of warm weather and homecoming flocks. This spring, new writers have joined *the quint*. Another eclectic offering of thought provoking articles, beautiful poetry, and provocative prose—this issue is designed for readers who enjoy many kinds of prose, scholarly and creative, non-fiction and fiction.

Showcasing articles and stories from the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Nigeria, our thirty fourth *quint* begins with with a non-fiction premiere, Tyler A. Turcotte's experience with baseball at Cross Lake, MB. Then R. Eric Tippin's "Evoking Heaven by Looking at Earth: Rudyard Kipling's Metaphysical Materialism" follows, a fascinating reading of Kipling's handling of the spiritual in his writings. Jill Darling's "I am because my little dog knows me," or, the rhetoric of (non)narrative: (queer) identity in Gertrude Stein's *Geographical History*" follows. Darling effectively argues that Stein's exploration of the relationships between consciousness, writing, identity, geography, language, and social norms in *Geographical History* interrogates the relation, or difference, between human nature and the human mind. Next, in "The Cartography of the Alexandrian: Anti-Ciceronianism in Milton's Eden," Kaley Jemison argues that the infinite proliferation of Milton's Eden mirrors the excessive floridity of Ciceronian rhetoric and that Adam and Eve's efforts to bring order to Earth relay the poet's the author's rejection of Ciceronian rhetoric,. Following, Joshua Adair's beautifully written memoir, "The Girl With The Gravestone Sidewalk: A Poetics of the Dead" invites us to consider how history and memory haunt us. A challenging historical approach to Nigeria's serious environmental problems, David Awoarwo's "Back to the Future: Culture, Environmental Management and Sustainable Development in Nigeria since the Mid-1970s"calls for the insights that can be gained from history via different Nigerian groups in the pre-colonial period, on finding political action on the part of government and the attitude of Nigerians towards the environment responsible for his country's woes. An important Northern story from new author, Walter M. Young's "Origin Relations: Mother of the North" ends our offerings this spring. We are honored to premiere this talented author's evocative and educational story of two individuals escape from residential school.
"

No *quint* is complete without its visual component. This issue's images are located far away from Spring's salty slush. I hope you enoy the sunshine and warm weather they offer! Here's to good reading and viewing, warmer weather and new leaves, thought-provoking material and a cup of something hot for the cool spring evenings. We at *the quint* wish you all the happiness longer days and windy afternoons can bring. *the quint* will be back in June with more offerings for reading and viewing in time for the lazy, hazy days of summer to come.

Sue Matheson
Editor

A Briar Islander

Sue Matheson

NORTHERN INTERFACE

by Tyler A. Turcotte

For Buddett

*Ap*é, boy. *Pee-toin*? Drink? I want to tell you about my first impression of your people and home. I must give the place feeling before I leave. I hope you won't resent me now that I'm leaving. I truly am grateful that your people, the Swampy Cree of Burnt Cross Lake welcomed me so soon after my arrival. I have to admit I was a little nervous when I first got here. It was not the murdered and missing signs on the highway coming into the territory, nor was it the habits of the people, it was that damn baseball game.

That day is a clear picture in my mind still. There was no liquor left after the hair of the dog that bit that morning when I staggered towards the knocking at my door. My renaissance was over and the Maritimes were behind me. I scrambled to find clothes and ash a cigarette before peering through the blinds to see who was knock-knocking on white man's door. I did not know what I was then, but you all knew. I came from the highway. I was an outsider. I opened my door to my first Swampy woman:

"Hello-"

"*Tansi*, are you the new teacher?" "I think so".

"Do you play whip pitch?" "I've played baseball before".
"Ok, we need you right away, *astum*".

I hoped the game would be like beer league slow pitch games back on the river. After a short drive up the dirt road, I followed her into the ball diamond and its surrounding parking dirt, pulled in, and when I did I was so distracted by the scenery I did not see her lips pointing to a parking place. I was looking at the crowd of you guys sitting, standing, everywhere. I slowed to a stop on the dirt to look on some 600, eh? More than half you guys anyway.

It was a brown apparition of fabric and flesh, of earth and trees, of water and air, and the entire world was tangled up in it. Behold the northern interface, I thought, first contact and all its glory. I got out of my truck and could tell word had spread about a new white player at

the diamond. A man standing by the dugout holding a red jersey was waving me over so I ran to him,

"Tansi boy, get dressed, we need you right away, we up one run, our right fielder right hurt he is. There one more up to bat. We shut down this inning, it's over. Two outs. Bases loaded. No pressure, white man."

He laughed by outstretching his tongue to his chin, like this, tilting his head back and said, "neee". I felt the pressure from the crowd. I said I played baseball, I never said I was a baseball player. Across my chest read *Braves* in bold white. I was tossed a glove and told to take right field so that the game could continue. An easy win I'm sure they

thought.

I jogged out to right field and turned to face the batter. Looking across the field I saw the mass of the community, but through the crowd of mumbling men and laughing women the sound that stood out the most were dogs barking on the dirt road next to the field. I squinted to get a better look at the males mauling each other in the dust. I could hear Nanabush, Wisageejack, the Witigoo, Glooscap, the ravens and the coyotes all barking at me.

The volume of the crowd brought the game back into focus, my great cause. Then it occurred to me that I could be tortured and executed as though it were a public carnival if I fucked up the game. While I swam in fears and fantasies of being acculturated, assimilated, being blown, and brutally murdered as the hero… I heard the ting. It was the ting of a bat on
ball for the ages. The crowd went silent as the ball soared into the air. I saw it in the quiet of the

sky and thought, “this is it, not only have I participated, I have contributed; I can be the revolutionary leader, the idealist I dreamed of, I can be carried out of here on the shoulders of the people with a dove on my shoulder,” but before I could finish the thought I stepped in too close and misread the ball. It grazed the top of my glove… barely touching the surface… and fell to the ground.

As I stood there in right field, a frozen idiot looking down on the ball at my feet, I felt all my idealism of working on the reserve crash down on me. Rather than think of the next step I could only fixate on the problem. I was deaf. I was blind. Dumb. Numb like I am now, brother. That scene comes from the darkness of my memory and into focus often: the leaves of grass; a shouting crowd, the center fielder cursing at me as he sprints in my direction for the ball; cursing at me in English and Cree as he stoops to grab the ball. He turns to throw it to home plate but it’s too late.

I lost you guys that game. Just another white disappointment to the swampy Cree. You guys are used to it, neee. It is no wonder that was the only one I ever played on the reserve. I could not face you then. I did not look to see if anyone was looking at me and I did not understand the language to hear the insults from the bleachers because public school did not want me too. I did not want to. I left the dug-out got into my truck and drove back to my temporary dwelling on the other side of the reservation. Of course, you know where the story goes from here, another white disappointment for the Swampy Cree.

Farewell. *Ekosani Jamis*.

Evoking Heaven by Looking at Earth: Rudyard Kipling's Metaphysical Materialism

by R. Eric Tippin, Cambridge University, Cambridge, United Kingdom

On November 28, 1902, Rudyard Kipling wrote to G.K. Chesterton's publisher thanking him for a copy of that young author's book of poems, *The Wild Knight*, before observing that "we all begin with arranging and elaborating all the Heavens and Hells and stars and tragedies we can lay our poetic hands on--later we see folk--just common people under the heavens" (*The Letters* 263). Though this observation may not describe the arc of Chesterton's work, it is generally true of Kipling's, much of which is situated between heaven and hell and squarely on humankind, its trades, and the tackle of those trades. Chesterton himself would write later in his life that Kipling "pierced through to the romantic, imaginative matter of . . . things themselves" (42-43). John Buchan, reflecting on conversations with Kipling at London dinner parties, recalls how he "had interest in every detail of the human comedy," and would "raven the heart out of a subject" (V). Both Kipling's contemporaries and, more recently, scholars have drawn

attention to his materialistic writing—his focus on the quotidian. For example, Stephen Gwynn points out "his passionate desire for concrete information" (213), and John Lee believes "Kipling made the common man at his common occupation, and sometimes the occupation itself, the subject of a large amount of his prose and verse" (265). E.M. Forster claims Kipling "pushes [the inner life] into the background and brings material strength and material organization to the front" (24). As Forster hints, this focus on the material seems to necessitate a suppression of the spiritual in Kipling's work. Kipling himself claims that he willfully avoids writing about supernatural mysteries, stating "I have seen too much evil and sorrow and wreck of good minds on the road to Endor to take one step along that perilous track" (*Something* 215), and hints that another motive for not using his own experiences of the noumenal realm is his concern for "the 'weaker brethren'—and sisters" (*Something* 217). Kipling's wariness of spirituality is possibly heightened by his belief that his sister's mental illness was due to her "meddling with the occult" as Andrew Lycett says (117), but, whatever his motives, Kipling admits to conscientiously avoiding the direct handling of the spiritual in his own writing,[1] and his critics, from his own time to this, have recognized the general success of his resolution.

Still, there is another almost contradictory phenomenon less recognized in Kipling scholarship. Both Kipling's contemporaries, such as Chesterton and Forster, and later writers such as Gwynn and Lee, who trumpet Kipling's clear focus on the material world, also balk at the idea that Kipling is a merely materialist writer. They seem to believe that, though Kipling's writing appears earth-bound, its effects on the reader reach beyond the temporal realm. Chesterton writes that Kipling "has not been frightened by that brutal materialistic air which clings only to words," but rather "perceive[s] the philosophy of steam and of slang" (38). Chesterton does not expand on what he means by "philosophy," but seems to believe it allows Kipling to see beyond the material aspects of his subjects. Vernon Lee, in a study of Kipling's prose, argues that his techniques—specifically the one in which he moves quickly from the abstract to the concrete—"may, no doubt, degenerate into a trick," indicating her belief that Kipling's style has a certain sham significance (204). On the other hand, Forster, though admitting that Kipling is full of "putty, brass, and paint," does not see this as the whole picture: "Words that can move the reader so deeply, that have an almost physical effect upon him, cannot be words of a charlatan" (13). For Forster, then, Kipling is not a trickster or a "charlatan," and must be a genuine practitioner of some art—an art which Forster clarifies a few sentences later by calling it a "magic." Magic and staunch materialism are usually treated in separate spheres of thought, yet Forster juxtaposes the two as if they belong together.

Forster is not alone in describing Kipling's use of language that resonates beyond materialism. J.M. Barrie chooses the word "magic" to describe Kipling's style (*Critical Heritage* 79); R.G. Collingwood, James Morris, Yin Liu, Jacqueline Bratton all describe Kipling's work as magical or mystical in some way.[2] Most telling is T.S. Eliot's answer to those who would call Kipling's focus on the material "shallow." Using the metaphor of depth, in a characteristic sweeping generality Eliot says, "Kipling is not merely possessed of penetration, but almost 'possessed' of a kind of second sight . . . There are deeper and darker caverns which he penetrated . . . Kipling knew something of the things that are underneath, and of the things which are beyond the frontier" (20). To say an author

like Kipling—who explicitly states that he chooses to avoid the supernatural realm and who is known for his fierce materialism—is "possessed of a kind of second sight" and privy to "the things which are beyond the frontier" might seem contradictory if not for the overwhelming agreement among Kipling scholars on the same two contrary claims: Kipling is staunchly material, and Kipling is mysteriously metaphysical.

There is, it is argued, an explanation for Eliot's and others' claims that Kipling has a metaphysical effect while championing the material. That explanation lies in what might be termed Kipling's *metaphysical materialism*. This essay argues that what Eliot and Kipling's other critics claim about his material and metaphysical writing is the result of a form of platonic idealism in which the physical realm is seen as a dim reflection of the spiritual realm. Because Kipling describes humans and material objects so concretely and with so much veneration, his writing tends to create *in the reader* a sense of defamiliarized mystery and extra-material inflection. Paradoxically, then, Kipling's prose is so material-focused, it is often perceived as metaphysical by his critics and many readers. Therefore, when Barrie, Lee, Chesterton, Forster, Eliot, Collingwood, and others call their experience of reading Kipling "magical" or "mystical" they are recording a what Plato calls a response to "true beauty" (*Phaedrus* 34). It is beyond the purview of this paper to offer judgments upon the substance (psychological, spiritual, or otherwise) of that sensation. Rather it examines two of Kipling's common prose techniques that work to evoke a certain noumenal *response* in his readers, namely, writing of material things spiritually and the use of a prose style that suggest the primal and the a-temporal. While this effect cuts across all of Kipling's oeuvre, it is tracked here in two texts from two different prose genres: *Stalky & Co.,* fiction, *Something of Myself,* non-fiction.

Treating the Material Spiritually

At times Kipling adopts what might be called a metaphysical language when describing or explaining physical realities, which, in turn, gives those physical objects the illusion of spiritual significance to the reader. Some might call this inclination in Kipling pagan—like a pantheist worshiping a mountain—or superstitious—like a sailor taking a caul to sea. Indeed, A.L.F. Rivet points out Kipling's sympathy for pagan philosophy over Christianity in *Puck of Pook's Hill*. However, neither "pagan" nor "superstitious" catches the right meaning of Kipling's practice of treating the physical spiritually. He is driven neither by religious inclination like a pagan nor by misguided belief in false correlations as is a superstitious individual. His treatment is, rather, a reverence for some object that, while it is expressed in spiritual language, only serves to uphold the materiality of that object. He reveres certain objects precisely because they *are* objects and serve some practical, earthly function, not because they point to heaven or prove some mystical link.

One such passage is found in *Stalky & Co.*. In the chapter, "Flag of Our Country" a conservative MP gives a speech to the schoolboys at the College (the Coll. as it is referred to in the book) in an attempt to boost the students' patriotism and imperial fervor "because the boys of to-day made the men of to-morrow, and upon the men of tomorrow the fair fame of their glorious native land depended" (*Stalky* 217). In the course of his speech, to add effect to his words, the MP unfurls "a large calico Union Jack" and calls it the "concrete symbol of their land—worthy of all honour and reverence!" (219). The boys' response, however, reveals a side of Kipling that may be unexpected, for it comes

into conflict with the imperialism of the MP:

> [The boys] looked in silence. They had certainly seen the thing before—down at the coastguard station, or through a telescope, half-mast high when a brig went ashore on Braunton sands; above the roof of the Golf Club, and in Keyte's window, where a certain kind of striped sweetmeat bore it in paper on each box. But the College never displayed it; it was no part of the scheme of their lives; the Head had never alluded to it; their fathers had not declared it unto them. It was a matter shut up, sacred and apart. What, in the name of everything caddish, was he driving at, who waved that horror before their eyes? (219).

Readers of *Stalky* know that silence is a rare attitude for these particular boys, and immediately this unfamiliar sudden shift casts a pall over the scene. This unfamiliarity may also be exacerbated by expectations that Kipling, a conservative himself, is in sympathy with the MP–that Kipling is, as George Orwell says, "a jingo imperialist . . . morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting" and will make his sympathetic characters act accordingly (1). The surprise of the passage is that they do not act accordingly. Rather, they look on in "silence," which seems to indicate either embarrassment or shame at something sacred being desecrated. Kipling's choice of the word "thing" to describe the Union Flag in the sentence following contributes to this unfamiliar, even embarrassed atmosphere, for it seems so uncharacteristic of Kipling's usual attention to *le mot juste*. As Gwynn points out, Kipling ordinarily has "a desire to call everything by its right name" (214), but in this moment of the boys' silence he calls the Union Flag "the thing," like someone describing a distasteful work of art they refuse to dignify by naming. This attitude is solidified in the last line when the flag is called "that horror."

But in what sense is the flag a nameless "thing" or "horror"? The emotions of horror and distaste can come from very different sources. The horror of the child dreaming of a monster is far different than the "divine horror" Edmund Burke speaks of in his treatise *On the Sublime and Beautiful*—one, he claims, that is expressed by King David and Horace during their encounters with "a force which nothing can withstand" (1064). One type of horror comes from the vileness of the observed object and the other from the glory of it. Kipling's characters seem to demonstrate the latter. The Union Flag is a "thing" and a "horror" not because it is vile but because it is, as Kipling says, "sacred and apart," something not to be treated casually or waved by just anyone. This is veneration of spiritual proportions—the kind of sentiment expressed by those who encounter divine beings and react in horror, as pointed out by Burke. Still, the object of this veneration is not divine, but a material, "calico" flag.

The remainder of the passage, which would logically establish the reason for the boys' hushed veneration, tells of the flag in material places: "at the coastguard station," on British ships, at a leisure club, in a store window, and even on the wrapper of a "certain kind of striped sweetmeat" (219). Again, readers are left wondering what differs between the MP's display of the flag and these varied displays—what makes one proper and the other "a horror." Sweetmeat wrappers and golf club flagpoles do not seem, at first, to be any more appropriate than a dramatic unfurling with grand words. However, each proper place Kipling lists for displaying the flag, unlike the brash patriotic fervour of the MP, is connected with some material or vocational aspect of the imperial

experience: war, trade, shipping, leisure, native food, and class. These are the activities and products worthy of such a symbol to Kipling. Andrew Rutherford and other critics have also noticed this impulse in Kipling to extol "the qualities men show in their work, and their achievements that result from it (bridges built, ships salvaged, pictures painted, famines relieved)" (xi). In this passage and elsewhere, Kipling tells his readers what he believes should be lauded—the true 'spiritual' spaces where the flag should be hoisted and printed.

Kipling follows this demonstration of the proper displays for the Union Flag with a near antithesis of ideas. The images go from the open air (golf courses, harbors, and shop fronts) to the hidden and the closed off: "[the Union Flag] was a matter shut up, sacred and apart." This sudden shift is jarring. Kipling moves precipitously from open, salty, sweet, airy, material images to the mysterious if not spiritual concepts of hiding, sacredness, and holiness or being set apart. Here, in the same paragraph are two impulses—to glory in the trades and tackle the Union Flag represents and to keep that flag hidden and set apart from those who do not yet understand its full symbolism. Kipling is holding up a material object as something to be gloried in and, at the same time, is unwilling to profane it by waving it before an assembly of schoolboys. He does not deny that the flag is a symbol or even that it is "sacred and apart." Rather, he alters the reason for venerating it. The conservative MP claims in his speech that the flag stands for "the fair fame of their glorious native land" (217). Kipling sees it as connected to the materials and activities that have shaped that land and its empire: fighting, shipping, and trade. The "sin" of the MP is not that he calls the flag a "concrete symbol," but rather that he divorces that symbol from the material objects it represents. What is concrete to Kipling is not the flag but its imperial settings. He does not deny the importance of the flag or that the country behind the flag could be great, but he insists on treating the symbol with *more* veneration because it represents the activities and materials—good, bad, pleasurable, painful, indifferent—of "men in a world of men" (*A Choice* 98). He calls his readers, perhaps unintentionally, to revere the Union Flag, not because it is a symbol of greatness, glory, or some other non-concrete concept, but for its material symbolism. His tone has spiritual elements, but his object is material.

The effect of the event does not end in the assembly, and the boys' reaction following it shows not only the inappropriate treatment of the flag, but also the unworthiness of the man holding it before them. Throughout the rest of the story, the boys show an undefined embarrassment, sullenness, even anger that spills over in vituperative lists of insults about the MP—a "Flopshus Cad, an Outrageous Stinker, a Jelly-bellied Flag-flapper" (220). They seem to dislike the kind of immaterial, politicised patriotism they have just seen displayed, and the insult the boys settle upon and use again in the chapter is "flag-flapper," for that is the offense which has brought on all the other insults. They do not object to the flag but rather to the one who has waved it. Again, this anger, like the horror at the sight of the Union Flag, has at least two possible sources: a distaste for the MP's form of patriotism or a species of patriotism far deeper and more mystical than that of the MP.

Readers are given an indication of which when Stalky, later in the day, after sulking and breaking up the volunteer cadet corps, puts his head on a desk and begins "to blub

like anything" (221). The text does not explain the reason for Stalky's emotional reaction, but from the context of the passage it seems likely that he is reacting like a witness to a violent tragedy. He has seen something holy and sacred desecrated by a person unfit (in Kipling's eyes) to handle and display it—lost his innocence, in a sense. He has seen not only a flag divorced from its proper material setting, but also by a person who does not understand the work involved in making that flag great. As the narrator of the story writes, the MP "profaned the most secret places of [the boys'] souls with outcries and gesticulations" (218). The word 'profane' is telling, for it indicates that the boys' patriotism is sacred and that the MP is unworthy to speak of it. Kipling's imagery is that of the MP tearing down veils like some parliamentary Antiochus Epiphanes and smudging "shining goals" of "Glory" and "Honour" with dirty hands (218). Kipling further emphasizes the man's unworthiness when he writes that even the boys' "fathers had not declared [the flag's glory] unto them," and the MP is a person of far less authority to the boys (219). Kipling, then, by declaring the MP to be unworthy to wave the flag or speak to the boys of honor, glory, and empire, demonstrates a patriotism and love of country far more mystical than that of the tub-thumping MP but still firmly rooted in material considerations. This feint of spirituality, it is argued, contributes to the illusory effect upon Kipling's readers—that hint of 'something more' in his words than a mere discussion of the material.

Another chapter of *Stalky & Co* demonstrates Kipling's tendency to treat physical realities spiritually, but rather than an object, he shows veneration for a man, and not just a man but a man at some kind of labor—*homo faber*. "Slaves of the Lamp, II," the final installment (in terms of the book's inner chronology) of the *Stalky & Co.* stories, occurs after the boys of the Coll. have left school and spent time working for the empire, mostly in India. In the chapter, four of the boys return to England and gather in a school reunion to share stories of their imperial exploits. Their talk, inevitably it seems, drifts to the one character who is not with them at their reunion—A.L. Corkran, Stalky himself, whom they have all encountered and who has, in their eyes, begun to grow into a demigod of sorts.

The first circumstance which gives the scene a sense of spiritual veneration of this imperial laborer is his absence, for it gives the impression that Stalky is beyond, even above the physical scene happening in the chapter; his presence would put him on a level with the other characters, while his absence allows him a higher place. His legend grows in his absence like Nelson's after Trafalgar. The setting—a gathering of Stalky's disciples in an upper room—only contributes to this spiritual aura around the man. His absence, furthermore, allows characters to laud him freely and sing his praises, as they do, declaring him "'the great man of his Century'" (281) and going so far as to ascribe to him spiritual titles: Stalky is "'a Sikh,'" a "'Guru of sorts,'" and "like a serene Brahmini bull" (283, 285, 281). In reality, Stalky is merely a clever independent British officer in India whose skill with people and quick wits make him seem invulnerable in "tight" situations and make him a terror to those chiefs who oppose the British in India. He is, as Janet Adam Smith writes, an "ingenious and crafty hero working with others in a vividly realized situation—to do his job" (16). Readers further understand Stalky's real value when, late in the chapter, it is predicted that Stalky and those like him will show their

true merit when there is "a really big row on" (296), possibly pointing to Kipling's own fears of German rearmament and an impending European war (Lycett 296). To Kipling, Stalky is a product of the British system, a man among men, yet Kipling chooses to glorify this worldly type by using other-worldly diction. To restate, Stalky's real value to Kipling lies in his contribution to the empire, but Kipling's choice of the religious words "Sikh" and "Guru" elevates this worker and his work to a higher level, beyond Christian mythology and into other religions. It is as if his imperialism is not only interested in bringing land and peoples under his control but also beliefs and traditions, making him a pan-religious deity. Isabel Quigley has recognized this faux-divine status of Stalky and the reality of his work beneath it—both his material utility to his nation and his quasi-religious status in the book. She writes that for Kipling, Stalky is "not merely useful but indispensable to the Empire," and that "such a man needs devoted followers . . . to whom he seems godlike, unquestionably right" (xxvi). As with the Union Flag, which is a symbol of material things worth venerating, Stalky is shown to be the symbol of a man worth venerating and not in ordinary language, but with spiritual epithets.

As the chapter progresses Stalky's admirers grow more and more religious in their praise. They recount that after carrying out certain exploits unapproved by his superiors, he "loafed up to Simla at his leisure, to be offered up on the horns of the altar" (295). Kipling moves quickly from calling Stalky a type of Guru to connecting him with Hebraic sacrifice, "The horns of the altar" being a direct quotation from 1 Kings 1:50.[3] There is an almost blasphemous brashness in Kipling's saying that Stalky "loafed" to Simla for his metaphorical sacrifice. Lambs, goats, and other animals used for Hebrew sacrifices are dragged to the altar, and Jesus, the "true" Hebrew sacrifice in Christian tradition, sweats drops of blood before his sacrifice; however, Stalky, the imperial sacrifice, has no such fears or any sense of urgency. He appears more self-assured, more worldly, more like a man, and, paradoxically, more like a god.

The penultimate image readers have of Stalky is in a "camp in Jullunder . . . sitting on one chair of state with half the population groveelin' before him, a dozen Sikh babies on his knees, an old harridan clappin' him on the shoulder, and a garland o' flowers round his neck" (296). Stalky is now a benevolent sahib, loved by the natives of India as well as his fellow British. He has become what Kipling and many of the New Imperialists longed for the British empire to become, "a profitable estate" adding "to the happiness, prosperity, security and peace of the subject peoples" as James Morris writes (79-80). The "garland o' flowers" with its pagan overtones, and the "dozen Sikh babies on his knee" only add to his semi-divine status. Stalky has become an idealized Anglo-Indian, much like Colonel Creighton of *Kim*. He is still British, and yet he can appear to be—perhaps is—one of the natives of India, when he chooses. He shifts seamlessly throughout the chapter from the sly infantryman, who uses the dead body of a man he has "abolished" as a way to incite native-on-native violence (*Stalky* 287), to the benign, pan-religious patriarch, wreathed with flowers and welcomed by both his friends and his subjects.

Kipling does not leave his readers with this elysian image of peace between the ruler and the ruled; he jolts them back to the actual value of a man like Stalky, reminding them that the spiritual images of Sikhs, Gurus, lambs, demi-gods, and saviors he has written serve material ends. The end of which he speaks is war—a "big row" (296). Stalky

is meant not for a religious quest or acquiring merit by kindly acts to subject peoples—though those activities are not looked down upon by Kipling, as is demonstrated in *Kim*—but for the more significant great game as it would be played out "on the south side of Europe" (296). His images can create the feeling of some metaphysical reality, but, when examined they often point squarely at the material things of earth.

It is this practice that Jacqueline Bratton calls Kipling's "Magic." She believes the way to grasp Kipling's art is "through an understanding of the uncritical, emotional responses which he *deliberately* sought to call up [italics mine]" (*Critical Essays* 45). She further argues that he uses his "magical powers, *hoping* to intensify and enlighten by directing the most primitive of our responses to words" (63). While it may be granted that Kipling does "intensify" certain audience responses, it is questionable and, indeed, unknowable whether this is deliberate. Readers have, indeed, called Kipling's work "magical," but it does not prove that he sought to conjure this magic, only that readers have experienced it while reading Kipling. Moreover, it is not merely the words themselves, as Bratton claims, which bring about the effect, but the material objects corresponding to those words. Throughout her study of Kipling's "magic," Bratton focuses on the power of his words, stating that the writer (including Kipling, of course) "is gifted with words; they are the Magic" (47); however, Bratton fails to make the connection between those words and Kipling's true objects of veneration—things themselves. In passages like those above, his words are a means to that material end. He spiritualizes flags and empire builders in order to solidify their materiality and humanity, and this hyper-awareness of the material and the human, as has been demonstrated, along with other style choices—which will be discussed below—brings about what Bratton calls an "irrational" and what has been called a "metaphysical" response to Kipling's writing.[4]

Prose Style Choices and Metaphysical Materialism

I have been discussing the intersection of Kipling's materialism and rhetoric that combine to create one element of his metaphysical materialism often referred to by his critics as "magic." However, as certain scholars have indicated, this perception stems specifically from his compositional techniques and stylistic choices. Brattan, as we have seen, argues that the power of Kipling is in his words—"they are the magic" (47). Barrie claims that Kipling writes in a series of vivid "lightning flashes," and "it is in these flashes that the magic lies; they are his style" (*The Critical Heritage* 79). Liu, writing on the *Just So Stories*, argues that in his use of the oral, the primal, and the visual, many of Kipling's passages have "incantory power when read aloud" (2). While his rhetorical moves of treating material things spiritually and spiritual things in material terms are vital to understanding this "magic" or "power," Kipling also makes certain style choices, particularly in his prose, that contribute to the "magic" or perceived metaphysicality repeatedly commented on in Kipling scholarship. While these techniques vary from genre to genre, from work to work, they all carry that absorption with the material that is the hallmark of his craft. Coupled with these style techniques, this devouring interest in the material works to create what has been called here a platonic response *in the readers* or the shadow of the metaphysical projected by the description of the physical. While any connection of style to reader response will necessarily involve conjecture and will beg possible exceptions, scholars typically agree that Kipling's writing evokes a metaphysical

response, and that there is a need to explore what has caused such reactions.

One work which demonstrates well Kipling's general stylistic choices is his autobiography *Something of Myself*, one of the very few works outside his voluminous letters in which Kipling seems to be writing prose in his 'own voice.' While readers should not be deceived into believing that the genre of autobiography breeds authenticity, they can be confident that Kipling is writing in a persona he wishes his readers to believe is himself and therefore in a prose style he considers his own. Readers will find these same prose techniques in other genres, but they are distilled in his *Autobiography* and therefore ripe for analysis. A passage in the opening chapter of *Something of Myself,* in which he chronicles his first steamer-passage from India to England, is a prime example of many of the stylistic tendencies readers find throughout his work that contribute to their sense of the metaphysical. The passage reads as follows:

Then those days of strong light and darkness passed, and there was a time in a ship with an immense semi-circle blocking all vision on each side of her. (She must have been the old paddle-wheel P. & O. *Ripon*.) There was a train across a desert (the Suez Canal was not yet opened) and a halt in it, and a small girl wrapped in a shawl on the seat opposite me, whose face stands out still. There was next a dark land, and a darker room full of cold, in one wall of which a white woman made a naked fire, and I cried aloud with dread, for I had never before seen a grate (4).

This passage forms its own paragraph in the book—a miniature story of a child's first experience of transcontinental travel. The first word "then" may seem a perfunctory transition, but it is also appropriate, for it sums up in one word the gaps in a child's memory. The passage preceding recounts Kipling's encounter with a fearfully large hen and his father's consolation by writing a poem for his son, and the final sentence before the passage above reads "I have thought well of hens ever since" (4). Suddenly, readers are tossed into another memory that begins with a simple "then." But rather than showing Kipling's carelessness, this abrupt transition shows his craft. To the adult looking back on childhood, as Kipling is doing here, events years apart have no connection between them but a "then." It would be like a child to have no recollection of events between the hen and the steamer trip; therefore, the *then* serves to make this memory more accurate by its very introduction. It "flashes" upon the reader as J.M. Barrie points out in his discussion of Kipling's style, but that very flash is materially accurate to his subject.

This "flash" works in conjunction with Kipling's diction in the first clause to create a pseudo-primal feel to the first sentence and to set up the feeling of the passage. "Those days of strong light and darkness passed" contains four images: the terrestrial day, bright light, deep darkness, and the passage of time by some motion. If "primal" signifies images that are experienced both by contemporary humans and prehistoric humans, images almost universally understood by humankind, Kipling's first clause of the paragraph can, with confidence, be called "primal," for each of its four images have deep roots in human experience. Furthermore, the phrase "those days" is broad enough to contain all time before Kipling wrote that phrase. "Days" is not merely a reference to the rotation of the earth but also to the concept of history—a shared idea for sentient beings with memories. The sentence continues with more time-specific images of human-built tools and geometry: "a ship," "a semi-circle blocking all vision." Of course, readers

will understand that the "semi-circle" is the paddlewheel of a steam ship, which Kipling indicates in his aside, but before the parentheses, the imagery is hardly less primal than the first clause. This use of primal imagery is not limited to this passage in Kipling, though here it is exaggerated. Kipling has a tendency to use images and sentence structures that can be categorized as primal. As Chesterton says of the *Just So Stories*, they read like "fairy tales told to men in the morning of the world" ("Chesterton Reviews" 274). Although Chesterton is making a statement about Kipling's style, he is primarily speaking of his own feeling toward Kipling's words. He is saying not only that Kipling's words are primal, but that when he reads Kipling's words he feels like a man "in the morning of the world"—a mystical feeling, if not metaphysical. Readers may have the same feeling as Chesterton as they approach this passage beginning with such universal images as light, dark, ships, semicircles, and the passing of time by motion. This 'primal' writing technique is one aspect of Kipling's metaphysical materialism in that it evokes feelings toward the text that have no corresponding objects in readers' material experiences—only in their, perhaps romanticized, perception of antiquity or the purport of "first things." Kipling's text need not be truly metaphysical in order for it to evoke such responses in readers; indeed, the fact that Kipling's text is so focused on the basic materials of the universe may allow it to affect its readers more deeply, for by describing real images he allows readers to project reality onto their perceptions of "first things," which, in reality, they cannot know.

Another important technique in the first sentence and indeed the entire passage adding to its primal, metaphysical feel is Kipling's use of indefinite articles: "a time," "a ship," "a train," "a small girl," "a desert," "a dark land," "a darker room," "a white woman," "a grate." Kipling's two asides serve to add detail to these nouns without exact place or time, but the great weight of the description in the passage comes from general types of specific objects. Writing "a desert" rather than "the Arabian desert" may serve to make the image of a desert larger, more shadowy, more like the "ideal" desert in the mind of each reader who has a concept of "desert" —less like any real place on earth, and, somehow, more real—in a platonic sense—than any place on earth. The same is true of "a small girl wrapped in a shawl" whose face "stands out still" but is not described. By not existing specifically on the page, she becomes more vivid, for she is the readers' ideal type of "a small girl." Kipling's technique, therefore, allows readers to project their own notional images into the passage.

The power of Kipling's indefinite articles in this passage is not only in their tendency to invoke the universal or ideal, but also in their complementary relationship with the passage's parataxis, polysyndeton, and diction. Readers can see Kipling's parataxis in three abrupt "flashes" as the scene shifts, and each time it is lashed to an indefinite noun: "there was a time in a ship . . ." "There was a train . . ." "There was next a dark land." While this is not pure parataxis, the vast distances traveled and events that transpire between shifts make the absence of transitions sufficiently jarring, and the absence of specific nouns make the trip even more mystifying and more childlike, as if the child-Kipling is waking at intervals, looking out the window at great stretches of ocean or desert and sleeping again. This parataxis exists between sentences in the paragraph; however, within each sentence, events happen in succession, each connected by a coordinating conjunction, usually "and"—what is called polysyndeton: "There was a train across a desert . . . and

a halt in it, and a small girl wrapped in a shawl . . ." Within each larger abrupt shift in place (the paragraph's parataxis), there are smaller shifts in events (polysyndeton)—quick snapshots taken by his child-eyes within larger memories. This technique, often used by those writing 'stream of consciousness' narrative, combined with Kipling's indefinite articles gives the whole scene the same sense we get from each individual image—something at the same time shaded and bright, opaque and clear, real and surreal. The images are just as a child would see them, which makes the passage feel crafted and clear, but they are also, in many places, divorced from any specific period of time, which makes them universal. "A white woman" making "naked fire" is not time-bound diction. Its objects need not exist in the nineteenth century, but could exist in the first or the tenth BC. All of these things, when combined, can serve to make Kipling's writing seem as if it is nearer "first things" than it really is, which, as has been argued, tends to lead to a certain metaphysical sensation in readers like Chesterton, Bratton, Collingwood, Barrie, and others.

The final technique Kipling utilizes in this passage and in many others is to write without, or with limited use of the simile, which makes words seem nearer to their actual objects and therefore, more primal or substantial in themselves. As Plato argues, words are merely symbols or imitations of their objects, which are, as Plato believes, types and shadows of true forms (*The Republic* X, 389, E). When words are used in metaphors or similes, then, they are three times removed from their objects, having the same relationship to what they signify as a scan of a photograph of a painting of a tree has to a real tree. Although Plato is skeptical of the practice of writing as a whole, not only in *The Republic* but the *Phaedrus*, one could argue that the most platonic form of writing is that which draws nearest its object, for it brings the reader as close as is possible to the true form of an object and consequently acquaints him or her with the object's true spiritual beauty. Seen in a platonic context, Kipling's passage above has more power to move because it refuses to compare beyond the necessary conventions of written language. The sentence, "A white woman made naked fire, and I cried aloud with dread, for I had never seen a grate" does indeed have buried metaphors, especially in the words "white" and "naked"; nonetheless, both words are used so appropriately—the foreignness of "white" in contrast to most humans he has experienced in India and "naked" modifying one of Earth's most primal phenomena, fire—that readers may forget they merely symbolize human skin color and the presence of a flame *en plain air*. Most of this passage's images, like negative statements, seem only to signify themselves; therefore, they appear to many readers more primal than they would had Kipling written, "I cried aloud with dread like a wounded rabbit" or some such simile. Collingwood calls attention to these techniques when he lists Kipling as a practitioner of "art as magic." Collingwood believes "magic" to be illusory, which lines up nicely with what Kipling is accomplishing in this passage, for none of the techniques described here have any relation to spirituality; nonetheless, they create the illusion of primal, first things, and of ideal deserts, children, and oceans.

The "illusion" of the primal in this passage is enhanced by the presence of what Erich Auerbauch terms "Biblical narrative" style in his close reading of Genesis 22—the testing of Abraham. Auerbauch writes that Abraham's journey with Isaac is portrayed in the passage "like a silent progress through the indeterminate and the contingent, a holding

of the breath, a process which has no present, which is inserted, like a blank duration, between what has passed and what lies ahead" (10). While much of this observation could be applied to Kipling's passage above, Auerbach's use of the word "silent" is particularly helpful in understanding Kipling's own journey, for the passage consists only of images separated by "indeterminate" time periods until the final line in which the child-Kipling "cries aloud" for fear of "naked fire." This connection with "biblical narrative" style, "in which time and place are undefined and call for interpretation" as Auerbach writes, can be important in understanding Kipling's critics' view of his writing as primal. Its very connection to the Torah's prose style, in its English translation, lends itself to readings of his work as ancient or primal but also gives evidence to Collingwood's idea of his art as somehow illusory and unintentionally magical. The fact that both Kipling and the writer(s) of Genesis tell a story "in a few independent sentences whose syntactical connection is of the most rudimentary sort," (Auerbach 9), that they both avoid simile, and that they move the story with polysyndeton does not prove that Kipling's prose is primal, but it does increase the likelihood that a reader will interpret it as such; many have, as has been demonstrated.

It must be understood that Kipling's use of stylistic techniques which evoke the primal or universal are far from the only notable features in his writing. Kipling is a skilled artist with many "brushes," including metaphor, simile, personification, and most other conventions of prose stylists and poets; what has been pointed out here are his tendencies. He can be enchanting while using simile as when he writes lines like, "You'll take the old Aurelian Road through shore-descending pines / Where, blue as any peacock's neck, the Tyrrhene Ocean shines" (*A Choice* 287). Still, it is argued that he seems more metaphysical when his images and techniques are most primal and when he lashes his words as near to their images as he can without allowing metaphor to come between.

Any study of Kipling's metaphysical or spiritual effects should take into account Kipling's intended materialism, for if Kipling were writing with the intention of being spiritual his effects would naturally be spiritual or magical, and he would become the purveyor of some system of belief beyond the material realm. However, if he is writing with the intention of presenting merely the phenomenal world, his metaphysical effects should be elusive, shadowy, and imprecise, for they are unintended spiritual effects and merely hints or shadows of the spiritual. This spiritual elusiveness is what we find in Kipling—or at least in critics who have reacted to his work. While critics such as Eliot, Forster, Chesterton, and Collingwood have all noted the feeling of 'magic' in Kipling's work, C.S. Lewis's account of his encounter with Kipling's materialism is of particular interest. He recounts, "After I have been reading Kipling for some days together there comes a sudden check. One moment I am filled with delight at the variety and solidity of his imagination; and then, at the very next moment, I am sick, sick to death, of the whole Kipling world" (232). He goes on to say he believes there are two causes for this sudden "sickness": "one arising from what may be called the formal, the other from what may be called the material character of his work" (232-233). Lewis admits delight at Kipling's "variety and solidity," but that delight is not lasting, and, rather than dying away peacefully like one's preference for an over-worn shirt, it turns into revulsion. Further, that revulsion is due to the "formal" and "material character of his work"—the two things, which, as has

been shown, form his metaphysical materialism. While certain of Kipling's techniques evoke a "spiritual" or "magical" response in his readers, this spirituality is subject to his interest in the material—therefore it can only hint at the spiritual; it can only create desire in the reader for something non-material; it cannot provide that thing which he or she desires. In this framework of thinking, Lewis' feeling of delight in Kipling's work's being followed suddenly by disgust is understandable. Desire without fulfillment is only pleasant as long as one believes the object of desire can fulfill; therefore, when Lewis realizes Kipling has no power to provide spiritual nourishment with his "solidity," he, understandably, feels he has been misled and recoils. Perhaps he begins to see Kipling's effect for what it is—the result of a technique, a style. To Lewis, then, reading Kipling's beautiful representations of the material world for long stretches is like smelling a series of gourmet meals without ever being given the chance to eat them—always enchanting but never fulfilling.

Conclusion

Lewis's example alone is not conclusive evidence for Kipling's metaphysical effect, for it is merely anecdotal and is as much about Lewis's personal spirituality as it is about Kipling's effect. It is not, however, merely about Lewis's spirituality. Lewis sees some causal relationship between his reaction and, as he recounts, Kipling's "formal and material" characteristics. This effect is more noteworthy when considered alongside other critics who have used words such as "incantatory," "magic," and "mystical," to describe Kipling's writing and Barrie's claim that "though it is by coarseness that Mr. Kipling gains his end, which is to make us suddenly sick, he does gain it, and so he is an artist" (*The Critical

Heritage 80). Lewis's response is not isolated to his own spirituality but is recorded, in different ways, by Kipling's critics both in his time and in this.

If we believe Kipling's own claims about his writing, he has not set out to write spiritually, but in various works at various times there is little doubt in many of his critics' minds of spiritual effect in his work. One could argue that the material world is simply more real to Kipling, easier to describe; therefore, he describes it and gives it his energy and power of mind. That very energy, that devouring material interest, that ability, as Buchan says, to "raven the heart out of a subject" (V), along with his technique of spiritualizing the material, has created what has been called here "platonic" and critics have called mysterious, deep, primal, magical, or spiritual effects in his work. Those effects seem to have far more to do with the reader's perception of spirituality than with any spirituality present in the work. Indeed, if Kipling sees the material world as a dream, it is a dream from which he does not wish to wake; if he sees it as a shadow, he finds pleasure in sitting in its shade.

Notes

With certain exceptions that will be noted below.

[2] Collingwood claims Kipling is a prime example of a writer using "art as magic" (70); Morris calls him "a great and often mystifying artist" (256); Liu writes, "Kipling himself exercised an ingenious and powerful magic" (9). Bratton, unique among Kipling critics, focuses almost solely on what she calls "Kipling's Magic Art" and argues, "The

effect of words lay for him in their irrational potency" (48).

[3] Quigley also sees the 1 Kings passage as Kipling's source for his image, "horns of the altar." However, Quigley also points out that Kipling believes the "popular misconception" that "victims could be offered up on the horns of the altar. In fact, they were to provide someone seeking sanctuary with a support to cling to" (325).

[4] In this section, I have drawn my examples from *Stalky & Co.* but this spiritualizing of the physical is present throughout the Kipling canon. Other representative examples can be found in *Kim*, "The Bridge Builders," "The Deep Sea Cables," "Wireless," and the *Just So Stories*.

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Bay of Fundy #2

Sue Matheson

“I am I because my little dog knows me,” or, the rhetoric of (non)narrative: (queer)identity in Gertrude Stein’s *Geographical History*

by Jill Darling, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and Dearborn

When suddenly you know that the geographical history of America has something to do with everything it may be like loving any man or any woman or even a little or a big dog. Yes it may, that is to say it does. (Stein, *Geographical History* 391)

The Geographical History, she told the reporter, was written “somewhat more clearly” than some of her pervious writings. Asked about the difficulties of her style, Gertrude maintained: “I cannot afford to be clear because if I was I would risk destroying my own thought. Most people destroy their thought before they create it. That is why I often repeat a word again and again—because I am fighting to hold the thought.

(Mellow, *Charmed Circle* 503)

Written in the summer after her famous American tour over the fall, winter, and into early spring of 1934-35, *The Geographical History of America or The Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind*, and the related work, *What are Masterpieces and Why are there So Few of Them*, come out of Stein’s experiences of the tour as well as the lectures she gave during the tour.[1] Before the American tour, Stein was well known, but not widely read, having had trouble publishing her work. However, when T*he Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* was published in 1934 it became instantly popular in the United States. In 1934, Stein and Toklas had been living together in Paris for nearly thirty years and although Stein had become a popular figure of attention in the media, she was still not taken seriously as a writer. *The Autobiography* was well received for its accessibility (it wasn’t as difficult as much of her previous work), as well as its content (it reads like a history of the art scene in Paris in the 1920s). About the time *The Autobiography* was released, Stein’s opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* premiered on Broadway and was also a popular success. With the combination of these, and the encouragement of friends and advisors, Stein agreed to do the American Tour. The tour consisted of a series of lectures which she wrote to give in cities all over the United States, as well as another series on “Narration” which she gave specifically, over a series of meetings, at the University of Chicago.[2]

1. According to Haas, Stein’s post-American tour writing can roughly be divided into entity and identity writing. Identity writing is writing for an audience in work such as in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and *Everybody’s Autobiography*, *Lectures in America*, *Narration*, and *What are Masterpiece*s, among others. Entity writing is considered by Stein to be “real” writing, which were often more like philosophical reflections, which include the *Geographical History* (1*11, 115*). What are Masterpieces, written around the same time as *The Geographical History*, takes up the History’s ideas and themes and presents them in a shorter, more concise and clear manner. Or as Lénárt-Cheng argues, Stein herself saw the autobiographical writing as the “moneymaking style” as opposed to her other more “creative” work. Dydo argues, however, that there was no real separation between audience and real writing over the course of the work: “Her texts do not progress linearly from one concern, say, with grammar, or with the novel, to another, nor do they go as I had earlier thought, from “real writing” to public or audience writing. They never move away from real writing, and Stein’s real voice was never lost” (5).

2. See Mellow for more on the American Tour.

It seems appropriate that Stein's success came with *The Autobiography*, even though the romantic/domestic relationship between Stein and Toklas was never openly discussed. Toklas was, according to scholars, instrumental to Stein's work on all levels, and their shared domestic life infused Stein's work. As Shari Benstock points out, "Stein's relationship with Toklas was the occasion for linguistic experimentation, exploration, and the expression of childlike joy. For Stein and Toklas, the assumption of an artistic priority is particularly important in understanding the personal dimensions of their Paris life" (176). Also key to Stein's work was her love for, and collection of, modern art and her conversations with her contemporary artists and writers. Her fascination with American English became even more prominent while she lived in France. English, for Stein, was a means to deconstruct language, and to write "American-ness." For Stein, Benstock explains, "everything in her adult life became a subject for and was subjected to her art. So when she speaks of her own experience living in Europe, or the need to distance herself from America in order to write about it, she is also suggesting the need to distance the facts of her personal life in such a way that she can reapproach them through her writing" (14). This negotiation of attention to the materiality of language and the infusion of personal experience are central to her body of work, and its reception over her lifetime.

Stein's *The Geographical History of America* is an exploration of the relationships between consciousness, writing, identity, geography, language, and social norms. Through these, Stein interrogates the relation, or difference, between human nature (what might be some kind of "essential" identity) and human mind (which is responsible for thinking and writing) in order to theorize and enact a deconstruction of readers' understanding of what any of these terms "mean." The process of linguistic interrogation serves to distance the reader from any assumed understanding of identity, and instead to think more critically about what it means to identify. *The Geographical History* is a kind of cultural commentary focused on writing, thinking, and dismantling social organizations of language and sexuality. The formal practices of the text become strategies for enacting cultural critique and offering alternatives (languages, narratives, and content) to dominant modes of discourse and socialization.

Stein, as in much of her work, is concerned in *The Geographical History* with simultaneity, or enacting a continuous present on the page, and doing away with writing that has, as she repeats throughout, a beginning, middle, and end.[3] It is written using mainly present tense verbs and gerunds, and only occasionally, and therefore noticeably, is the writing in the past tense. At times phrases or fragmented ideas are used in place of sentences with subjects and predicates, and sometimes longer sentences get caught up in the sound of their words, repeat and circle around as if stalling their movement forward. Stein seems to be showing us that if a complete sentence has a beginning, middle, and end, then sentences that do not have subjects and predicates, or which end up in a circle of repeated words, keep from moving forward. Each word represents each new present moment; there is no past and no future but only "presence."

3. Although this may not be exactly the same kind of continuous present as in work like *Tender Buttons* and *Making of Americans,* it is I would argue yet another example of continuous present, grounded in a kind of present tense in the grammar of the language throughout, as well as on the level of the text as a whole having, as Stein writes, no beginning, middle, or end.

According to its title, *The Geographical History of America* is analogous to "the relation of human nature to the human mind." The relation between these however, is that they are not related, or their relation cannot be coherently articulated. Human nature, she writes throughout the text, "is not interesting." The human mind, on the other hand, corresponds to, has to do with, or may actually be, writing. We might interpret that the human mind is represented by writing, or that writing is proof of the human mind that thinks, writes, constructs. Writing and identity, read through Stein, are similar in that each is constructed, and discontinuous. Writing that has no beginning, middle, and end and subverts cohesive narrative structure serves as an analogy for alternative practices or identities that disrupt and call attention to social/structural norms as constructed, and constricting. *The Geographical History* is uneven, disparate, and non/narrative, as is the relationship between human nature and human mind; it may not be articulated coherently, though it nonetheless, according to Stein, deserves thinking, writing, and reflection as a process of discovery and learning.

The line famously repeated (in various ways) throughout the text, "I am I because my little dog knows me," points to the simultaneity of formal textual strategies used by Stein such as repetition, word play, and challenging the limits of the signifier and signified relationship, as well as the content of her cultural/philosophical investigation into the nature of identity formation and negotiation in the world. *The Geographical History* challenges readers' expectations by narrating from a first-person point of view while subverting how we are to read the voice of the "I" of the text. The words "identity" "masterpiece" and "autobiography," as well as other terms having to do with writing and language, nature, and romance, are repeated throughout the text; the repetition, with slight changes in usage, disorients the reader, making her reconsider how these terms "mean" and how we are to understand their use for Stein. Additionally, the text critiques the structural and the linear progression of narrative by using chapter titles that do not progress "forward." For example, chapter and section titles often seem random: "Chapter II" is followed by "Chapter III" which is followed by "Chapter II," and these are repeated as titles throughout along with variously numbered "Acts" and "Parts." Recognizing that language creates meaning, Stein reclaims ordinary terms that we otherwise take for granted, and pushes them so that they become less recognizable, calling attention to the relation between human nature and the linguistic and social construction of meaning.

As a key influence on contemporary experimental writers, Stein continues to be an example for combining formal strategy and politics. Deborah Mix explains the importance of "recognizing Stein's presence and the vocabularies she offers" and how these contribute to the "democratizing work of redefining experimentalism and the avant-garde so that we can recognize their potential to embody a libratory and decentralized politics" (5). Stein's formal, textual strategies thus open possibilities for what can be represented, or altered, through language, and point out how language is a socializing structure that must be challenged and dismantled. According to Mix, her "texts operate not by avoiding or encoding meaning . . . but by opening up meaning's possibilities" (15). Stein's politics operate simultaneously at the levels of form and content, in order to present a critique of linguistic and cultural social structures that limit possibilities for identification. Further, political engagement occurs on multiple levels: between the writer and the language of

the text, between the text and the reader, and between the reader and the world. Mix quotes Patrocinio Schweickart who states, "Literature acts on the world by acting on its readers" (21). And because there is always more work to do in the world, contemporary writers continue to look to Stein's example for engaging politics through aesthetic form.[4]

In Stein's *Geographical History* the relationships between identity and human mind and human nature are decisively unclear; Stein keeps these concepts in flux, avoiding definition. Like human nature, identity as a term is always in danger of being understood as essential, natural, intrinsic to human existence. If human nature "just is" then identity also is something that is assumed as naturally occurring; we believe that we are born with our identities. The human mind is about writing and thinking, and the use of mind and nature together in often incoherent ways seems to be part of Stein's purpose. The line between nature and construction, for example, is a constantly shifting one, or at best blurry, so that we can never be sure what we are born with, and how we are made by the world into which we are born. It is this tension, and lack of clarity, that plays out in *The Geographical History* through the circular "arguments," repetition, rhetorical play, and logical fallacies she uses to draw readers into the conversation, while refusing to draw conclusions or spell out definitive explanations. Stein's refusal to define or explain identity calls attention to the fact that even though we use the term as if we know what it means, we really have no idea; and the (slightly varied) repetition of the statement "I am I because my little dog knows me" throughout *The Geographical History* breaks the notion of identity out of the abstract box of assumed understanding. Putting identity in fluctuating relation to both human nature and human mind throughout the text puts pressure on any simple definitions; concepts become simultaneous, instead of one causing another in a hierarchy; and we, as readers, find ourselves reading them on multiple levels and in multiple directions all at once. And each turn of each term shifts the process just enough to continue to destabilize meaning, so that the writing is the thinking, which is also the reading, continuously in process of interrogation.

We can also consider this kind of writing as a queer practice; as Stein destabilizes the meaning of the terms above, Judith Butler's explanation of repetition and the destabilization of gendered identity and the lesbian subject seems especially relevant:

> Through the repeated play of this sexuality that the 'I' is . . . it is precisely the repetition of that play that establishes . . . the instability of the very category that it constitutes. For if the 'I' is a site of repetition, that is, if the 'I' only achieves the semblance of identity through a certain repetition of itself, then the 'I' is always displaced by the very repetition that sustains it. In other words, does or can the 'I' ever repeat itself, cite itself, faithfully, or is there always a displacement from its former moment that established the permanently non-self-identical status of that 'I' or its 'being lesbian'? ("Imitation" 311)

If gender, like identity, is a performance, according to Butler, then we perform our identities through repetition of our "selves"; the "I" has to repeat itself in order to achieve the "semblance of identity." The potential for "trouble" here comes by way of

4. For more on Stein's aesthetic politics and how it differs from other modernists' insistence on the separation of high and low culture, see Berry.

the impossibility of exact repetition. The "I" can't repeat or "cite itself" in the same way all the time so that there is a "non-self-identical status" more accurately representative of an "I" than a singular or stable performance (or definition) of identity. Identity is not seamless, in Butler's terms, but always shifting; recognizing this processual movement of identity (in terms of gender, lesbianism, or heterosexuality) calls attention to the fictional nature of sexual and other identity markers as given and stable. Butler continues:

> If repetition is the way in which power works to construct the illusion of a seamless heterosexual identity, if heterosexuality is compelled to repeat itself in order to establish the illusion of its own uniformity and identity, then this is an identity permanently at risk, for what if it fails to repeat, or if the very exercise of repetition is redeployed for a very different performative purpose? . . . . That there is a need for a repetition at all is a sign that identity is not self-identical. It requires to be instituted again and again, which is to say that it runs the risk of becoming de-instituted at every interval. ("Imitation" 315)

Sexuality, or identity, is not seamless, Butler argues here, even though the normative "heterosexual" is constructed as such, believed to be coherently uniform and unproblematic both in form and in content. Heterosexuality is the accepted norm, and it is so because it is seen as seamless and stable, without disruption. However, heterosexuality, as identity, is precisely not stable, nor is any singularly defined identity marker, or even identity itself. The emphasis on repetition is its own undoing; where repetition fails to repeat, gaps are found in the logic of repetition as social interpellation.[5] Stein's repetition calls attention to itself as an exaggeration of its own power to influence. However, the repetition in excess destabilizes the idea and practice of repetition as a tool of power and social construction. When repetition of sexual and gender performance fails, or repeats inexactly, or for a different purpose than ideological inscription, this lends toward the undoing, or deinstitutionalization of language, and identity.

Performing or enacting queerness entails interrogating and going beyond normalized boundaries; Stein insists on constantly pushing, even redefining the idea of the boundary itself. Earlier readings of Stein's discussions of the relation between human nature and human mind often simplify a dualistic separation between the two.[6] The distinction, for Stein, however, is unclearly delineated. Throughout *The Geographical History* the two concepts influence and play off of each other in complicated ways, and the play with language, and misuse of logical argumentation, further draw attention to the fact that the two (nature and mind) are not the same, but they are not in binary opposition either. The relation between the two is a continual process that is dynamic and in flux. Although Stein deals with this relationship in a slightly more accessible way in *What Are Masterpieces*, in *The Geographical History* the two purposefully evade clear explanation or definition, while Stein simultaneously brings readers along through the process of theorizing these,

5. I'm using Althusser's theory of interpellation in which subjects are ideologically produced as social beings.

6. Curnutt points to the "distinction between the inner and outer self"; identity is that outer self that is tolerated and not related to the inner self that "exists independent of observation." Ashton uses the more clearly and simply delineated concepts of identity and entity from *What are Masterpieces* to put human nature and human mind on separate "sides" though in the *Geographical History* the two are in more complicated relation.

even if there are no absolute conclusions drawn. As a strategy, this works against the boundaries and norms that rely on simple definitions and binary constructions; for if we cannot clearly articulate the relation between human nature and human mind, then we cannot define and categorize subjects based on who or what we think they are, and our processes of knowing ourselves and others become "queered," opening alternative spaces for interrogative learning and understanding.

A close reading of *The Geographical History* will show further connections between Butler's theories of narrative and identity, and Stein's representation of these—thus enacting in her creative-philosophical text many of Butler's philosophically theoretical ideas. Early in *The Geographical History,* Stein's discussion of human nature and human mind, in relation to the question of identity, is presented as complicated subject matter, and thus the process of interrogation and discovery and begins:

> Chapter III
>
> The question of identity has nothing to do with the human mind it has something although really nothing altogether to do with human nature. Any dog has identity.
>
> The old woman said I am I because my little dog knows me, but the dog knew that he was he because he knew that he was he as well as knowing that he knew she. (423)

Immediately, "identity" is disconnected from anything we think we might know about it. Stein puts identity in uneasy relation to mind and nature. If any dog can have identity, then identity cannot be an essential aspect of human nature, but points to our having identities as social beings. The question of identity is one of relation, of one to another, yet Stein complicates this, putting the old woman in relation to her dog who "knows" her, thereby setting up an interrogation of the terminology itself that will always fall short of definition. Stein creates an "unsatisfying" excess of language that will continually fail to account for itself, while we as readers will only fall short in understanding whether or not there is even any such thing as identity, let alone how we might define it. As Butler explains, making sense of identity in terms of self-understanding will generally fail; the gap between naming and identity, and being "an identity" limits one's ability to narratively account for oneself.

> If the identity we say we are cannot possibly capture us and marks immediately an excess and opacity that falls outside the categories of identity, then any effort "to give an account of oneself" will have to fail in order to approach being true. As we ask to know the other, or ask that the other say, finally or definitively, who he or she is, it will be important not to expect an answer that will ever satisfy. By not pursuing satisfaction and by letting the question remain open, even enduring, we let the other live, since life might be understood as precisely that which exceeds any account we may try to give of it. (Butler, *Giving* 42-43)

The Geographical History is excessive in its refusal to identify. The text highlights its own inability or failure to account for the relation between nature, mind, and identity. There is no answer that satisfies the questions presented, but instead the process of exploration, over the course of the text, allows the questions to linger, to remain open

Act I Scene III

I am I because my little dog knows me.

Act I Scene I

Now that is the way I had played that play.

But not at all not as one is one.

Act I Scene I

I am I because my little dog knows me. (401)

Act I Scene I

Which one is there I am I or another one.

Who is one and one or one is one.

I like a play of acting so and so.

Leho Leho.

Leho is a name of a Breton.

But we in America are not displaced by a dog oh no no not at all not at all at all displaced by a dog. (401)

Scene I

I am I yes sir I a lived on and traveled to several treaty territories in Manitoba and Saskatchewan as an educator m I.

I am I yes Madame am I I.

When I am I am I I.

And any little dog is not the same thing as I am I.

Chorus. Or is it.

With tears in my eyes oh is it.

And there we have the whole thing.

Am I I.

And if I am I because my little dog knows me am I I.

Yes sir am I I.

Yes madame or am I I.

The dog answers without asking because the dog is the answer to anything that is that dog. But not I. Without tears not I. (405)

The constant repetition of "I" and its interchangeability with the number one, makes the reader question the viability of an "I" that knows itself, or that understands the relation between the first person pronoun, and third person pronouns. In order to be an "I" and give an account of oneself, according to Butler, one has to be in relation to another; there is no "I" without an other, or a "you." The repetition of "I am I because my little dog knows me" seems to be a strategy of convincing, as if Stein (or her narrator) is trying to convince herself that she has identity because she is recognized (by her dog,

by others), but that the need for convincing is always a need and never a fulfillment while questions still linger ("I am I why. I am I where"). There are also the questions of interchangeability: "Which one is there I am I or another one" and so if one has identity ("I") how or why is that different from another's "I"/identity and displacement: "But we in America are not displaced by a dog oh no no not at all not at all at all displaced by a dog." If identity is interchangeable, and dogs and people all can have identity, then this also reduces the importance of the concept altogether, creating, for Stein, a kind of nonidentity. If every "one" has "identity," and these are potentially interchangeable, and individual identities can be displaced, then what is the point of identity at all as a concept? It is this which Stein continues to explore (the relation between identity and nonidentity) throughout the text.

Linguist Emile Benveniste, according to Kaja Silverman, explains that "language, discourse, subjectivity" are "shown to be theoretically inseparable" (43). Further:

> There is no concept 'I' that incorporates all the I's that are uttered at every moment in the mouths of all speakers, in the sense that there is a concept 'tree' to which all the individual uses of tree refer . . . . Then, what does I refer to? To something very peculiar which is exclusively linguistic: I refers to the act of individual discourse in which it is pronounced, and by this it designates the speaker . . . . The reality to which it refers is the reality of the discourse . . . . And so it is literally true that the basis of subjectivity is in the exercise of language. (Benveniste qtd. in Silverman 44)

Silverman explains: "Benveniste insists that the individual finds his or her cultural identity only within discourse, by means of the pronouns 'I' and 'you'" (45). It is through language, by way of our pronominal relations to each other, that we are able to "find" our personal/cultural identities. According to Benveniste, and Silverman, subjectivity is always already conditioned by the available discourses and understanding of one's place in the (linguistically constructed) world. If the "basis of subjectivity is in the exercise of language," then subjects' abilities to form ideas, and negotiate their own processes of identity, necessarily work through language and discourse. Or as Silverman further explains:

> The subject's discourse is constrained by the rules of language; it can only speak by means of a pre-existing linguistic system. Moreover, 'language' must here be understood in the broadest possible sense . . . every utterance must be conceived as having various levels of signification, and issuing from multiple voices. It is spoken not only by the palpable voice of a concrete speaker, writer, or cluster of mechanical apparatuses, but the anonymous voices of cultural codes which invade it in the form of connotation. (50)

These anonymous voices are from previous (and continuing) "codes" and discourses, into which we are born, and which determine speaking and writing in one's contemporary moment (Silverman 50). Subjectivity then is formed through discourses, and relations between language and culture. Speaking (and writing) subjects are contextualized within a cultural and linguistic system that "pre-exists the individual, and which determines his or her cultural identity" (Silverman 52). If subjectivity is formed through language, then understanding and performing our identities can be seen as both constructed, and

as the meaning/content that offers insight into the nature of identity formation in the world. Writing that calls attention to itself in its failure to cohere according to social norms of language, sexuality, and representation, pushes the limits of what is acceptable and "troubles" the system. This opens new spaces of possibility; as Butler says, "by letting the question remain open, even enduring, we let the other live" or we let identity remain open and in process, exceeding definition and containment.

In an early section, titled "The question of identity" (401), Stein begins to play with "I" as the first-person pronoun that represents identity, and the number one (written variously as one, I, 1); and uses repetition of the "I" as a defamiliarizing strategy in order to detach herself and her reader from really knowing what the pronoun represents. Notice the repetition of the signs "I" (as both pronoun and Roman numeral) and "one" in the following passages:

> Part IV
> The question of identity
> A Play
>
> I am I because my little dog knows me.
> Which is he.
> No which is he.
> Say it with tears, no which is he.
> I am I why.
> So there.
> I am I where.

potentially even more open to manipulation. Through language we may be subject to ideological expectations and normalizing narratives, but using language we might also subvert, and "re-write" those.

Stein takes on the cultural and linguistic systems in which she is contextualized, and tries to write through them in ways that call attention to the fabricated nature of "human nature," and the false idea that "identity" is a natural part of that. In The Geographical History Stein takes the material language of particular concepts (identity, autobiography, romance, etc.) and tries to divorce them from their cultural significance created through discursive repetition and acceptance. Her other-oriented use of repetition, and her refusal to define or explain, calls attention to the process of signification and brings this back into the realm of the arbitrary. If Saussure claimed that the relationship between signifier and signified is an arbitrary one, use and repetition have changed the status of this relationship to one that is more determinative. Stein challenges the signifier-signified relationship in order to show that identity and subjectivity are not essential and given, but these are as constructed as anything else that is not part of the literal, natural landscape. In order to understand "identity" one has to understand the nature of the cultural and linguistic systems that have constructed the concept itself. And if "identity" is a construction that has no essential core, then the idea of "autobiography," as an account of an identity, is doubly fictional. The Geographical History is a material example of an attempt to dismantle and call attention to the linguistic and narrative systems that claim to offer us the tools for self-understanding; Stein uses the materials of language to show the impossibility of complete subjective awareness. In addition to

repetition and dissociation, Stein uses particular tropes or examples to draw connections and open new spaces for re-thinking the concepts under scrutiny.

Early in the text, Stein draws on the idea of the detective story in order to investigate the mystery (and documentation) of identity:

> The whole book now is going to be a detective story of how to write.
>
> A play of the relation of human nature to the human mind.
>
> And a poem of how to begin again
>
> And a description of how the earth look as as you look at it which is perhaps a play if it can be done in a day and is perhaps a detective story if it can be found out. (409)

And:

> How I do like numbers this Detective story number one.
>
> Detective story number I. About how there is a human mind.
>
> And how to detect it.
>
> Detective story number I.
>
> The great thing to detect in a detective story is whether you have written as you have heard it said. If you do write as you have heard it said then you have to change it. (411)

"Detective story number I" might be the first in a series of stories, or a story about "how to detect" identity. An autobiography might be a detective story in the ways in which it compiles the details of a life and then tries to make sense of them in some kind of narrative form. Stein's project does something different in the ways it explores concepts we think we understand, and puts them under the pressure of language, calling attention to just how little we do know. How can writing an alternatively narrated text aid in understanding? Writing and human mind are intimately related; writing and thinking are inseparable. This work is an autobiographical detective story about self and writing, or the writing self, and this writing is always in process negotiating between what is heard and said and written, and is always subject to change.

Customarily focusing on the present tense of writing, Stein claims to disavow history, possibly because history is not of the present and can only be written in retrospect. She writes, "Now history has really no relation to the human mind at all, because history is the state of confusion between anybody doing anything and anything happening" (422). And it's not about remembering and forgetting:

> The land has something to do with the human mind but nothing to do with human nature.
>
> Human nature is animal nature but the human mind the human mind is not.
>
> If it were then the writing that has been written would not be writing that any human mind can read, it has really no memory nor any forgetting.

Think of the Bible and Homer think of Shakespeare and think of me.

There is no remembering and there is no forgetting because memory has to do with human nature and not with the human mind. (408)

Autobiography, for Stein, is a space for exploration. Remembering is about the past, while writing, or the human mind, has to do with the present constantly turning into a new present. In the middle of The Geographical History a section on autobiography relates language and writing in a continuous beginning again, in which, Stein writes, "human nature is not only uninteresting it is painful but I it is not I who doubt what it is all about but naturally what it is is what it is not" (458). An "I" (person) is a "one" (individual) who is not an "I" until known by another, Further, two later consecutive sections: "Autobiography number one is almost done. Autobiography number one" and "Autobiography number one now almost completely begun" show the constant starting again, this text representing a life that is continually in process. Time, like narrative progression, tries to contain that which doesn't abide by such constraints.

Autobiography I

When I was one that is no longer one of one but just one that is to say when I was a little one, but not so little that I meant myself when I said not one. (448)

Story, like identity, cannot be contained to linear, progressive narrative. She writes:

The story of my life.

Chapter one.

At that time I had no dogs

Chapter II

So I was not I because my little dog did not love me. But I had a family. They can be a nuisance in identity but there is no doubt no shadow of doubt that that identity the family identity we can do without. (458)

The "family identity" is yet another way of identifying through a social institution. Like language and other social structures, the family reinforces certain norms of identification and behavior. Social, cultural, and familial recognition may become difficult if a subject seeks alternative possibilities of identification outside of social norms for particular identificatory categories. The significance of being recognized by one's dog, for Stein, is an example that both points to the complexity of identity and recognition, and may expand the sense of the possible: if identity, which begins within the family structure, is impossible, being recognized in alternative ways becomes necessary. Still, the difficulty of socially constructed identity lingers, and Stein's repetition of the phrase "I am I because my little dog knows me" calls attention to the importance of continuously negotiating an unanswerable question. While this repeated phrase may be read as displacing human identity by putting that in relation to dog identity, it can also be read as calling attention to alternative means of recognition. In her personal life, Stein's dogs were important to her as companions, and using the example of the relationship between dog and owner further sheds light on that between self and other (one identity in relation

to another); "I am I because my little dog knows me" disorients the reader and calls attention to "identity" from yet another perspective, even while the reader recognizes the relationship between one and one's dog as familiar and ordinary. If identity cannot be thought without a consideration of an "I" in relation to a "you," Stein makes readers think about just how complicated this relationship actually is.

Further in the text, and more specifically in terms of geography, Stein writes, "In a small country where the land is not flat and where as you look you see what it is if it is as it is a great deal of poetry can and will and shall and must and may be written" (467). As writing comes out of, or is in relation to, the cultural realm, location plays a key role; the text and its context are in critical relation. As an American living in France, Stein used the negotiation between these geographical and emotional spaces in much of her work. For example, she writes: "But in a flat country it must have content but not form and that may make a master-piece but is it poetry" (467). Poetry, as writing that interrogates language, emotion, and culture, can be read as analogous to geographical texture. Poetry, like language, like identity, is not flat. And the relation between form and content is like that between a subject and her geographical and cultural context, geography being used here both figuratively and literally. Stein wrote "about" America, using everyday American English, from her physical context of France. Of her time in America, during the tour of 1934, Stein wrote "the being here it is so natural that it is not real" (qtd. in Retallack 15), a statement that points to the distance, both geographic and linguistic, that seems necessary for trying to make sense of this relationship between the "natural" landscape and constructions of identity (or how it is defined) in the world.

Stein's continuous present tense functions, in part, as anti-narrative, or against narratives that "naturalize" who and what we are. Human nature is socially constructed because we can't talk about it without language; we construct language to create understanding of human nature, and so the deconstruction of these narratives, for Stein, has to be approached through linguistic practice. Returning to Butler and Benveniste, it can be said that since subjectivity is possible because of discourse, writing the "I" places the subject in relation, and constructs identity, in writing. The subject of the text (the "I" of experience + the narrative "I") is contextualized, for Stein, through language and geography. Landscape and scenery are continuous, and similar to the continuous present:

> Ordinarily anybody finishes anything.
>
> But not in writing. In writing not any one finishes anything. That is what makes a master-piece what it is that there is no finishing.
>
> Please act as if there were the finishing of anything but any one any one writing knows that there is no finishing finishing in writing. (480)

In writing, Stein enacts the continuous "not-finishing" in which there is no fabricated narrative with a beginning, middle, and end with closure, but is instead a continuous process. She uses the example of a play, and compares this to the example of natural landscape, or scenery, both of which seem continuous, without beginning, middle, or end:

> A little play.

War and storms.

Romanticism and money and space.

Human nature and identity and time and place.

Human mind.

Master-pieces.

There need be no personages in a play because if there are then you do not forget their names and if you do not forget their names you put their names down each time that they are to say something.

The result of which is a play that finishes. (482)

A play, or to play, is active. Identity, like narrative, is expected to be cohesive, a finished product, named and determined, the product at the end of the process (a process which then is forgotten), and naming leads to recognizability (in terms of given cultural codes and discourses). Stein, however, seems more interested in writing (identity) as play, which is not determined or narrated in a closed structure, but open, dynamic, in flux, continuous. As Jennifer Ashton points out, "naming" for Stein "has been understood as the sign whose structure of meaning is the very paradigm of determinacy" (582) and so, not naming keeps the play open, not determined, not finishing. Or:

What is a play.

A play is scenery. (485)

A play, like natural scenery is continuous and has no beginning, middle, end; it is instead continuous action in the present tense. A play enacts the story, while a novel tells a story of something that already happened. Without naming, and without linear progression, a play might continue, like scenery, indefinitely.

Coming to the end of *The Geographical History,* Stein writes, "I am I because my little dog knows me. The figure wanders on alone" (487). But one can only be a one, an "I" in relation, and as differentiated from an other (my little dog). The figure is alone, but the "I" is relative (the sign in the sentence, the speaker in discourse). "I so easily see that identity has nothing to do with masterpieces although occasionally and very inevitably it does always more or less come in" (487). And so identity, like geography and culture, enter into the text whether intentionally or not. Stein constructs *The Geographical History* to explore these questions of identity, and in the process ruptures our understanding of what it means to identify, creating the concept of nonidentity, and thereby opening space for other means of identification. As subjects, we are always in flux and changing, not always (if ever) coherent and unified, while the limits of language contribute to limited possibilities for identification in the world. Understanding this, and working to dismantle the limitations of language, might make us more tolerant and open to continuing to push against, and revise, the boundaries: of language, of texts, of the varieties of identifications, and of other social and cultural structures.

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The Cartography of the Alexandrian: Mapping Nation and Desire in Cavafy's poetry

by Demetrios V. Kapetanakos, La Guardia Community College, Long Island City, New York

Of course you'll speak about his poems—

but say something too about his beauty,

about his subtle beauty that we loved.

. . . .

Pour your Egyptian feeling into the Greek you use (71)

"For Ammonis, Who Dies At 29, In 610" [1]

Daniel Mendelsohn's brilliant introduction to his translation of Constantine P. Cavafy's poetry bridges the divide that has long categorized his oeuvre. The "historical" poems have dealt with the moments outside of the traditionally privileged Classical era of Greek civilization. Cavafy preferred to capture moments on the fringe of Greek history,

1. I decided to use Edmund Keeley's translations for this entire essay because they do a good job capturing the content of Cavafy's poetry.

including the Hellenistic, Late Pagan, and Byzantine eras. His erotic poems, where men meet in dark alleys and hidden spaces, are jarringly candid for the early twentieth century. Mendelsohn believes that this binary is overcome by the theme of Time. Whether an individual waits to see the outcome of a historical event or reminisces about an all-too-brief homosexual affair, the reader could only wait to see what the ultimate outcome will be for the protagonist (xxxvi). Another important element that needs to be brought to the forefront is his notion of Space. His entire work captures a particular geography of marginality that transcends both ancient history and the fleeting moments of passion. Both of these types of poems play with the binary center and margin and in the end, upend the spatial expectations of the reader. This depiction of space reflects Cavafy's own status as a Greek that was born and spent most of his life in Alexandria, Egypt. These distinct categories of poems, historic and erotic, are superimposed on a particularly Cavafian cartography to create a particular Alexandrian sensibility.[2]

In two separate journal entries during his first journey to Athens in 1901, Cavafy wrote, "This morning we went to the Archaeological Museum. Fine. Particularly beautiful the bust of Antinous" (272) and "Then left Alexander and went to the Zappeion, which is a large and well designed building. Byron's statue, in the Zappeion's garden is a beautiful work" (274). In an otherwise dull journal, full of run-downs of daily events and meteorological readings, Cavafy inserted these two fascinating statements. Antinous and Byron epitomize the characteristics of individuals found in Cavafy's historic poems. They are fated toward one outcome and after fate intervenes, the tide turns towards a completely different conclusion (Vayenas 50-52).[3] While sailing down the Nile, Antinous fell into the river and drowned. Byron also faced an early death when he contracted dysentery while waiting to join the Greek army at the Battle of Messolonghi. At the same time, these characters' sexuality reflects the eroticism of his contemporary poems. Antinous was the lover of the Roman Emperor Hadrian and Byron continues to shock with his sexual escapades. Beyond capturing these two distinct aspects of Cavafy's work, these individuals also represent a peripheral connection to Greek identity. As a Roman, Antinous was a part of a civilization that heavily borrowed from the Greeks. Although Byron sacrificed his life for Greek independence, he never became a full-fledged Greek, remaining a philhellene or friend of Greece.

These two specific journal moments give Cavafy a moment of respite from the tedium of Athens, a city that only stood to remind him of his status as an Alexandrian Greek. He connected with these figures, whose marginal otherness appears to capture his own identity as a Greek outsider. He also experienced a moment of pleasure, admiring the beauty of these two men. His interest points to the way the historic and the erotic are intertwined. These distinct identities are not separate, but come together in the poet himself—a gay Alexandrian that challenges what it means to be Greek within Athens, the very center of the Greek world. Through his gaze, Cavafy transforms the cityscape. Athens becomes a "space where queerness . . . dominates the (heterocentric) norm, the dominant social narrative of the landscape" (Desert 21) – even for a brief moment. This

2. Scholars such as Edmund Keeley, Francis Golffing, and Alexander Kitroeff have defined Cavafy's "Alexandrian sensibility." This includes the feelings of alienation, isolation, and melancholy that is found throughout his poetry. They connect these sentiments with his status as an ethnic Greek that was born and spent most of his life in Alexandria, Egypt.

3. Nasos Vayenas defines this change in the situation of the individual as "irony," a particular narrative construction found in most of Cavafy's poems.

queerification of Athens forces the reader to rethink the spatial dynamics of Cavafy's poetry. One cannot separate the erotic from the historic. Instead, his defiant cartography collapses these entities to create a new mapping of the Greek world.

When asking "Nationalism and Sexualities: As Opposed to What?," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick comments on how, to this day, the concept of nation goes unquestioned. Instead of thinking of it in static binaries where dominant terms are privileged over the "Other," Sedgwick challenges us to reconceive its physical form in more complex and continually shifting forms. ". . . it may be that there exists for nations, as for genders, simply no normal way to partake of the categorical definitiveness of the national, no single kind of "other" of what a nation to which all can by the same structuration be definitionally opposed" (150). Cavafy's mapping of Greek identity captures the possibility for new conceptions of nation. It is located on multiple levels. Whether one looks at his historic poems or his erotic ones, these poetic spaces are actually one in the same. The chronological setting might be different, but the relationship between the individual and his position within space are structured in the same exact manner. The certainties of mainland Greece and its Classical history have been replaced by the variability of an ancient Hellenistic world where Greeks have made their way to Egypt and Asia. This historic fluidity of space is also found in the erotic crevices of Cavafy's contemporary Alexandria where gay men steal erotic glances, kisses, and more wherever possible without being caught. The geographic margins of the historic and the erotic become embedded within a greater Diasporic map, where the Alexandrian Greek must find his place in a geography that is always fleeting and shifting.

In the poem "Going Back Home from Greece," the narrator is a traveler sailing away from the Greek mainland. As he approaches "the waters of Cyprus, of Syria, of Egypt," he experiences a moment of contentment as he calls these locations "the beloved waters of our country." It is odd that someone would find a sense of home away from the physical space that could be traditionally considered a home. He pokes fun at those Greeks that insist on considering their Greek identity in such a limiting manner:

> It isn't right, Hermippos, for us philosophers
>
> to be like some of our petty kings
>
> . . . .
>
> who through their Hellenified exteriors,
>
> Macedonian exteriors (naturally),
>
> Let a bit of Arabia peep out now and then,
>
> A bit of Medea they can't keep back
>
> . . . .
>
> For Greeks like us that kind of pettiness won't do.
>
> We must not be ashamed
>
> of the Syrian and Egyptian blood in our veins;
>
> We should really honor it, take pride in it. (199)

The narrator insists that the Greek-speaking communities living in the Near East, and of which he is most likely a member, remain authentic Greeks. This population has taken on the culture and mannerisms of their local neighbors. They have also intermarried with other peoples. As a result, they form another Greek identity that contains foreign and even barbarian elements.[4] However this hybridized, spatially removed Greekness is just as valid as that found on the mainland.

While other modern Greek poets found inspiration in Classical Greece, Cavafy maps out this new Greek identity by looking closely at the world of Hellenistic Greece in his "historical" poems. On the one hand, Classical Greece of the fifth century BC was marked by a more circumscribed geography. Greece consisted of small city-states scattered through the mainland and the coast of present-day Turkey. These small city-states tended to consist of homogeneous populations that ran their own affairs. Yet by the late fourth century, these city-states were overpowered by Macedonia, a kingdom to the north. Under the leadership of Alexander the Great, this kingdom transformed a vast empire to the east covering Anatolia, the Levant, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, and parts of India. Although Alexander's empire lasted little more than a decade, his achievements transformed not only Greek civilization, but the very nature of the Greek individual. Before, the Greek of the Classical era was surrounded by his own civilized brethren. The new Hellenistic Greek now lived alongside a local barbaric population and resulted in the aforementioned cultural hybridity (Pollitt 1). Cavafy's decision to use the Hellenistic era as the setting for the many of his "historical" poems was central to his own Alexandrian identity. The presence of Greeks in Egypt and other areas of the Middle East dates back to that era.

4. The term "barbarian" was used by the Greeks to refer to any person that is not of Greek origin. As a result, he or she was not considered civilized.

With this disintegration of the center/ margin binary there could no longer be an authentic Greek identity. The play between these two terms is central in Cavafy's poem "A Prince from Western Libya." The narrator critiques the manner through which definitions of identity have been located in the center. In the first half of the poem, the narrator describes the appearance of a prince named Aristomenis as distinctly Greek, from "his name, his dress, modest" to his knowledge from "Greek books,/ especially history and philosophy." As the poem breaks into the second stanza, the reader learns that these Greek characteristics are only a façade:

> He assumed a Greek name, dressed like the Greeks,
>
> learned to behave more or less like a Greek;
>
> and all the time he was terrified he would spoil
>
> his reasonably good image
>
> by coming out with barbaric howlers in Greek
>
> and the Alexandrians, in their usual way,
>
> would make fun of him, vile people that they are.
>
> This was why he limited himself to a few words,
>
> terribly careful of his syntax and pronunciation;

and he was driven almost out of his mind, having

so much talk bottled up inside him. (157)

While one could view the prince as an imposter, the narrator does not critique the prince, but the "vile" Alexandrians. The possible exposure as a barbarian has forced the prince into a life of silence, a manifestation of his alienation from the more civilized Greeks. Cavafy here shifts the center and margin positing Alexandria as the center and western Libya as the margins. Ultimately, the center is no longer privileged. The readers' sympathy lies with the prince rather than with the Alexandrians.

The prince believes that he could become a full-fledged Greek. For a while, the reader believes that the prince has succeeded in this task. However, by the end of the poem, Cavafy's sense of irony creeps in at the last moment. Discursive definitions of Greekness have forced him to remain in silence for fear of being discovered as a fraud. Cavafy does not use irony simply for its own sake. It plays a specific role in alienating the individual from the center and transcending the presumed binary of center/ margin. This emphasis on the individual is symptomatic of the Hellenistic age. With the vastness of the Hellenistic world and the numerous kingdoms located so far from the Greek mainland, the Hellenistic individual was forced to fend for himself. This individual is mirrored in the situation of the Alexandrian Greek, who remains in Egypt without the close ties to the traditional homeland. Whether Cavafy believes this alienation of the diasporic individual is inevitable, one can only surmise. Nonetheless, some of these traditional historical poems remain a powerful critique of the sense of community inextricably linked to conventional forms of Greek nationalism.

While creating the space for alienation and loss, the Hellenistic world also became the site of possibility. With a little ingenuity and a great deal of luck, common men were able to rise to positions of power and wealth. During this time, the goddess Tyche (or Fortune) and the god Kairos (Opportunity) became major deities. In many cities, cults of Tyche were established. People created little statuettes of the goddess from gems and glass bottles. She became a common image representing both the hopes and anxieties of the period. Kairos represented the same sentiments as seen in the following epigram next to a sculptural relief of the god:

> . . . Questioner: "And who are you?" Statue: "Opportunity, the all conquerer." Q: "Why do you stride on the tips of your toes? S: "I am always running." Q: "Why do you have pairs of wings on your feet?" S: "I fly like the wind." Q: "Why do you carry a razor in your right hand?" S: "As a sign to men that my appearance is more abrupt than any blade [is sharp]." Q: "And your hair, why does it hang down over your face?" S: "So that he who encounters me may grab it." Q: "By Zeus, and why is the back of your head bald?" S: "Because nobody, once I have run past him with my winged feet can ever catch me from behind, even though he yearns to." (qtd. in Pollitt, 53-54)

While Tyche represented the fortune or foretelling of one's own future, Kairos represented man's ability to change it. If he is able to capture a tuft of Kairos' hair, then he has seized opportunity.

Although no such personification exists in Cavafy's poetry, the sentiment is present. In his poem "The God Abandons Antony," Cavafy captures the moment before Mark Antony's departure from Alexandria. Soon to lose to Octavian's forces, Mark Antony will be forced to leave behind his city, his lover Cleopatra, and his life:

> When suddenly, at midnight, you hear
> an invisible procession going by
> with exquisite music, voices,
> don't mourn your *tyche* that's failing now
> . . . .
> Above all, don't fool yourself, don't say
> it was a dream, your ears deceived you:
> don't degrade yourself with empty hopes like these . . .
> say goodbye to her, the Alexandria that is leaving. (33)

I replaced Edmund Keeley's translation with the original Greek word because it seems to capture fortune as defined in the Hellenistic era. The narrator of the poem warns Antony against drowning in his state of melancholia. Although he might have had to let go of Kairos' hair, he still achieved a moment of happiness that would remain with him forever. In the sequel to this poem, "Antony's Ending," Antony responds to a bunch of ladies lamenting his state of exile after the loss of Alexandria

> to stop weeping for him,
> that kind of thing was all wrong.
> They ought to be singing his praises
> for having been a great ruler,
> so rich in worldly goods . . . (194)

Antony believes that he will be remembered for his successes, no matter how short the period might have been.

This idea of captured and missed opportunities is not strictly in the domain of the historic. His erotic poems position the individual within the world of Kairos and Tyche. In "An Old Man," set in a contemporary Alexandrian café, the narrator describes the regrets of a solitary figure:

> At the noisy end of the café head bent
> over the table, an old man sits alone,
> a newspaper in front of him.
> And in the miserable banality of old age
> he thinks how little he enjoyed the years
> when he had strength, eloquence, and looks
> . . . .

And he thinks of Prudence, how it fooled him,

how he always believed – what madness –

that cheat who said "Tomorrow. You have plenty of time."

He remembers impulses bridled, the joy

he sacrificed. Every chance he lost

now mocks his senseless caution (4)

Although Cavafy never uses the term tyche in this poem, the sense of opportunity and possibility found in the two "Antony" poems exists here too. If the old man had taken advantage of his youth, he would at least have been able to reminisce of those moments later. For Cavafy, the old man became a figure that needed to be pitied. The achievement of one's wants and desires could never last forever. They are singular moments of happiness that through the act of remembering come to define one's existence. Despite the failure of Mark Antony's struggles for control of the Roman Empire, his brief reign over Alexandria with his lover Cleopatra brought him meaning. On the other hand, the old man's failure to attempt at Kairos' tuft of hair renders him pathetic.

The insertion of Kairos into his writings set in fin-de-siécle Alexandria forces the reader to reconsider the spatial dynamic of the erotic poems. If Cavafy's production of historic space problematizes the binary of center and margin, then his erotic poems present similar deconstructions. In the article "Marginality and the Landscapes of Erotic Alien(n)ations," Gordon Brent Ingram defines queer space as "a landscape of erotic 'alien(n)ations,' one that shifts with demographics, social development, political economies, interventions of 'the state,' aesthetics, and –yes-desire" (31). This focus on space as a continually shifting entity is important for Cavafy's erotic poems. In "The Window of the Tobacco Shop," the narrator describes an encounter between two men on the street where "They stood among others." Meeting in a public space and afraid of possibly being found out of their secret identity, the two men at first "timidly, haltingly expressed/ the illicit desire of their bodies." "Then a few easy steps along the street until they smiled, and nodded slightly." In the second stanza, the two men finally entered "the closed carriage" upon which point, their "hands linked, lips meeting," they began their affair (81). In all of his erotic compositions, Cavafy moves from public space to a private one. Public space allows for the encounter between men to occur, but the threat of being discovered and then being beaten up or even killed remains. Once they enter a private or protected space, their true identity as gay men could finally surface.

A similar mapping of public and private takes place in the erotic "One Night," which captures a night of passion. The affair takes place in a "cheap and sordid" room, "hidden above the suspect taverna." "The voices of workmen/ playing cards, enjoying themselves" comes from below. Only when the narrator begins to describe what occurred that night in the stanza, the reader finally enjoys full access to the private space.

And there on that common, humble bed

I had love's body, had those intoxicating lips,

red and sensual,

red lips of such intoxication . . .

By the end of the poem, the reader realizes that the affair took place in the past, and we are getting access to the narrator/ protagonist's inner thoughts. Remembering those lips, " . . . that now as I write, after so many years,/ in my lonely house, I'm drunk with passion again." (57). The space has finally shifted once more and the reader realizes that the private space is not only an erotic space, but a space of memory. The reader is allowed to enter the inner workings of the narrator's mind and find insight into not necessarily what actually occurred, but the effect it had on the narrator. The act of remembering becomes a way to cope with a world that alienates the individual.

The reader never learns what would happen if the affairs are uncovered, but the possibility of violence or even murder always threatens to encroach on this space. The setting of "One Night" is described as cheap and sordid, but it is not a specific sexual place. The presence of workmen playing cards suggests that this taverna is for the lower classes rather than for gay men. One must wonder what would have happened to the narrator and his partner, if they had been discovered by the men below. The interaction of the public and the private become central to shaping the actions of the figures. Space allows his characters either to hide their gay identity or to perform it. Cavafy's characters are not simply passive. They are participating in their own form of resistance. The poetic subjects reassess and constitute the space around them.

All of these poems question about which term in their respective binaries should be. As I have already described, "A Prince from Western Libya" challenges the privileging of the center over the margin. With our sympathies completely given to the Prince, the Alexandrians who purport to have the higher social standing are deemed "vile." The concepts of high and low culture or civilization and barbarity are questioned and inverted. Likewise, the erotic poems challenge our notions of public and private. Everyone is entitled to wander through public space, but at the same time limits everyone to completely act out their gay identity. The private then becomes a liberatory space where desires are allowed to manifest themselves. Through the erotic poems, the reader is allowed to enter these personal moments. He challenges the reader to reconsider the standard privileging of the heteronormativity of the public over the true pleasures of the private. With similar constructions and elements, these acts of spatial deconstruction in the historic and the erotic poems merge into one kind of poem, a mapping of Greek and queer identity through the geography of alienation and resistance.

Cavafy's continued popularity today is due to the profound way he captures the human psyche at its most elemental and profound. The individual is at the very center of his poems. However, his surroundings, position, and location will go on to shape his viewpoint about the world. This is how the identity of members of any Diaspora is shaped. The concrete geographic borders that define nation are a luxury available only to those living within it, but not to their Diasporic brethren. Since Cavafy's sense of ethnic identity has remained outside of the mainland, he found other ways to construct it (Keeley 55, Kitroeff 18-21). In this case, it is within lines of poetry rather than a map. On one level, Cavafy's Alexandrian sensibility captures that alienation and melancholy that extends from his Diasporic and sexual identity (Golffing 115). At the same time,

there is an incredible amount of hope and pleasure embedded in his lines. Like Cavafy's characters, those fated to be a part of a Diaspora all have to find a sense of who we are in these small moments of our past, whether historic, erotic, or something else. This is the legacy of his poetry as best summed up in the final lines of "For Ammonis, Who Dies At 29, In 610":

> Pour your Egyptian feeling into the Greek you use
>
> . . . .
>
> so they contain something of our life within them,
>
> so the rhythm, so every phrase clearly shows
>
> that an Alexandrian is writing about an Alexandrian" (71)

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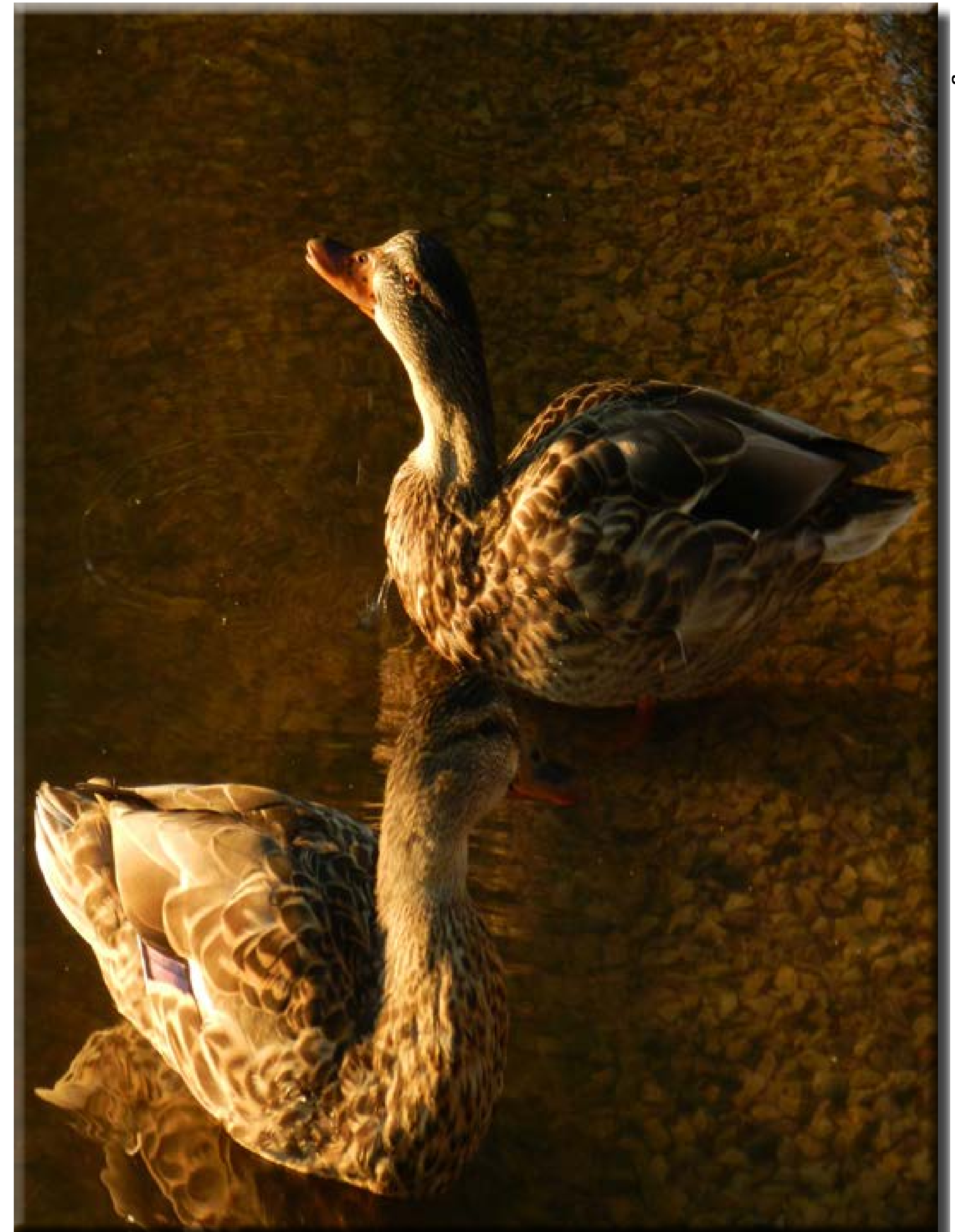

Ducklings #1 .... Sue Matheson

PROLIFERATION AND PROSODY: Anti-Ciceronianism in Milton's Eden

by Kaley Jemison, Florida State University

John Milton opens *Paradise Lost* by claiming, "That to the height of this great argument/ I may assert eternal providence, /And justify the ways of God to man." (13). Through this ambitious objective to vindicate God's actions to mankind, the Garden of Eden's exaggerated growth symbolizes the Creator's enduring and infinitely proliferating love. Yet, Eden also serves as a linguistic space in which God, Adam, and Eve assign names to all its denizens. Consequently, the garden's verdant over-proliferation may illuminate the poet's philological convictions. During the course of his education at Cambridge, Milton repeatedly repudiated the florid writing style of Marcus Cicero, the Roman politician and orator. Merging the biographical with the poet's illustrations of Eden, Adam and Eve's unceasing labors to halt the Garden's proliferation signifies Milton's espousal of the Anti-Ciceronian linguistic movement through his emphasis on controlling and structuring language. I shall examine Adam and Eve's arduous attempts to restrain the Garden's fecundity as it echoes Milton's rejection of the Ciceronian rhetorical style and consequent conviction in structuring syntax. I will sustain this assertion by examining Milton's educational background, poetic style, the diction illustrating the Garden, and the first couple's constant toil, concluding this claim by exposing the parallelism between pre- and post-lapsarian Earth. Besides considering Adam and Eve's toil as an allusion to the author's rejection of Ciceronian rhetoric, this analysis of the Garden of Eden will reveal that the epic poem, as a whole, pivots on a discourse of language and signification.

Ciceronianism is an elaborate, flowing style of writing popularized during the seventeenth century and derived from the Roman orator Marcus Cicero (106-43 BC). However well-schooled in this mode, Milton's education at Cambridge University reveals his rejection of this overly ornamental writing style. In The Life of John Milton, Lewalski enumerates the texts that Milton read during his studies at Cambridge: "Rhetoric was pervasive, mastered mainly through practice. Tutors assigned handbooks based on Aristotle, Cicero, Quintinian, and Athphonius" (20). Book sale records indicate that the university certainly exposed Milton to Ciceronian rhetoric. Moreover, the style of Latin rhetoric, particularly Ciceronian, became increasingly popular during the mid-seventeenth century as Seymour Chatman articulates in "Milton's Participial Style," "After 1660 when English prose style developed a new phase, which was saturated with classical elements" (Chatman 1390). This stylistic prevalence, coupled with the university's emphasis on rhetoric, indicates that Milton certainly would have been familiar with the Ciceronian style of writing. Yet, it is equally evident that Milton was scornful of Cambridge's instruction, partly due to his suspension from the university after a conflict with his tutor. Consequently, immediately following his graduation, Milton rejected much of what he had been taught in Cambridge's curriculum and ideological convictions.

As Lewalski explicates, "He was disappointed by and sharply critical of the education he received at Cambridge University, which he completed, complaining of the required studies and exercises" (15). Whether due solely to the orator's florid syntax, or because of his temporary suspension from the university and criticism of their instruction, Milton clearly disavows the Ciceronian style of writing.

However, Milton's renunciation of this rhetorical style is most prominent in his educational model, "Of Education." Cicero's syntactical style prioritizes eloquence and ornamentation which he emphasizes in "The Five Days Debate at Cicero's House in Tusculum between Master and Sophister": "And to join prudence with eloquence to exercise ourselves in this more sublime and copious art [...] to be perfect philosophy, an ability to discourse at large and floridly upon the most important points" (7). In referring to syntactical aesthetics as "the sublime art", the orator preeminates eloquence over argument. Conversely, Milton emphasizes structure rather than artistry. In "Of Education", he further conveys this conviction in the centrality of structure: "For their studies, first should begin with the chief and necessary rules of some good grammar" (324). Milton plans to begin his ideal education by instructing his students in grammar rather than composing elegant verses. By elevating content and structure over aesthetics, Milton repudiates Ciceronian rhetoric, which certainly may have permeated Paradise Lost.

Moreover, the language of the epic poem echoes its author's emphasis on syntactical structure and renunciation of the Ciceronian writing style. The Poet, John Lyly, a predecessor of Milton, exemplifies Ciceronian rhetoric throughout his work and particularly in "A Song of Daphne to the Lute" (1580):

> On Daphne's Cheeke grow Rose and Cherry,
> On Daphne's Lip a sweeter Berry,
> Daphne's snowy Hand but touch'd does melt,
> And then no heauenlier Warmth is felt,

The entirety of this poem centers on describing the nymph, Daphne's beauty through an excessive array of adjectives which mirrors the floridity characteristic of the Ciceronian writing style. The verses' end stop lines further emphasize descriptive language as each line is a self-contained illustration of one of Daphne's features. The singularity of each line elevates linguistic aesthetics over a continual argument. Conversely, Milton's lines from his invocation to the muse formally juxtaposes with Lyly's verses: "I may assert eternal providence, / And justify the ways of God to man." (Milton 13). Unlike in "A Song of Daphne to the Lute", Paradise Lost does not contain the array of adjectives. It also does not possess the musicality of Lyly's lines which they derive from the rhyming couplets. Instead, the concentration of Milton's poem in justifying the ways of God surmounts the work's poetics. As Harold Toliver asserts in "Symbol-Making and Milton's Labors in Eden", "Milton seems more directed to constructing the argument than the verse" (Toliver 445). The absence of a multiplicity of adjectives, perhaps Milton's greatest contention with Ciceronian rhetoric, enables the epic's argument to rise above the trappings of style, conveying Milton's conviction in the supremacy of God. In contrast with Lyly's self-contained lines, Milton' enjambment allows each line to merge with the next, propagating a continual argument. His repudiation of the obsessively styled

construction of Ciceronian writing resonates throughout the language of *Paradise Lost*.

Yet, as it does not correspond with traditional English gardens, the Garden of Eden clearly foregrounds Milton's ideologies on writing as it embodies a linguistic space. As Arnauld D'andilly elucidates in his 1660 book, *The Manner of Ordering Fruit Trees*, English gardens during the seventeenth century were highly structured with differing fruit trees and other flora demarcated from one another and arranged into orderly rows and groupings:

> Since that neither all sorts, nor all situation are equally proper for all forts of fruits, it may easily be known that to order fruit trees well, it is necessary to separate them, and to make particular plantations of pear trees, apple trees, red fruits, and plum trees of necessity be planted in diverse places, and be set at different distances, for they cannot be mixed together without hurting each other.

D'andilly's discourse on the necessity of categorizing and separating foliage illustrates a regimented garden both for its appearance and for the health of the fruit trees. This image of a meticulously arranged garden juxtaposes with Milton's portrayal of the Garden of Eden as overflowing with a diverse intermingling of flora:

> Out of the fertile ground, he caused to grow
>
> All trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste;
>
> All amid them stood the Tree of Life
>
> High eminent blooming ambrosial fruit.

Milton's Eden is overrun with a superabundance of flora, colors, and scents. This stark contrast between appearances and arrangements of gardens indicates that Milton did not simply replicate a traditional, English garden for Eden in *Paradise Lost*. Rather, he most likely illustrated Eden's unruly growth and lack of organization for a specific purpose. In "Milton's Wild Garden", John R. Knott posits that although Eden is obviously not a model of the English garden, its variety and unrestricted growth is similar to the Italian garden: "Milton was recalling the great Italian Renaissance gardens that he saw in his travels through Italy, with their variety of landscape features and their informal plantings" (Knott 72). While the Garden's appearance seems to reflect the free growth of Italian landscapes and certainly may have influenced its illustration, I assert that the Garden represents language and its fecundity alludes to excessively ornamented writing.

Eden fulfills this role of a linguistic space when God creates and subsequently names Earth and man: "Divided light the day, and darkness night He named [...] The dry land, earth, and the great receptacles of congregate waters he called seas" (Milton 245). Besides creating day, night, earth, and sea, God also forms language through his naming of these elements. This act simultaneously establishes Eden as a linguistic space and signifies God's creations. Toliver notes other instances of the creation of language in Eden in, "Symbol-Making and the Labors of Milton's Eden", when he articulates, "That Milton's first parents create a good deal of language together is not surprising; Adam's celebrations of nature and his social language - the naming of things in the cosmos and the meet conversations" (Toliver 435). Through Adam and Eve's naming of creatures,

hymns, and conversations with the Angel, Eden exists as a space of language and signs. This process of signification enables these creations to gesture to elements outside of their physical forms. As the sun, with its capacity to set and rise again, alludes to Christ's resurrection, and the apple tree represents knowledge, Eden, as a whole, signifies linguistic expression wherein Adam and Eve's fruitless attempts to stymie the Garden's boundless growth conveys the poet's conviction in the necessity of structuring writing.

Consequently, the Garden of Eden epitomizes Milton's linguistic debate by echoing the excessiveness of Ciceronian rhetoric. The diction that encapsulates the Garden alludes to the exaggerated abundance of Ciceronian writing, exemplified in Lyly's poetry:

> With thicket overgrown, grotesque, and wild,
>
> And overhead up grew insuperable higth of loftiest shade,
>
> Cedar and pine, and fir, and branching palm,

Throughout the epic poem, Milton illustrates Eden with diction such as "wanton", "profirous", and "overgrown" to reveal the Garden's fecundity. Yet, the employment of "grotesque" to describe this overwhelming growth signifies Milton's disdain for this abundance which, by extent, represents the excessive floridity of Ciceronian rhetoric. Like the lines in Lyly's "A Song of Daphne to the Lute", this stanza's enjambment, which lacks any periods to definitively terminate a line, echoes the fluidity of the Garden's proliferation and uncontrollability. By mimicking Lyly's melodious style, Milton parallels Eden's fecundity with the excessive, stylistic ornamentation of Ciceronian writing. Yet, even through this apparent poetic commonality between Lyly and Milton, the latter

still refrains from demonstrating Lyly's enumerations of adjectives and obsessively styled poetry. In "Milton's Rhetoric", J. Broadbent asserts that Milton's poetry is rich in argument rather than language; "Milton's own prose is not euphemistic or rich in any rhetoric, but the debating kind" (231). Once again, as Broadbent observes, the poet elevates content over linguistic style; besides noting the Garden's heady scent, Milton does not adulterate his verses with an abundance of rich descriptions. Instead, he simply lists the kinds of trees present in Eden. Milton diverges from the floridity of Lyly's writing, which simultaneously conveys his conviction in the necessity of linguistic structure and prioritization of content over poetic aesthetics.

Paradoxically, Eden embodies an unrestricted, virginal concupiscence, which attenuates the exaggerated eloquence of Ciceronian writing.

> Wantoned as in her prime, and played at will
>
> Her virgin fancies, pouring forth more sweet,
>
> Wild above rule or art; […]
>
> More warmth than Adam needs. (Milton 36)

The Garden simultaneously manifests virginity, as the innocence of pre-lapsarian Earth, and carnality in its unruly growth. The sun's pure light and exaggerated warmth also conveys this paradox of nature. The mingling of purity and fecundity in Eden illuminates Milton's view of Cicero's superfluous eloquence. By painting the Garden's growth as, "Wild above rule or art", the poet posits that Ciceronian rhetoric exaggerates style so

that it subsumes form and loses its artistry. John M. Major shares this conviction in "Milton's View on Rhetoric" and articulates, "To be sure, he does disdain the excesses and artificialities of the kind of rhetoric for poetry and prose which was inflicted on schoolboys and which in one coloring or another has always had its adherents" (705). Milton's poetry and prose do not adhere to the common emphasis on linguistic eloquence. Major further asserts that Milton's contempt for grandiloquence stems from his religious convictions. Seventeenth century theology considered eloquence to be linguistic vanity and thus delivered more simply worded sermons. Consequently, the poet's repudiation of the stressed artistry of Ciceronian rhetoric may derive, in part, from these religious ideologies and from his preeminence of argument within writing.

Furthermore, Adam and Eve's unceasing labors to control the Garden's burgeoning growth signify the author's conviction in the necessity of structuring language. In "Milton's Wild Garden", Knott reveals that Eden exhibits some order in the midst of its unruly wilderness, "In describing the nuptial bower, Milton emphasizes the beauty of an intricate and relatively stable natural order. Elsewhere in the Garden, the "luxuriant" vine and other "wanton growth" require attention if Adam and Eve are to maintain their spaces "(Knott 77). The wall encircling Eden presents a limited form of structure as language is entrapped by the page. The nuptial bower exists as the only other controlled space within Eden and reveals that the purpose of the first couple's union is to bring order to the entire Garden. Besides the circular wall and nuptial bower, Eden demonstrates an unrestricted growth, which continues to proliferate even after Adam and Eve's pruning.

His bounty following our delightful task

To prune these growing plants

and land these flow 'rs,

which were it toilsome,

yet with thee were sweet. (Milton 47)

In contrast with his previous enjambment, Milton employs end stop in these lines. The commas, period, and apostrophe in "flow'rs", restricts the lines' intermingling. This poetic form mirrors Adam and Eve's task of restraining the Garden's growth and elucidates Milton's emphasis on grammatical structure in writing. The poet also conveys his emphasis on syntactical structure through the half rhyme between "thee" and "sweet" and "bounty" and "flow'rs." The incompleteness of these rhymes simultaneously demarcates and unites the lines, which reflect the fruitless nature of Adam and Eve's attempts at bringing order to Eden. The unceasing nature of the couple's labors echoes the continuousness of structuring writing. Similarly, Milton's diction relays his ideology of rhetorical structure as Knott articulates in "Milton's Wild Garden", "Milton inevitably committed himself to a language that implies the necessity of control, with adjectives such as "overwoody" (5.213) and "overgrown" (Knott 69). While I am in accord with Knott's assertion that Milton employs a language of control, these words gesture more towards Eden's excessivity. However, Milton does certainly implement diction that conveys the need for control within the Garden as in: "prune", "prop", "bind", and "direct." All of these words denote support which exposes Milton's conviction in the necessity of structure in writing.

Likewise, post-lapsarian Earth mirrors Eden's fecundity by reestablishing Earth as a

linguistic space and emphasizing the poet's conviction in syntactical structure...

> But the field to labor calls us now
>
> With sweat imposed, [...]
>
> Here let us live though in fall'n state content.
>
> Nature first gave signs, impressed
>
> On bird, beast, air, air suddenly eclipse(Milton 55).

Adam and Eve's toil in Eden parallels those in fallen Earth in arduousness, continuousness, and the delight with which the couple performs this task. In a manner akin to Milton's previous illustration of the couple's labors in the Garden, these are end stop lines, which echoes both Adam and Eve's pruning the land and the poet's emphasis on structure in writing. In addition to foregrounding the necessity of order, these lines also reestablish Eden as a linguistic space. Symbolizing man's fall, the Garden's inhabitants disperse; creating an ominous sign of mankind's pending suffering. Like the apple tree, which represents knowledge, the fleeing animals fulfill a linguistic role as their departure signifies events to come. Marshall Grossman recognizes the integrality of metaphor in Paradise Lost, in his essay, "Milton's Dialectical Views"; "The things invisible to mortal sight in Paradise Lost are the tenors of metaphors whose vehicles are drawn from representative human experience" (Grossman 31). The Garden of Eden is certainly one of these veiled metaphors that stem from human experience as it exists as a symbolic, linguistic space. However, the nature of Adam and Eve's toil alters in post-lapsarian Earth. Their labor is still continuous as is the exercise of structuring language. Yet, the need to tend the land intensifies: "Laboring the soil, and reaping plenteous crop, corn, wine and oil:" (Milton 394). Unlike in Eden where the couple prune the flora to prevent being fully engulfed by it, Adam and Eve labor in the fields to sustain themselves. Therefore, this shift from ordering the land in order to maintain space to ensuring survival signifies Milton's pronouncement in the integrality of structuring writing. Eden's fecundity and Adam and Eve's consequent toil alludes to Milton's repudiation of the floridity of Ciceronian rhetoric and his belief in syntactical structure.

Paradise Lost revolves around a discourse of language, where in the Garden of Eden foregrounds Milton's rhetorical convictions. Eden's infinite proliferation mirrors the excessive floridity of Ciceronian rhetoric. Therefore, the couple's unceasing efforts to bring order, to both Pre-lapsarian and Post-lapsarian Earth, coupled with Milton's implementation of end stop lines relay the poet's assertion in the integrality of structuring writing. Such subtle linguistic debates within the text direct the reader to consider the entirety of the epic poem as a discourse on the formation of language. Consequently, future criticism may wish to examine the transformation in language after man's fall as it echoes the alteration in Adam and Eve's labor from Eden to Earth.

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Ducklings #2

Sue Matheson

The Girl with the Gravestone Sidewalk: A Poetics of the Dead

by Joshua Adair, Murray State University, Murray, Kentucky

The House with the Gravestone Sidewalk

"Forces are manifested in poems that do not pass through the circuits of knowledge."

—Gaston Bachelard

Poetics of Space

The women in my family gifted me a poetics of the dead – on film, in memory, through experience – as a way of aestheticizing all that frequently proves too ugly to bear. Just as I began to write this essay, I asked my mother about a historic house in a town near her and she casually responded, "oh the one that Sarah Gibson haunts?" as though that

were the most run-of-the-mill route to clarifying that we were speaking of the same place. But that's how it goes in my family. Exposed far too soon to the deadly, cruel potential of the world and the prospects of afterlife secluded in some house – neither heaven nor hell --as they frequently outlined them, mine was a childhood populated by the dead and dying where time flattened out, where the past overlays the present. These women edified me with a poetics of elegy for the dead; they grasped that some experiences prove immersive, overpowering, and inexplicable. They trained me to see askance so that possibility remains alive and generative, even if the source of such inspiration struck me as unlikely or mistaken. If I sound cryptic – pardon the pun – I mean to say that they raised the dead while they reared their children and taught us that houses were haunted; families were cursed; and, above all, competing narratives and conflicting dialogues beget creative thinking. For me, questioning the existence of ghosts is an absurdity: of course they don't exist, except when they're all around you.

I've lived with them always – sometimes as characters populating narratives that figure prominently in my genealogy, others as presences in houses I've inhabited – and I offer here my poetics of those dead, untaxed by the somewhat false reassurance of tangible proof or hard logic. Not to say that those aren't wonderful goals and comforting concepts, but poetries and sensibilities rarely draw their force from such dry, remote stuff. What I set forth here has flourished in emotion, ambience, and trauma – influences equally if not more powerful than the so-called "hard facts" – and while it may frequently beggar belief, it represents a strong vein of my personal epistemology as a queer academic. To be clear, I believe these horrors, this haunted genealogy, figures prominently in my subjectivity – even as I disown the possibility of literal hauntings – and I traverse this ground in hopes of sussing out how our consciousnesses may be, at least partially, constituted and enriched by the spectral.

As luck would have it, the girl with the gravestone sidewalk grew up to be my mother. No one knew where those stones came from; they already formed the sidewalk from the back door to the outhouse when my grandparents took up tenancy in 1946. By the time mom arrived in that newly electrified house in 1948 – running water and a bathroom wouldn't be added for another fifteen years – my grandmother had already largely forgotten that every trip to heed nature's call required traipsing over someone's grave(stone). In spite of its electricity, the house and its remote location conjured shades of the nineteenth century, and while those stones of the same era may not have troubled her once she took their presence for granted, she still feared the house and refused to stay there alone. She had immersed herself in *The Uninvited* in 1944 and thus was wise to the pitfalls of following a path similar to Ruth Hussey's character who dredges up the murdered former mistress of the house, nearly losing her sanity in the process. No, Gram preferred to summon only the dead she knew; strangers suddenly manifesting were an entirely different affair. Thus, she nearly succumbed to madness one winter night when, by pure chance, a snowstorm hit before her family could make it home and she had to endure several days of frozen solitude in that house. For her, silence conjured possibility and some stones were best left unturned.

Despite its periphery menace, mom and my aunt spent many sunlit childhood afternoons playing on those slabs – rubbed nearly, though not absolutely – free of their

original inscriptions. Their state is reminiscent of the poetics I wish to capture; they were present and their surface carried visible, if elusive, meaning. In later years they attempted rubbings to ascertain the names of the deceased, fearing they might be buried nearby – perhaps under the house or in a nearby field – but to no avail. At no point did anyone attempt to relocate or reconsecrate the stones, their tangible reminder of death simply another working element on my grandfather's farm. The possibility of the significance of those gravestones, however, imprinted itself on my mother, though, as she imagined graveyards desecrated to make way for corn and soybean crops, or worse, a hog lot. My grandmother put a point on those fears when, one day, she casually announced to her daughters that theirs was a replacement house built after the original burned to the ground with all its occupants inside some years before. Hearing these stories in childhood and adolescence, the quotidian terror of such oddities – charred families, repurposed tombstones – incited terror and fascination, impressing upon me that our stories about family history differed sharply from other people's.

From an early age – say five or six or so – my mother insisted that the dormered attics surrounding the large second-story bedroom she and her sister shared were infested with the ghost of a young child who perished in that fire. Her sister concurred, though neither can now say if they arrived at this assessment independently. They assert that this spirit either bounced a ball rhythmically against their bedroom wall or fist-pounded them perhaps in some ghastly reenactment of that all-consuming fire. As a young adolescent I visited that house, then abandoned with its windows broken out, and they insisted the child persisted there still, observing and captive. In the midst of my incredulity, I still managed to feel terror-stricken, as though I were suffocating. Unfazed, they reminisced about their lives unfolding in that house, comfortable in their understanding of it as both a site of malevolence and enchanting unremarkable nostalgia. For them, haunting and the terror of trauma were as commonplace as Gram's blackberry pies they had once devoured in that dining room. They even pried off pieces of trim molding to keep as mementoes, hoping to preserve that childhood, terror and all. I've always regretted failing to photograph those stones.

Because of them, I've always known the world as haunted. Their understanding of the past and its presence, even intrusion, never eludes me; as a result, I perpetually conceive my movements in this world as surveilled. As a theoretical perspective, I believe that the ghosts in which I do not believe stand witness. When I observe the unseen hand fondling Barbara Hershey's breast in *The Entity* (1982), I grasp the poetics at play as the horror of the unknown interacts with our physicality. As an adult I have come to understand that particular sensibility as a byproduct of, or perhaps a contributing factor to my queerness, which has frequently rendered me at worst a target for verbal and physical violence and at best the subject of much attention. Sensing the force of the staring gaze of another – usually tinged with disgust or at least disapproval – figures as a commonplace occurrence in my life. I draw unwanted attention because of my difference and so I have come to conceptualize my lacking masculinity as a magnet for observation as analogous to the condition of believing a disembodied entity stands watch, however unwelcome, over one's life. The comparison strikes me as particularly poignant, because in those times that I have chosen to explain this sensation to others

who experience the world differently they look at me with an aghast incredulity similar to hearing someone pronounce a sincere belief in the material existence of ghosts. Both have the effect of suggesting one may be overwrought or unnecessarily sensitive, out of touch with reality.

The House with the Haunted Closet

If that sounds unhinged, I can only respond that this supernatural sensibility was fostered in me long before training in critical thought encouraged me to disown it. It was never a sensationalized sensibility; it was nurtured in a fairly blasé fashion. I first became aware that my mother believed us to be accompanied when we moved into a rented farmhouse in the 1980s. Unbeknownst to us – my brother, sister, and me – from the first night we spent in the house, mom insisted something else inhabited the space. And though it will likely do little to alter your perception of her as someone unstable, flaky even, I know her to be a down-to-earth, no-nonsense person with little investment in emotion or folderol – even though her belief in ghosts may seem to utterly contradict my assessment. On our first night in the new house – a white Folk Victorian built around 1900 – as she worked away downstairs unpacking boxes in a style I always imagine resembling Margot Kidder in *The Amityville Horror* (1979) both in form and in anticipation of the horror to come, my father returned my grandparents to their home a few miles away. Our new house was located down a quiet rural road, surrounded by livestock lots and fields, dark and silent. While hanging pictures in the living room, she heard frantic footsteps upstairs running the hallway and instantly assumed my hyperactive older brother had gotten out of bed to cause trouble as he frequently did. Furious, she tore up the staircase to apprehend him before he woke me or my sister. She discovered instead three catatonic children.

In the following two years in that house, the footsteps continued running the upstairs hall and then descending the staircase. I don't know if I remember that, though I vividly recall one scorching August night that all five of us piled onto my parents' bed – theirs was the only room with air conditioning – to watch *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972). I have never gotten the image of the distraught little girl losing her grasp on her "Frozen Charlotte" doll and turning in horror to see someone crush its porcelain head as they fled in terror – a memory which has merged with those footsteps and become exceedingly poignant and perhaps entirely apparitional recollection rooted in that space. Despite my skepticism, the memory of that haunting abides with me.

A sun-starved house encircled by trees, mom started her days by opening the drapes in each room in hopes that her houseplants would capture enough light to survive. If she left the house, upon returning she would discover them drawn, which she attests to this day. I cannot account for this. My sister's room, which featured a half-door

that intermittently refused to open or would not stay closed leading into a crawlspace, figures prominently in our oral history as my aunt and cousin claim to have felt an invasive coldness and then seen a luminescence emerge from it one night when they bunked there. They would never stay in the room again and genuinely feared that space. Strangely enough, mom never moved my sister out of there, and for her part, my sister never complained. That experience, or my imagining of it anyway, would take on new terror when, several years later, I discovered a *Tales from the Darkside* (1984) episode called "Inside the Closet," which features a similar door with identical proclivities, the space behind which harbors a ghastly monster that ultimately murders the young woman staying in the room, but not before terrorizing her for multiple nights, its hand always lunging from under the bed to grab her ankle just a split-second too late. The image of that grasping hand, coupled with my childhood terror of the horrifying possibilities of my sister's bedroom, has never left me. In fact, at forty years old, I never get in or out of bed in the middle of the night without imagining that hand jutting from under the bedskirt as my feet leave the floor. My mother echoes a similar, chronic thought pattern and credits the same episode – which we were far too young to watch – with the creation of that particular fear. I believe with absolute certainty that no such creature exists, yet a static part of my psychic landscape asserts, almost nightly, that something persists there, watching and waiting and the precarity of the near miss affects my spatial sensibilities and awareness of danger – no matter the context.

For instance, that dread follows me even when I am completing some mundane task like shopping at Wal-Mart – and not for the obvious, more comedic reasons – and as I navigate other public spaces as a queer man. Part of this stems from sustained long-term bullying as a child through my early adult years, and sporadically thereafter, because of my difference from stereotypical males. I easily recall similarly "phantom" moments in junior high and high school when my schoolmates would lick their fingers and stick them on my neck from behind and then make some juvenile remarks about the faggot "liking it" because they figured I wanted them to kiss me. I never identified the culprit because I was too fearful to turn around, frozen with a terror akin to what I experience watching that girl's endangerment or hearing my mother's stories. Other times I would be assaulted at a urinal, mid-stream, or someone would steal the contents of my locker which I would discover later, never knowing who had been there. As a college student, this treatment – always anonymous, apparitional – intensified to a point that I would shower around 4 am – playing a kind of ghost myself – after all the partyers had finally passed out and I could be sure no one would accost me. I frequently urinated in a milk jug I hid in my closet to dump later because I was too afraid to take the risk of using the bathroom when someone might target me. I became a ghost in my own life, traumatized by my own difference and the way it attracted others to me.

The fact that the concept of presences and of omnipresent surveillance shapes and underpins much of my mother's family's understanding of their consciousness offered me an archive and a framework for conceiving my own difference and the ways that spectrality proved analogous to my own lived experience. Despite their certainty that they were surveilled, at least periodically throughout their lives, by some unseen, inexplicable force, they never appeared to suggest as much out of paranoia or fantasy. They did,

however, each in their own way, endure profound trauma. My great aunt Dorothy, for example, lost her son under questionable circumstances in 1957. The official verdict insisted that Jack had been having an affair with a young married mother name Lynn, the wife of a dentist. The police surmised that during a lunchtime sexual escapade turned bad, my first cousin (once removed) murdered his lover and then shot himself, though investigators never established his motive. My family always maintained that Lynn's brother, a college student who lived in their house, had arrived home for lunch to find them in bed together and murdered them. Either way, Dorothy lost her only child and a few days after his burial, her mother, with whom she lived, reported to the entire family that she had heard Jack climb the staircase to their second-story apartment the night before, hang his hat on the hall tree and plod down the hallway to his bedroom. I heard this story countless times during my childhood, but it was never sensationalized or even delivered to underscore some point about the existence of ghosts or to fulfill some maudlin desire for loved ones' deaths to be rendered impermanent, at least not in a manner pronounced enough to become apparent to me. Rather, it was proffered as a garden-variety observation; a recollected memory highlighting that we exist among other modes of existence, other knowledges. When, at seventeen, my sister inadvertently ended up at the site of the murders as a babysitter, my mother expressed mild surprise similar to that of encountering an old friend after years of separation, as though somehow it made perfect sense in her mind that of all the houses and all the children in need of minding, of course my sister would end up doing so in the house where our cousin and his lover died violently. Her main interest in what I considered an unsavorily serendipitous coincidence centered upon whether my sister had sensed a presence in the house of anyone other than unruly children she'd been hired to "keep alive" as their mother had put it, which unsettles me even now.

Her placid detached engagement had been practiced for generations, it seems, and perhaps this may account for the seemingly disinterested aplomb with which my female relatives – because this is a specifically female-focused *modus vivendi* in my family, except for me – navigated the notion that trauma and loss transpire amidst presence and surveillance. My great-grandmother Vieva – the one who heard Jack ascend the staircase – had grown up under the shadow of her mother's likely, though unproven, murder. Jennie Freed had come to the United States, probably in the 1880s, as a Swedish immigrant, and the only daughter among five brothers. They immigrated as a group and she quickly married my great-grandfather James Pierce Drew, a man of some social stature and personal wealth. They were married for a little over a decade when she died under mysterious circumstances. During the course of their marriage she produced two daughters, Vieva and Marjorie, and a son, Clifford, to whom they always referred to as "the hunchback." Occasionally my mother would drag out her cabinet photos of him, and I was always taken aback by his ghoulish looks, with dark circles under his eyes and pale complexion. For me, he greatly resembled the child drowned in the attic of the mansion in the 1980 horror film *The Changeling* – a film to which my mother introduced me – whose phantom-possessed Victorian wheelchair chases Trish Van Devere's character down the grand staircase with such ferocity that her otherworldly screams prevented me from sleeping for nights afterward (I was 10) and left me unwilling to go upstairs to my bedroom for weeks. I was terrorized by the notion that something stood observing me

from over the banister as I ascended the staircase, uncannily motivated by a presence that never materialized.

Jennie Freed Drew Shortly Before Her Death, and Her Tombstone

Though this particular instantiation of spectral possibility may strike you as childish nonsense, it manifests in my mind today as being akin to my understanding of my own inability to evince masculinity and to measure up to the phantom of compulsory heterosexuality which haunted the first two decades of my life, at least, and still makes cameos today. I sensed the presence of the absences in my demeanor and expressions – as well as the excess in those areas which many think should not be if you're a boy – and though I did not believe in them, either, they tortured me. I remain acutely aware of my inability to perform as masculine, just as the child who is murdered in the bathtub evinces weakness and frailty when his father demands a sturdy, robust boy to ensure his fortune would be secure. We can suffer because of the nonmaterial; it's lack of physicality failing to render it immaterial. It exists even as we know that it does not; authenticity as a locatable object at some point holds no truck with the haunted. Our world forces us to live under the surveillance of specters like Masculinity and Heterosexuality, even if they dominate altars at which we do not pray, because their ideologies pervade our very consciousness and forbid the possibility that we banish them as impossible, even fraudulent.

I feared for my safety in the days after seeing the horror that unfolds in The Changeling, horror I have often wondered if Jennie Freed Drew experienced during the final months of her life. No official cause of death was ever established, but my grandmother would occasionally weave stories about James Pierce Drew sitting vigil over his wife's grave in rural northwestern Illinois in the Presbyterian cemetery for months after her death, allegedly to block any attempts by her brothers – angry and suspicious about her death at such a young age – to exhume her body and prove she had been poisoned. She even took us to the cemetery when I was 6 or 7 and posed us around her headstone for a family photo. Shortly after Jennie's death, Clifford succumbed to his ailments and left Vieva and Marjorie to contend with the world alone as their father separated them and placed them in the care of other people. All her life she wore her mother's gold-filled hinged

bangle engraved with a baroque 'D' for "Drew," as a kind of talisman of her presence, telling stories of how it sported the teeth marks of she and her siblings because Jennie had allowed her teething babies to chew on it to keep them quiet during church services. This connection has proven durable – a further reminder of the specter of a woman none of us knew – as my sister now owns the bracelet and repeats the story, inculcating her own children into our genealogical terror.

After living in sorrow and loss throughout her childhood, Vieva unwittingly married into the same. The resonances of John Elmer Porter, her father-in-law, and his daughter, Ethel Porter Brownlee, both of whom died in 1925, reverberate in my family mythology to this day. The Porters were local gentry in that part of the world, having played a significant role in the founding of Warren County, Illinois and they enjoyed special connections to the founding of Monmouth College and various other enterprises. They boasted their connections to the American Revolution – which they had purchased when John Elmer married Cora Belle Sterrett – and generally lord their prominence over just about everyone. As the most visible and privileged family in the county, they were accustomed to drawing the public gaze. They bequeathed us their sensitivity to sensing oneself being seen, which plays a central role in our family's existence particularly when the Porters' fortunes altered to point that they were no longer subjects of admiration and envy and simply the focus of derision and scorn.

Cora Belle Sterrett Porter and John Elmer Porter

John Elmer and Cora Belle produced a brood of spoiled children without a knack for anything but spending their father's money and engineering spectacle. Carousing was the order of the day for the male children, and the females were encouraged to undertake the machinations of augmenting their wealth and fortune by marrying well. Ethel, their ethereal daughter of exceptional height, took well to this work and made her parents proud. Her miasma still clung to our household well into my teenage years, as mom had inherited Ethel's wedding dress – which, sadly, she eventually sold in a financial pinch – wedding crystal, and numerous photos of the grand event. The photos dazzle me: dozens of guests gathered around a number of white tents, everyone in finery, her wedding to Howell Brownlee a week-long event that included camping in tents, Chautauquas, games, and other events. To hear my grandmother tell it, they emulated English aristocratic

models and shut down the entire county so that everyone might revel. I always felt a special kinship with Ethel; I admire that she appeared perennially elegant, if not quite beautiful. Her demeanor screamed kid skin gloves and daintily high-heeled boots with pearl buttons and a Gibson Girl up-do. Nevertheless, in spite of all those wonderful photos and their appearance of grace and ease, her life was already nearing implosion.

Ethel May Porter Brownlee

Shortly after their wedding fête, the Porters lost everything under mysterious circumstances. To this day no one knows who snagged the thread of that unraveling, but the locals gossiped that one or another of Ethel's brothers gambled the entire family holdings away in a demonic card game. While that smacks of the grandiose nonsense people usually concoct to mask much more banal circumstances, it's all I have to offer in the way of explanation for their reckoning. Almost overnight, all they had evaporated. John Elmer and Cora Belle were forced out of their imposing house – a lookalike for the one Karen Black takes for the summer in *Burnt Offerings* (1976) – which was eventually demolished to make space for additional fields. The children, all adults, at least chronologically speaking, scattered into rented houses and tenant farms in neighboring counties. The name Porter became infamous as the focus of colossal *schadenfreude*. They became their own ghosts, palely navigating the life that remained and mourning, above all, the loss of their fine possessions. The swiftness of their decline allowed no time for acclimation to their new circumstances, and from what I can deduce, most of them squandered their remaining lives bemoaning this beautiful antique chest or that stunning Oriental carpet that vanished in their fall. Those stories obsessed my female relatives, too, and to this day I can spin tales about the phantom objects that populate Porter mythology, including a mahogany bedroom suite carelessly pitched into a ditch when they bought something nicer. They mourned for that lost universe in perpetuity, and have done so for generations, lamenting what they had been and no longer were.

John Elmer, broken, in a cruelly ironic twist, was forced to take the position of groundskeeper at Monmouth College, the institution his family helped establish. He was the focus of endless scurrilous chatter and his humiliation proved so punishing that in 1925 he eventually killed himself by sawing a tree limb from the wrong side, never to enjoy that the Great Depression was about to level those who levelled him. For decades

after, his family would occasionally hear snippets about the old man's ghost appearing in that tree, sawing furiously. Ethel, for her part, ceased to entice Howell Brownlee. Her allure, it seems, stemmed from the promise of endless wealth, and as a pauper he felt a woman requiring substantially less dress fabric might better suit him. Shortly after John Elmer's burial, Howell divorced Ethel, leaving her destitute except for the fine flotsam bequeathed her during that unforgettable wedding week. He remarried shortly thereafter and she opted to die, also in '25, rather than adjust to a world where poverty and abandonment overtook a person. Though I suspect suicide, no one ever suggested as much, casting her as dead "of a broken heart."

Ethel's Wedding Revelers

Life has taught me, though, that while we may very well be haunted by the loss of love and the horror that befalls people, even sometimes deserving – or least not undeserving – people, these horrors rarely kill us. Broken hearts, trauma, loss: these are the conjurers of the spirits who collapse chronology and remind us that the construct of time does little to relieve the terror we inherit as well as create and endure in our own lifetimes to deed to others. Apart from witnessing nearly a dozen of my elderly relatives suffer the horror of terminal illnesses and then die before I was ten years old, I also lost friends to drunk driving accidents and suicides during my teenage and early adult years. I always watched those mourning events unfold with curiosity because they were so unlike my own experiences of such losses in their rawness and wildness. My mother attended the deathbeds of at least half a dozen of our relatives when I was a child and that, coupled with her blithe acceptance of the reappearance of the dead, leant an air of professionalism and businesslike acceptance to the affair of dying. Ours are not a people given to Sicilian outbursts of grief.

Well except for me. When my partner shot himself, I unwillingly bucked that trend. Given that this was the early 2000s and queer partners had no say-so when it came to their unofficial spouses, I had no control over his funeral or burial according to the law once his mother intervened. A private affair, she only acquiesced and invited me when she realized she didn't have enough pallbearers; as chief mourner I bore his weight, literally and figuratively. I made a spectacle of myself the entire time, to my horror, spattering tears on everything and everyone. My grief was unimaginable even to me as I experienced it, and in that period I completely grasped how the narration of these events, which this essay attests, becomes an unavoidable feature of one's existence from that point forward. I wondered if Ethel felt similarly when she lost Howell. What struck me most intensely, though, was a memory of a story my grandmother shared nearly

twenty years earlier when she was becoming accustomed to living alone after the death of my grandfather in 1984. She hadn't slept a night without him since that snowstorm at the farm in over forty years. She stopped sleeping altogether for quite a long period of time when she started to have dreams that he was knocking at their front door, and when she opened it he stood there as a young man in his GI uniform. At once panicking and overjoyed, the horror of awakening to discover it was merely her mind's misfiring, or perhaps wish fulfillment, became unbearable.

In those rare moments when she would drift off, she would startle, half awake, certain that he lay in bed beside her. Fear paralyzed her, rendering her incapable of even reaching out a hand to ascertain the truth. She *knew* he was there; the fact that he wasn't became immaterial. We – a family bent upon curating our ghosts – dismissed her story as a commonplace occurrence catalyzed by grief and exhaustion. And yet, this experience of haunting exerted tremendous influence over her life and habits. Her home – even her bed, her favorite place – no longer a sanctuary or refuge, she carried on in this fashion from when he died until two years later she had a massive stroke and never returned home again. One night shortly after my partner died, I started having the identical experience of believing him to be in bed beside me – it was even coupled with the same paralyzing fear. Even though I never believed it possible – and I still don't – the sensation stunned me and made a profound effect on my experience of the world. To this day I recoil at the horror of discovering myself next to someone I loved dearly, unable to move or even breathe, overcome with the slimmest hope and terror that it was real. Not long after, and ever since, I suffer the nightmares that he's not actually dead and has returned only to awake and immediately force myself to remember reality. I say reality, but that feels inaccurate, imprecise. After all, for hours some nights that becomes my life again. It's not so easy to dissociate oneself from or to dismiss as irrelevant. It proves impossible and commonplace at once; our minds engage a strain of poetics simultaneously wondrous and destructive. This summoning – this labor of grief – places us slightly ajar from those who surround us, forcing us to live akimbo in a place that exists for the mourner alone – both imaginary and indistinguishably real – in a dimension where physicality takes a back seat to the power of our psychological states and our perceptions of the world, not unlike the circumstances presented in *The Others* (2001) – sometimes the dead and the living interact reality with at least one party not knowing who's who. I never understood this till I was wracked with terror so crippling I simply could not move a muscle to verify the truth, if there is such a thing. I felt like my paternal great grandmother, Mona, a funeral dresser, who insisted that every corpse she had ever clothed stood quietly at the foot of her bed as she slept, waiting to ferry her on to the next mode of existence, or non-existence, as the case may be.

As a person who has always felt different, separated, set apart, the intensity of grief and mourning queered me further. I told no one of my terror at experiencing that my mind could send signals indicating he was actually in bed next to me without providing me the tools to disarm such perceptions. The situation intensified when, three months to the day after his death, I awoke one Saturday morning after a particularly difficult week to find a sparrow hopping around in my house. I have no idea how it entered; I never found any possible ingress. He was not hurt or sick; he was, however, terrified by

me. And, oddly, the feeling was reciprocal. In that moment I had uncanny thoughts and vague memories of being told at some point that sparrows are harbingers of death or some other such superstition. Most of all, though, I thought that housebreaking bird might be a sign from Aaron that he was okay and wanted me to be, too. I entertained the thought just as I immediately dismissed it. I'm an atheist and I see death as a zero sum game, but this presence disrupted my thinking and to this day I consider that event strange and inexplicable. It gives me no comfort, but it also no longer disturbs me to realize that there are happenings which cannot be explained or understood. Such events, for me anyway, forge a strange beauty – utterly ethereal – that fortify a sense of wonder for the world and this life even as I ingest and transmit so much cynicism.

I felt haunted then, as I do now. I cannot, nor do I wish to, offer a satisfactory explanation for drapes that appear to have volition or birds that nonchalantly appear, just as I cannot offer compelling justifications for lives decimated by murder and tragedy. What interests me most in all this is the complex, and often contradictory, thinking and feeling invested in these experiences and our compulsion to narrate them as explanations for who and how we are when, if anything, their revelation only serves to render us as illogical, incoherent, illegible. Each of us in my family who insists upon giving voice to these experiences of the world and their impact renders ourselves queer (or queerer) by highlighting our unwillingness to abandon the illogical, the abject, the foolish because we rationally know these things cannot happen and that the dead do not physically rejoin us, even in avian form. To me, it's a feminine way of understanding the world, which is perhaps why we work so diligently as a culture to decry its possibility and

generative potential in terms of dimensional thinking and critical insight that comes when we engage that which has been disowned. In my work as an academic, I find myself grappling with these ghosts, and others, frequently and I'm often surprised what they teach me despite conceiving them as fictions, theoretical lenses. While it's never been my mission to disprove any of these stories, I find myself in a state of perpetual cognitive dissonance where they're concerned as they are at once perfectly sensible and utterly absurd as the inspirations for a queer sensibility guided by a sense of being surveilled; of living at many margins because of my wonky perspective; for seeing the past as present and inescapable, indistinct. Unlike my grandmothers, I've never become accustomed to the memorials that I trod in a way that has helped me cease to notice them, nor have I grown insensitive to the ghosts at the foot of my metaphorical bed. In the end, we're all traipsing over graves and dressing up the dead, no matter how deep the hole we've dug or how distancing the disbelief we've designed to keep them at bay.

Apropos Blurriness: Me and my siblings posed around a gravestone, a childhood commonplace.

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BACKWARDS TO THE FUTURE: CULTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA SINCE THE MID-1970S

by David Aworawo, Ph.D., University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria

Introduction

Studies on the state of the physical environment around the world have revealed that rapid degradation has taken place since the second half of the 20th century. The quest for rapid development has led to massive industrial expansion, urbanization and deforestation which have caused extensive damage to the environment. At the same time, the importance of a healthy environment for sustained development has been realised and emphasised during the same period. This has spurned numerous activities towards environmental protection globally (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2011:38-388; McNeil, 2000: 1-3). Indeed, never in human history has there been so much consciousness towards environmental protection as has been experienced since the mid-1970s. Yet, the level of environmental

degradation globally was unprecedented from the last quarter of the 20th century to the opening years of the 21st century.

Nigeria has not been left out of the global trend. Its physical environment has experienced extensive pollution since the second half of the 20th century and the government has responded by taking measures to promote environmental protection. Deforestation, urbanization, industrial activities, especially those related to the exploration and production of oil and gas as well as indiscriminate dumping of refuse, have been the major sources of environmental degradation in Nigeria. The Nigerian environmental condition has thus been similar to the experience in other parts of the world. Measures taken by the government to promote environmental protection have revolved around the establishment of agencies to assess the state of the environment, the creation of programmes aimed at enhancing regeneration, education of the populace on environmentally-friendly attitudes, and the enforcement of laws to punish polluters of the environment.

In practical terms, however, the measures have been grossly inadequate and the result has been that the state of the Nigerian physical environment has been progressively worse in the course of the first two decades of the 21st century. In most cases, government response to environmental protection has been influenced by devastating developments which intensely degraded the environment and posed a threat to the lives of many people. This was the case with the events leading up to the establishment of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) in 1988. The establishment of the agency was influenced by the dumping of toxic waste in Koko, a community in the Niger Delta area in 1988. FEPA was established for the purpose of putting in place measures to protect the environment. About a decade later a Ministry of the Environment was established to perform functions similar to those of FEPA, namely: articulating policy and taking action to ensure a healthy physical environment in Nigeria. These measures represented the institutional arrangement to ensure environmental protection in Nigeria and it has recorded a measure of success, although not impressive in absolute terms. While the existence of these agencies has not translated to extensive government support and the achievement of a healthy physical environment, an even more critical issue that has received very scanty attention from government has been the education of the people to be environmentally friendly and avoid actions that degrade the environment such as the indiscriminate dumping of refuse and felling of trees. Studies have revealed that to achieve a healthy physical environment taking action to ensure regeneration of polluted lands needs to be accompanied by education to prevent further pollution. In this regard, there is a lot of insight to gain from the pattern that was followed by different Nigerian groups in the pre-colonial period.

The article explores the state of the Nigerian physical environment and factors that have influenced its condition. It discusses issues such as general attitudes towards the environment, government policy and political action, urbanisation, and the implications of all of this for sustainable development. It equally assesses the nature and effectiveness of institutional arrangements to ensure a healthy physical environment as well as general ethical behaviour towards environment. The ways and means by which the environment was protected in pre-colonial Nigeria and what lessons can be learned from this to ensure

a healthy environment in contemporary times are also discussed. In most parts of the world, human activity constitutes one of the most important influences on the physical environment. It is for this reason that the culture and value system of a people greatly influence the condition of the immediate environment. This is a major influence on the focus on the factor of ethical behaviour towards the environment in this article, in addition to other issues, in the analysis of the state of Nigeria's physical environment. The article establishes that negative attitude towards the environment and ineffective government action are the two most prominent determinants of the state of Nigeria's physical environment. It maintains that the Paul Collier formula of nature + technology - regulation = plunder aptly captures the Nigerian experience (Collier, 2010: 5-7). Accordingly, it recommends that education leading to the cultivation of a more positive attitude towards the environment and more effective political action on the part of government are the central issues for Nigeria to achieve a healthy physical environment and ensure sustainable development.

The State of the Nigerian Physical Environment

The state of the Nigerian physical environment has over the years been determined by the condition of the environment and the nature of man's interaction with it. Man's economic activities have always led to some degree of environmental pollution, but in the Nigerian case the level of pollution was not extensive up to the early post- independence period and the regenerative ability of the environment generally absorbed the negative impact of man's activity. This pattern changed in the 1970s, however, as the level of industrial activities expanded across Nigeria. Many of the industrial establishments paid very scanty attention to environmental issues in their operations and this has an overall negative impact on the environment. The level of degradation of the environment in Nigeria was further worsened by the expansion of the exploration and exploitation of oil and gas in the Niger Delta. From the early 1970s to the period when toxic waste was dumped in Koko in 1988 which caused national and international outrage, hardly any concrete step was taken by government to monitor the state of the environment and protect it. The government established the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) in the aftermath of the Koko toxic waste in 1988 and the Ministry of the Environment was also established in 1999 mainly to monitor and protect the environment.

The activities of government institutions established to monitor and protect the environment and other measures taken by government outside the institutional arrangement have had some positive impact on the environment. The government agencies have prevented some industrial establishments from engaging in activities that could have polluted the environment. They have also threatened legal action against some firms that have not conformed to international standards in their operations. Furthermore, the government agencies have embarked on campaigns aimed at environmental protection in addition to programmes directed at regeneration of polluted lands. All these have helped to promote a healthy physical environment. However, these activities have not gone far enough and the result is that the pollution of the Nigerian physical environment has been progressively worse since the 1970s.

Environmental pollution in Nigeria has been caused mainly by the culture of

disregard for the environment by many Nigerians and the less than impressive policies, programmes and action by government on environmental issues. This has been reflected in activities such as indiscriminate dumping of refuse, extensive felling of trees and the little attention paid to environmental issues in productive activities. Industrial establishments across the country, whether owned by Nigerians or foreigners, have been too much concerned with profit maximization and under the circumstances environmental issues have always been accorded little priority in their operations. The oil multinationals operating in the Niger Delta have been the most culpable in this regard. Their disregard for environmental protection is reflected in their slow response to oil spills which pollute soil and water and threaten the means of livelihood of local people. This trend became extensive in the 1970s as oil exploration and exploitation expanded. By the early 1980s, Nigeria had become one of the leading gas flaring countries in the world, with 88 per cent of its gas being flared which amounted to nearly 40 million tonnes annually (Akinyeye, 1997:94). Methane, the main gas that is flared is known to contribute to acid rain and global warming. The consequences on the environment have been disastrous.

Other industrial activities have equally affected the environment negatively, with the owners of the industries treating environment issues with insouciance. The textile manufacturers allow the dye wastes from their factories to flow into streams to destroy aquatic life, and the cement manufacturers allow dusts from their factories to pollute the air up to a kilometre radius from their site of operation. As one government official involved in the control of environmental pollution lamented: "Unfortunately, only a few industries have installed the simplest pollution control equipment such as … sand-

filtration gadgets, oil and grease traps for effluents; scrubbers, particulate traps or precipitators for gaseous emissions" (Falomo, 1997:1 110).

In the late 1990s, one source estimated that "about 19,000 tonnes of hazardous wastes were generated yearly from industries" (Olokesusi, 1997:249). This has resulted in the intense pollution of the environment. This situation has been worsened by the fact that government officials who have the responsibility of monitoring compliance of industries with environmental standards have generally not lived up to expectation as they are either not sufficiently committed or collect bribe from company officials and take no action when environmental standards are disregarded. All over the world, the expansion of technology and industrialization is always accompanied by social change which poses some challenge to the environment. As Akingbade has noted:

> Technological change has produced more wealth and affluence, more consumption, more education, more communication, and more travel in our century (the 20th) than was produced in all preceding centuries. It has also changed society in fundamental ways and produced crisis in education… crime, health services, development etc. Society's responses to such issues are made in desperation… not out of deliberation (Akingbade, 1996: 103).

It is not in all societies and countries that the response to the challenges posed by technological change and industrial expansion reflected desperation and lack of effectiveness. Countries that attach importance to sustainable development anticipate the challenges posed by technological change and effectively respond to them. This makes it possible for them to maintain a healthy physical environment despite the impact of industrial expansion. Swift and effective response to environmental protection in the

face of industrial expansion has not, unfortunately, been the case with the Nigerian experience and this has been a major factor responsible for the progressive degradation of the environment since the 1970s (Onosode,1999).

At the individual and local levels, lack of concern for the environment, some negative cultural practices and falling ethical standards have negatively affected the environment in different ways. In some communities across Nigeria, for instance, instead of fishing in rivers and ponds sparingly to preserve aquatic life as it was done in the past, some individual have been known to pour dangerous chemicals into ponds and streams to kill fish. This has led to the destruction of aquatic life and endangered the health of the unsuspecting individuals who buy and eat the sea products killed by such chemicals. Some of the individual who pollute streams and ponds have justified themselves by claiming that they are compelled to resort to using chemicals by their struggle to survive in a harsh economic condition. In other areas, people have been known to set fire on bushes in their efforts to catch animals, without bothering about the destruction that is caused by such acts and the damage to the environment. The impact of these activities on the environment has been devastating.

Nigeria has also experienced extensive deliberate destruction of pipelines carrying petroleum products in attempts to siphon products for sale since the 1980s. The practice worsened in the course of the 1990s and led to serious pollution of the environment. The breaking of the pipelines often leads to the spilling of petroleum products during and after pipes are vandalised. The spills end up polluting the ground and streams. In some instances, the breaking of petroleum pipelines causes fire outbreak, leading to the loss of life and property (Onosode, 2000:25; Oghenero: 2016). One of the cases was the fire outbreak ate Jesse in Delta State in late 1998. In spite of the extensive destruction that was recorded in this particular case, numerous other cases were recorded between 1999 and 2002.

The central government introduced an amnesty for militants in the Niger Delta in 2009. This action reduced the cases of pipeline breakage and the consequent oil spill. Many of the young people who engaged in pipeline destruction became enrolled in the amnesty programme of government and this took them away from their illegal activities. In addition, the government became more active in compelling the oil-producing companies to clean up polluted lands. This had a healthy impact on the environment. Unfortunately, extensive pipeline destruction began again in late 2015 and continued to early 2016 as a new government took office in May 1915 which was perceived not to be committed to the development of the Niger Delta and the interest of the people of the area. The contrast in the prevailing condition from 2009 to May 2015 and from late 2015 to early 2016 emphasises the importance of political action and the role of government in environmental protection and the achievement of sustainable development.

The progressive degradation of the Nigerian physical environment has also been reflected in the nature and extent of deforestation in the past half a century. The forests have not been spared in the general lack of concern for the environment. In many rural and a few urban areas, people have cut down trees for fuel. This has been particularly intense since the prices of gas and kerosene began to increase astronomically since 1988. Between 1983 and 1993, it was estimated that about 450,000 hectares of forest were lost

annually in Nigeria, whereas only an average of about 40,000 hectares which represented less than ten percent were replenished annually (Akinyeye, 1999:88). Deforestation has had a devastating impact on the environment in different parts of Nigeria in diverse ways. In parts of the south-east deforestation has caused serious erosion and in the north it has led to the southward expansion of the Sahara desert. Deforestation and desertification have thus gone together in much of northern Nigeria. The practice of deforestation reveals the importance of habits, values and cultural issues in the maintenance of a healthy environment. This is more glaring from a consideration of the fact that in pre-colonial and colonial times there were customs and cultural practices that prevented indiscriminate tree felling and protected the forests.

The practice of deforestation in different parts of Nigeria described above reveals the centrality of the cultivation of the culture of environmental protection for the country to achieve a healthy physical environment. That is why any serious discussion on the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria must address the issue of culture, values and attitude towards the environment. In this regard, the perspective presented by Tony Marinho on steps to be taken to achieve a healthy environment in Nigeria is apt. According to him, the protection of the environment from degradation in Nigerian is "a multi- pronged war" which must involve a change of attitude on the part of the entire populace. He stated further.

> We must inculcate the basics of hygiene in everyone. We must judge offices and schools by their toilets… We have become a nation of sweepers not cleaners. .. Students especially at tertiary level must want to seriously study African customs, culture, costumes and traditions with a view of selecting the beneficial and discarding the harmful.

Marinho concludes that education and moral regeneration inculcated from a very young age, are important in the environmental 'war'. The need to inculcate sound social values in the efforts to maintain a clean environment in Nigeria can therefore not be overstressed.

It is important to analyze the general lack commitment to environmental protection among Nigerians. An important explanation is the emphasis on the acquisition of material things which grew progressively after the Nigerian Civil War in 1970 and led to the abandonment of the value system and culture which had helped to preserve the environment. This has been accompanied by the general neglect of what is collectively owned. Ironically, it is this prevailing environment, that is, "the total external conditions or surroundings" that has influenced the behaviour of younger generation of Nigerians towards the environment. In other words, the generality of the people have been influenced by the prevailing attitude which has been structured by the value system. This is the school of thought that is referred to as environmentalism, that is, "the belief that a person's behaviour is chiefly affected by his environment" as opposed to heritability, that is the concept that emphasizes the influence of heredity as the determinant factor in human behaviour (Alao, 1996 vi-vii). Cultural factors have undoubtedly been a strong influence on the state of the Nigerian environment.

In the analysis of the state of the Nigerian environment and the factors shaping it, it is difficult to establish the relevance of heredity. The attitude of Nigerians to the environment has been determined almost entirely by the social environment. Man's interaction with the environment in Nigeria, as elsewhere, has been double-sided. As human activities affect the environment either positively or negatively, so too the environment affects human

behaviour. For instance, the harshness of the physical environment has sometimes led to economic hardship which has in turn influenced lack of interest in environmental protection. In the case of Nigeria, however, the greatest influence has come from the social environment which has shaped the values, culture and attitude towards the environment. The point is underscored by Paul Stern in his explication of the value-belief-norm theory (Stern, 2000: 407-408). This emphasises the need for extensive education on the need for commitment to environmental protection by the generality of Nigerians to a healthy environment to be achieved (Akingbade, 1996: 111-112). There is the need to make people realize the fact that the destruction of the environment is a threat to the very existence of man. This makes a positive attitude towards the environment a collective responsibility and an issue of enlightened self interest.

Culture, Social Values and the Environment

Culture and social values are important determinants of the environment in different parts of the world. Social values are the standards of behaviour which guide the way a people live. They are those principles which regulate human activity in a society. Since human activity impacts on the environment either positively or negatively, social values necessarily affect, and sometimes determine, the level of healthiness of the environment. The standard of behaviour of a people influences what they do to the environment and equally restrains them from doing certain things that they known would affect the environment negatively. It is for this reason the changing pattern of the value system in Nigeria over the years had influenced the state of the healthiness of the environment in the country.

In pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria, there were many aspects of the value system which had positive impacts on the environment. In most Nigerian societies. It was regarded as anti-social for one's immediate environment to be dirty. Each family therefore ensured that the house and the immediate surroundings were kept clean each morning. This routine was religiously followed by most families. In some communities, certain age groups were mandated to clean the roads leading to the town or village on fixed dates and they routinely performed the task for the benefit of all. On such occasions, properties that were collectively owned such as the town hall and refuse dumps were also kept clean (Chokor, 1993:17). This was the case in most communities in Igboland. The communal feeling which was very strong at that time and the fear of sanction by the whole community ensured the full participation of the people. It should be emphasized that this environmental ethic is still prevalent in many rural communities in Nigeria up till the present time, and it is this factor, coupled with the relatively low level of the population and industrial activities, that has ensured that the rural areas remain cleaner than most urban centres. Thus, even though it has been established that poverty promotes pollution, that is, the poorer the people in a community the relatively dirtier their neighbourhood, in Nigeria the environment in the rural neighbourhoods are counterparts (World Bank, 1996 xiii). The main factor responsible for this is the environmental ethnic which emanates from the nature of the social values.

There were regulations which helped to protect the environmental from being degraded in many Nigerian communities during the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

In some communities fishing in some rivers or ponds was limited to certain periods of the year. This was true of some Isoko and Urhobo communities in the Niger Delta and this helped to protect such rivers from being depleted of fish. In some other areas, the indiscriminate felling of threes or the cutting of some species was forbidden. This was the case in some communities in present Oyo and Osun States, and according to Boyowa Chokor, also in some communities in northern Nigeria. As Chokor explained: "In pre-colonial Hausaland of Northern Nigeria, there were traditional keepers of the forest and nature conservationists referred to as Sarkin Aji or Sarkin Dawa, with wide powers to protect and enforce community conservation norms" (1997:17). People generally complied with those norms and this helped to protect the environment.

The influence of culture and tradition on the environment in different parts of Africa has been acknowledged in different studies. One report stated:

> In an African context, it is important to define sustainable development with a historical perspective. It is not enough to compare the present with the future, since the residual effects of past practices must also be considered. African cultural heritage and traditions remind us that land and its associated natural resources must be regarded as a sacred trust that has been bequeathed to us by our ancestors. This resource base must be handed over to future generations intact or in an enhanced condition (World Bank. 1996).

Recognition of the importance of the environment and positive environmental ethic helped to ensure a healthy environment in many Nigerian communities in the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Appreciation of the environment made the people to strive to protect it, and the persistence of this attitude in some communities has kept the environment in their pristine condition up to the present time.

However, it was not all aspect of the social values of the various Nigerian communities that impacted positively on the environment. The practice of bush burning, for example, did not have a healthy impact on the environment. This practice was common in the country in pre-colonial and colonial times and has persisted in some communities until the present. It was the regenerative power of the environment that absorbed the negative impact. In some communities too, solid waste was not properly disposed of and this negatively affected environment (Akinmayowa, 1996: 87-88). This latter practice, which arose mainly from ignorance, caused sickness and death in some communities in Nigeria until recently, and probably still does up till today. Nevertheless, taken together, it can be concluded that the culture and social values of most Nigerian communities helped to preserve the environment from degradation until recently.

The Impact of Political Action

In maintaining a clean environment, political action plays a very important role. Through legislation, sanction on polluters, concrete actions in preventing environmental degradation and promoting regeneration and numerous other ways, political action plays a critical role in the maintenance of a healthy environment. In Nigeria, the government has played diverse roles in the efforts to ensure a clean environment. This has been the case since the colonial period.

From the early 1900s up to independence, numerous legislations were enacted at both the central and regional government levels with the aim of improving the quality of the environment and maintaining a high standard of hygiene. The Colonial Township

Ordinance of 1917, the Forestry Ordinance of 1937 which was amended several times up to 1960, and the numerous bye-laws on wildlife preservation in the 1940s and 1950s, were part of government efforts to preserve the environment (Chokor, 1997: 18-21). Apart from legislation, the colonial authorities took concrete actions to ensure that refuse and sewage were properly disposed and that the aesthetics of the major towns was maintained. Several other concrete steps were also taken to ensure nature conservation. Apart from the forestry and wild animal preservation laws, the government took a concrete step to promote nature conservation when it established the first game reserve at Yankari in 1956.

The same general pattern has been followed since independence. The government at the federal and regional and later state levels have enacted so many legislations and taken several measures to preserve the environment. Perhaps the most important of these legislations was Decree No. 58 of 1988 which established the Federal Environmental protection Agency (FEPA). The activities of the Agency in ensuring a healthy environment in Nigeria since 1988 up to 1999 when a ministry of Environment was created was impressive in spite of constraints (Osuntokun, 2001:498-499).

Some of the legislations that the governments at various levels have enacted to protect the environment since 1960 include the Wild Animals law of 1963 and 1965 by the Northern and Eastern regions respectively, the Sea Fisheries Decree of 1971, the Seas Fisheries Regulations of 1972, the Exclusive Economic Zone Decree of 1978 and the Endangered Species Decree of 1985. These legislations helped to ensure the preservation of the environment and wildlife before the creation of FEPA. In the 1960s and 1970s many more game reserves, about twenty of them, were established in addition to the existing Yankari. All of these were established by the various state governments. In 1979, the Federal Government established the first national park, the Kainji Lake. Since then, the Federal Government has established at least six additional national parks which include a children's park at Abuja which was opened in late September 2001. The broad aim of establishing these game reserves and parks is to preserve wildlife, maintain a healthy environment and promote tourism. Without such political action, many species of animals would simply have disappeared and the environment neglected.

As already pointed out, the establishment of FEPA in December 1988, which was in itself in reaction to dumping of toxic waste at Koko in the Niger Delta in May of that year, changed dramatically government policies and action to environmental protection. The agency was given broad responsibilities which included the determination of environmental standards as well as guideline and criteria to guide the maintenance of the environment across the country. Determination of the quality of water, air, and the atmosphere, the proper disposal of industrial and solid waste, general maintenance of a decent standard of hygiene all over the country and enforcement of the laws made in relation to the above, were other broad responsibilities of FEPA. In addition, the agency had the responsibility to carry out research on environmental issues and to formulate polities accordingly to ensure that the standard of the Nigerian environment is abreast with what obtains globally. The Agency eventually succeeded in establishing a National policy on the Environment in 1989 (Chokor, 1997: 23-24).

This policy clearly reveals the concern of government for the environment after the

incident at Koko in 1988 which eventually caused the death of many people in the port town. It was clearly stated in the policy that the government was determined to maintain a healthy environment which should enhance the health and well-being of everyone in the country. The policy also focused on conserving and maintaining the ecosystem and wildlife endowment of the country, ensuring a balance between economic development and environmental sustainability. In addition to this, the policy emphasised creating public awareness on how to maintain a healthy environment and forging international cooperation in areas of ecological preservation, protection of the ozone layer, preventing toxic waste dumping and maintaining a healthy environment generally.

The activities of FEPA, as the agency of government charged with the responsibility of protecting the environment, were not limited to policy formulation. The agency took action against polluters of the environment such as industries that discharged hazardous wastes indiscriminately. The National Effluent Limitation was published to guide industries on effluent treatment, and anti- pollution measures to be taken to avoid environmental degradation. Industries were also informed about the pollution limits permissible after which they would be sanctioned. FEPA also gave guidelines on water quality standards and monitored it by conducting tests in its laboratories to assess its quality. By so doing, this agency created tremendous awareness about the environment both among operators of manufacturing industries and the general public. While it is true that compliance with FEPA guidelines on environmental standards especially by manufacturing industries was far from satisfactory, it is equally true that flagrant disregard for the environment would have been more extensive in the two decades from its establishment in 1988 but for the conscious efforts of the agency.

The constraints of FEPA in discharging its functions were many, ranging from inadequate funds, manpower and equipment, to problems associated with the legal system to prosecute violators of environmental laws, lack of cooperation from some government agencies, apparent powerlessness to deal with certain elements within the country such as the oil multinationals in which the government itself has strong interest, among others. It is therefore obvious that part of the problem of FEPA is the government itself. For instance, the incredible pollution of underground water in Baruwa, Lagos State, by petroleum products from the depot of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, for many years set FEPA on collision course with the NNPC. But FEPA made very little progress on the matter because of the influence of the NNPC. The environmental protection agency seemed powerless in the face of powerful interests. Thus, for years after the discovery of the polluted underground water at Baruwa the people endured the pollution despite the efforts of FEPA. This emphasises the importance of political will on the part of government in the maintenance of a healthy environment in Nigeria.

Political action in Nigeria regarding issue of environmental protection falls below what is required. While the creation of FEPA has greatly enhanced environmental consciousness, some actions of the government have negatively affected efforts to ensure a healthy environment. For instance, the funds committed to environmental protection every year for much of the 1990s was about one per cent of the annual budget which was insignificant, considering the enormous environmental problems the country faced during the period ranging from desertification to erosion, among others. The trend has

not changed in the second decade of the 21st century. The inadequacy of government action in tackling environmental problems is illustrated by the programme of reforestation and prevention of desert encroachment launched in the late 1980s. It was estimated that 400 million naira would be spent on reforestation between 1989 and 1999. A vigorous campaign was launched and every Nigerian was urged to plant at least ten trees. This was, however, not sustained and the result has been that the rate of deforestation has remained at 3.5 per cent, with the forest area declining from 168,000sq.km to 156,000 sq.km between 1980 and 1990, and further to about 145,000 sq.km in 1999 (Olokesusi, 1997: 248). At present, the arid zone in Nigeria constitutes about 12 per cent of the country's total land mass. As earlier stated, the problem of desertification has persisted in Nigeria and ineffective government policy has ensured that the arid zone continues to expand. That is an important reason why the government needs to display greater commitment to environmental protection.

The central government in Nigeria took a major step towards environmental protection when it created a Ministry of the Environment in 1999. An important early preoccupation of the ministry was to stop the flaring of gas by oil companies in the Niger Delta. Nigeria had for many years been one of the highest burners of gas from oil exploitation in the world which devastated forests and caused acid rain. Before the creation of the Ministry of the Environment, it has been agreed by the oil companies that the flaring of gas would stop by 2008 (Mukhtar, 2011). The companies had promised to install devices to channel the gas that would otherwise have been flared to profitable use by the end of that year. The Ministry however felt that the agreed date was too far away and sought to compel the oil companies to accept an earlier date. The year 2004 was suggested. A consensus was reached and many of the companies accepted between 2004 and 2006. The rest of the companies that thought that 2004 was too early accepted 2006 and 2008. It was thus thought that gas flaring would end in Nigeria in 2008. It can be said that the Minist4ry recorded some success in its efforts on the gas flaring problem as it mounted pressure on the oil companies. Unfortunately, by 2016, eight years after the final deadline that was agreed in 2000, the oil multinationals continued to flare gas in Nigeria and information from some officials of the Ministry of the Environment suggests that a new date of 2030 has been set as the deadline for stopping gas flaring. Apart from its efforts to stop gas flaring, the Ministry of the Environment commenced a programmes to sensitize Nigerians to adopt environmentally-friendly practices and environmental protection generally. It encouraged the maintenance of a clean environment, tree planting and forest conservation, and discouraged indiscriminate felling of trees and environmental pollution by individuals and corporate entities. In many respects, the ministry reinvigorated the advocacy on sustainable development.

The Nigerian environment was also positively influenced by the insistence on an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) by both FEPA and the Ministry of the Environment before major projects were embarked upon. FEPA produced the National Guidelines and Procedures on EIA in the early 1990s which contained information on what was expected of individuals and organisations that embarked on major projects to protect the environment. The insistence on EIA by FEPA and the Ministry of the Environment did not only make it possible for a more environmentally-friendly

approach to be adopted in the execution of major projects, it also sensitized people to assert their rights when a project is perceived to negatively impact on the environment. Many individuals and groups actually protested when an EIA was not carried out on proposed project they thought would impact negatively on them in the course of the 1990s. This tended to prevent a situation whereby major projects were started with utter disregard for its impact on the environment as was the case before the early 1990s. Some individuals have even gone ahead to insist on Environmental Audit Accounts (EAA) for already existing projects so that the impact on the environment could be assessed (Chokor, 1997: 25). Such has been the level of awareness which has been generated regarding environmental protection since the late 1980s.

Undoubtedly, then, the creation of FEPA and the Ministry of the Environment had a positive impact on the environment from the late 1980s to the middle of the second decade of the 21st century when advocacy for environmental protection was strong and environmental regeneration was vigorously pursued. Ironically, FEPA, a much smaller agency than the Ministry of the Environment, seemed to have done much more to promote environmental protection and sustainable development in Nigeria than the Ministry. FEPA drafted guidelines, created programmes to protect the environment, created awareness on the need to maintain a clean environment, sanctioned polluters of the environment, and embarked on activities to ensure environmental regeneration in a manner that the Ministry has not managed to do. Thus, apart from creating an elaborate bureaucracy, there is the need for the Ministry of the Environment to embark on more extensive programme of sensitization of Nigerians on environmental issues and ensure that the country adopts international best practices on sustainable development as contained in the many protocols and agreements that Nigeria has signed since the last quarter of the 20th century. With all the efforts, a lot is left to be done. From 2015 through to 2017 Nigeria experienced serious economic problems arising mainly from global economic issues and domestic economic policy. In the atmosphere of economic recession environmental issues usually receive less attention than in more prosperous times. This poses a challenge for the government in environmental protection.

Conclusion

Environmental management in Nigeria has received a great deal of attention since the late 1980s. Global emphasis on the importance of sustainable development and the negative impact of climate change, which has been linked to neglect of the environment, have ensured that hardly any country is left behind in the efforts to achieve a more healthy physical environment, and Nigeria is not an exception. Industrial activities expanded progressively in Nigeria from the 1970s onwards and this was accompanied by higher level of pollution of the environment. Intervention by the government to protect the environment, especially after the dumping of toxic waste in Koko and the subsequent establishment of FEPA, marked a landmark in the activities of the government to protect the environment from pollution and degradation. However, there has been lack of consistency on the part of government in commitment to environmental protection. Thus, despite government efforts and advocacy by many non-governmental organisations pollution has continued apace in different parts of Nigeria. This has been especially true

of pollution caused by oil exploration and production in the Niger Delta.

The analysis above clearly reveals that political action on the part of government and the attitude of Nigerians towards the environment have been the greatest determinants of the Nigerian physical environment. Political action has made possible the establishment of the framework and the creation of agencies to monitor and protect the environment, while attitude towards the environment has largely determined the extent of environmental pollution and protection. This reality emphasises the importance of appropriate policies and actions on the part of government and the right attitude towards the environment on the part of the people. Education on environmental issues is of immense value to the protection of the environment. People need to understand the fact that destroying the environment means destroying the source of life's sustenance.

Nigeria's environmental problems are serious and multifaceted. Concerted effort by government and the people is important for them to be effectively addressed. At present, just about one per cent of the national budget is committed to the environment. This is clearly inadequate and it partly explains why the level of success in environmental protection and regeneration has been low. Nigeria experienced very low level of economic development in 2015 and 2016. This usually provides a pretext for paying less attention to environmental issues. However, economic problems should really not be a justification for neglecting the environment because in the long run neglect of the environment worsens the economic fortunes of any country. The Ministry of the Environment expressed renewed commitment to tackle Nigeria's numerous environmental problems from early 2016 onwards. The level of commitment displayed by the officials of the Ministry, especially the top level management, as well as consistency in the implementation of its programmes will certainly be central to how much success will be recorded. These measures are vital to ensure a healthy physical environment and sustainable development in Nigeria.

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More Magic

Sue Matheson

Origin Relations: Mother of the North

by Walter M. Young

Once there were children who ran through a forest. Where they ran to and who they escaped from remains untold.

In the high north, where the vast boreal landscape meets the cerulean sky, the frontier of civilisation ends and our story begins. The autumn winds began their trumpets in high note. It bellowed a chilly breeze between the pointed tree tops, serenading the sleepy timbres into a delicate teetering dance. Under the canopy of fluttering orange-brown leaves, the evening sun spilled onto the forest rug, leaving pools of brilliant light upon its scattered surface.

This symphony of nature was abruptly dispelled by the splitting of thunder. The fierce cacophony came not from clouds but from a rifle. The approach of quickening footstep followed the laboured breaths of a child. A bright-eyed girl sprung from the thickets as quickly as frightened jack rabbits.

They're close behind, she thought grimly.

The men chasing her were from Fisher River residential school. She knew the old facilitator, Father Piccard, would send trackers to hunt any child who ran away from the school. She did not expect them to be carrying firearms.

Aleena leaped over a small stream and climbed up a low dike. The sound of gun fire crackled once more, whizzing past her heads. The bullet pierced soft branches and shattered the bark of a birch tree, sending shards of cambium in every direction. Behind, she could hear the two trackers arguing. "We're supposed to scare, not kill 'em," one of the trackers growled.

"She seems pretty scared to me, boss," the other tracker chuckled harshly. "Scared like a little rabbit."

The sound of their cruel voices hastened the child's escape, carrying her on winged feet. She scrambled under brushes, pushed away branches, and leaped over more streams until her lungs burned and her feet caked with mud. Then Aleena ran some more. It wasn't until she stopped in a small clearing that she met her second companion.

What am I going to do? Aleena winced when she heard the snapping of twigs close by.

Pssst!

She heard it. Aleena turned to the fallen tree trunk. Its roots fanned out like skeletal fingers reaching for the ground they once clung to. The gray bark was now covered with brown fungus and icky, yellow lichen.

Pssst!

A pair of blue eyes peered over the tree trunk at her. His face was pale and his lips were pink and bow shaped. By the thin countenance and auburn coloured hair she knew he was different from her. He waved a small, freckled hand to Aleena, beckoning her to come behind the fallen trunk. She spared no argument and hid with the strange pale boy.

There they waited.

It didn't take long before a couple of slovenly dressed men in oil stained overalls came strolling into the clearing. They growled like bears and cursed like hyenas. (Aleena had never heard men say such thing because the people of her village never used foul language.) Their muffled conversation faded as they continued searching away from the clearing. A much anticipated sigh of relief passed between the cowering younglings as the angry men searched elsewhere. Tranquility reigned in the forest.

Aleena was the first to speak. "What do we do now? They might come back." She thought about what happened to children who ran away from residential school.

"*Pour qui,*" the pale boy muttered in a strange accent. "I save you and I get no thanks." She stared in astonishment at him. It was the first time Aleena had ever met anyone with such an accent.

"Pierre is the name," the young French boy greeted. "You are?"

"I'm Aleena Loclin," the young native girl replied. Pierre took her hand and kissed it gently. A faint blush coloured Aleena's cheeks.

"Well, now that we are friends here, how 'bout you tell me why you were leaving the school?" Pierre flashed charming smile. The feature seemed quite natural to him.

"I can ask you the same," Aleena retorted in her own charming way.

Pierre briefly recalled himself staring out the window thinking about what his uncle had said to him earlier. As he gazed out at the distant horizon, he noticed a figure speeding away from Fisher River. He knew this was his only chance to escape the captivity of his uncle's guardianship.

"I ran away from uncle Piccard," Pierre acknowledged. The shame was clearly written on his face. "We are in the same boat, no?"

Aleena covered her mouth in shock. Fisher River was a harsh place for aboriginal children but she never knew other children were taken there too. They shared a sympathetic silence before Pierre stood up, hands on hips.

"Me thinks we should leave before those men come back." The French boy brushed the dead leaves off his blue trousers. "If we follow west me thinks we will reached the road to town."

The two companions walked where Pierre had pointed out. As they crossed the forest landscape, the golden evening sun began to sink below the horizon. The French boy explained he was not a student of Fisher River. Instead, the old priest, Father Piccard, was his mother's brother. His father had died some years ago during a logging accident, leaving his mother and one sibling. Then, "My mother and sister died last month when their boat crashed into a rocky outcrop," Pierre relented. "I came to live with uncle Piccard at his school because I had no one else in my family."

"That's so sad," Aleena moaned sympathetically.

"I tell no lies, *sai*," Pierre answered sternly. "I live in the school just as you."

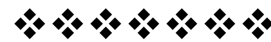
"Then how come I never see you eat with the children in the dinning hall then?"

"I take my meals in my uncles' office. He prefers I am 'separated from the rats', as he calls it."

"So what was it like where you used to live, Pierre," Aleena asked.

"I lived on a farm near the St. Lawrence. That's near Quebec city. Have you ever seen?"

Aleena thought about the strange land where Pierre was from. Her grandmother never told her about such things before arriving at Fisher River.



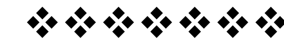
They approached a clearing where the tree line separated into a wide field shaped like a corridor. The sickly green moss below their feet grew soft and moist. Aleena was already wishing she had a pair of muklucks.

The young French boy stopped. "Can you see those branches sticking out of the moss? I think the overgrown moss has covered the fallen trees." He pointed to the uneven surface which formed the outline of slain timbers. An uncomfortable thought filled Pierre at the mention of fallen trees. "Perhaps we should be careful, no?" He turned to an unconfident Aleena. Pierre could see her courage failing. "Follow me, *madam.* I'll lead the way."

The young French boy's mannerism held a positive vigour. Aleena felt strong enough to cross. "Okay. Is it alright if I hold your hand while we cross?"

Pierre offered his slender hand to Aleena. She took it and they both entered the clearing together. Crossing the moss was easy. Climbing and balancing on the slippery surface was the difficult part. It was here the children were unaware of the dangers which lurked below. As they traversed the treacherous terrain, Pierre thought he saw a break in the moss between two large trunks. It wasn't until he heard Aleena scream that he realised the hidden pit fall below. Unable to save neither himself or Aleena, the two children slipped between the cracks of the timber and moss.

The last glimpse of light shrunk away as they descended into the dark maw of the shaft.



It took the trackers thirty minutes to find the trail where the children had disappeared. The one tracker with a puffy, red nose peered over the edge of the exposed mineshaft. The second tracker with a salt-and-pepper moustache and a rifle slung over his shoulder joined his partner.

"The trail ends here," the first tracker said.

The second tracker peered into the black pit, spitting a glob of brown tobacco into its miserable depths. "These mineshafts can go for hundreds of meters. Too bad," he concluded. "These little rabbits are as dead as their culture. Let's tell the old priest."

The two trackers would return to Fisher River residential school to inform Father Piccard of this tragedy.

The world seemed weightless as they fell into the infinite darkness. The last thing Aleena felt was the air rushing upon her face. She anticipated the cruel, watery bottom to be the last sensation she would ever experience. Strange how neither the watery surface or the sudden collision of anything solid ever occurred. Instead, there was a momentary

spell of dizziness before blacking out. Time became absent.

The children faded in and out of sleep like the undulated howling of wind in a cave. Aleena was sure at one point she'd felt her hands dragging across a hard surface. Pierre would recall the smell of burning logs and the warmth of flames against his cheek. There was a vague recollection of a woman's voice speaking a distant yet familiar language

It was then Aleena heard the voice of their saviour, Flower Blossoming:

Kee-nee-pah-nah, Kee-nee-pah-nah,

Nee-mee-sim, Nee-mee-sim!

Kee-nee-pah-nah, Kee-nee-pah-nah,

Nee-cha-kan, Nee-cha-kan!

Aleena did not recognize the children's rhyme but did recall her own Cree language-a trait not even Fisher River could beat out of her. She awoke to find a woman sitting beside a campfire, singing to someone in her arms. By the tone of her beautiful voice and the maturing shape of her body, Aleena guessed this woman was not much older than she is.

The woman stopped singing when she sensed someone was watching her. Morning light from the canopy of rustic leaves spilled across her buttery-brown face, revealing a pair of almond shaped eyes. In her arms, wrapped in a comfy kodka[1], was a baby of no more than eleven months old.

"Who are you," asked Aleena as she sat up. When the Flower Blossoming didn't understand, Aleena asked again in her Cree language.

1. A kodka is a harness used for carrying small infants. It is usually made from animal skin and hangs snugly from the shoulders of young mother.

An enthusiastic light twinkled in her eyes when the Inninew woman understood Aleena's words. Being an isolated and traditional community, the Inninew are remarkably sensitive to the articulation of speech. Hearing young Aleena's voice reminded Flower Blossoming of another who spoke such words and left a lasting impression upon her…

When Flower Blossoming told her name, Aleena answered in Cree, "*Tapwe*! That's a pretty name. Is that your Indian name?"

She didn't understand the concept behind 'Indian naming'. Flower Blossoming explained it was the name her father, Noble Bull, had given her on the day she was born.

"My name is Aleena. My friend and I are from Fisher River residential school."

Flower Blossoming didn't know what a residential school was.

"It's a place where kids like me go when the Indian Agent comes to visit the reserve. They say it's a school to learn reading and writing." Aleena felt a pang of guilt when she thought of that place. "I ran away because I didn't like it there."

Flower Blossoming nodded sympathetically and asked if there would be people who would worried about her.

"I have a family waiting for me back home. There's my mom and dad and baby brother. We share a two-story house with my grandparents and some of their children. Where do you live?"

Flower Blossoming pointed toward the east. She described a great forest at the base of a mountain where the warm Tremblers sway all-year round and the seasons yielded to a myriad of colours and light. Long houses and tee-pees sprawled along the calm rivers of

Paskwa. Aleena imagined that splendour in her mind as some place peaceful and simple. The people who inhabited this tranquil region were called the Inninew. In her archaic Cree, Flower Blossoming had named this place Greywood.

"The Greywood," Aleena repeated. "It sounds like a good home. But why are you so far way from it?"

It was here Flower Blossoming lowered her head and gazed into the kodka in her arms. There was a long pause before the young Inninew woman spoke. After the winter snow had melted, the Inninew enjoyed a prosperous Spring and Summer with their new 'gifts'. They hunted fair game and fed well. Their grandfathers and grandmothers guided them through prayer. They also saw lands far beyond the Sleeping Birch. The Inninew lived harmoniously with the land and all its flourishing antiquity.

Then the insects came.

It was on the morning after the men had returned from a bountiful hunt. A crisp wind blew from the north carrying with it the dewy scent of the mountain. The women rose from their dwellings to greet the victorious hunters. The children playing along the Paskwa river ran to catch a glimpse at the huge beasts that the men carried. Excitement filled the air above the village of the Inninew. A great feast would be held this day!

Flower Blossoming was feeding Awasis Achakos when her brother, High Wind, emerged from the hunters' crowd. He was about to ask how their father was when something caught his ear. Gripping his mighty spear, High Wind turned his gaze to where the sound began. His triumphant face soured into a countenance of horror when he gazed into the eastern horizon. Against the cerulean sky, a black cloud rose and multiplied above the circle of Sleeping Birches. The swarm of small, winged creature soon blackened the sun, filling the sky with their hateful war-buzz. Toward the southern edge of the village, the waters of the Paskwa churned and grew restless. Slowly they crept onto the shore; the family of insects that slithered and glided within the river gathered like a flood. Lastly, the western hills sundered, tearing root from earth. The crawling relatives of the insects marched from their subterranean homes. By land, water and sky the insects surrounded the peaceful village.

The Inninew were paralysed with awe, yet most by fear. Children ran under their mothers skirts. Women huddled close each other. The men lifted their bows and spears. Flower Blossoming remembered standing next to her brother as he struggled to make sense of this gathering. None knew why the insects had come…but soon they would.

A hush fell across the village. Then the earth insects began beating their pointed feet on the ground like a drum. Then the water insects splashed on the wet shores like the shaking of a rattle. Those that couldn't splash simply whistled. Finally, the sky insects sang a chorus that none had ever heard. Its dreadful hymn sent shivers down the backs of the Inninew. This was the song of '*Koomawpesinew*'.

When their song was done, a foreboding silence followed. The sky insects flew to their dwelling in the swamp. The water insects swam to their watery huts in the river. And the earth insects crawled back to their underground home-fires. None knew what to make of the insects' mysterious visit. So the Inninew ignored this warning and continued as usual.

The following night, a lonely cough broke from one of the huts. The spirit of sickness had descended on the village of the Inninew. By the arrival of the new moon,

more than half of the villagers suffered from many forms of malady. Some developed scars on their backs. Others grew weak and coughed often. An old man from Noble Bull's circle of elders succumbed to his ailment and 'took the journey south'. The people were suffering and it was up to their leader to solve this matter.

Noble Bull and his house made food and tobacco tributes, asking the Grand-cestors for guidance. He then summoned his circle of shaman and offered prayers with them. The last thing he did was gather the Inninew for a community meeting. In a grave and sunken manner, Noble Bull spoke to his people about the terrible sickness afflicting their community. They agreed that the insects had something to do with it.

Aleena sat and listened with childish wonderment. She imagined the Inninews' tight cluster of huts and pillars of smoke from camp fires as Flower Blossoming told her story. Then she though of the villagers who were dying and needed help. "What will your people do," Aleena asked when she couldn't hold back her inner grievance.

The kodka in Flower Blossoming's arms suddenly squirmed and cooed. The baby murmured some unpronounceable phrase. Aleena melted when she saw the child in the woman's arms. She came closer and smiled at the face looking at her from the folded kodka. "Aww, ever cute," she said in her best English accent.

"Is that me you speak of, *neh*?" Aleena's companion, Pierre, awoke from his place on the pine branches. He sat down beside Aleena and rubbed his eyes. The two women laughed when they noticed the pine combs stuck in his auburn hair.

"Awazz, not you," Aleena said curtly. "I was talking about the baby."

Here, our four companions introduced each other - with Aleena as translator, of course. Pierre and Aleena had yet to meet the last member in their forthcoming adventure. His name is Awasis Achakos, and he was a special child among the Inninew. (And in case your wondering, Flower Blossoming is not his mother.) He was given to Noble Bull and his children when the Grand-cestors brought him down from The Arm of the Praying Mountain.

"What is so special about him?" Pierre asked, thrusting his thumb toward the infant.

Flower Blossoming explained how the children in her village were all showing signs of sickness. Awasis Achakos was the only child who appeared to be healthy. Noble Bull and his advisors agreed that the child had something to do with saving the Inninew.

"Then what is a girl and a baby doing out here in the middle of the bush?" Pierre crossed his arms, looking very doubtful. "Maybe a young girl and her baby are running away, no?"

Aleena was taken back by Pierre's suspicions. "They're not running. They're…" Aleena couldn't finish. It occurred to her that if the Inninew were in trouble why would the chief's daughter and adopted son be this far from the village. A flood of ideas came to mind but it was better to ask than to speak those thoughts. "Why are you and your brother not with the Inninew?" she asked in her best Cree.

Flower Blossoming looked apprehensive before answering. She and her brother were on a journey to the swamplands west of the Arm of the Praying Mountain. There they would meet the leader of the insects, Manchukamow, and his helpers. Noble Bull had asked her to visit the insects' home-fire and ask why they have brought so much sickness to their people. She explained this to both Aleena and Pierre.

"Sounds dangerous," Aleena said.

"Sounds made up," Pierre retorted.

Awasis Achakos didn't care for Pierre's retort and started to cry. Flower Blossoming immediately began rocking her brother.

A wild idea twinkled in her eyes as Aleena leaned closer to Pierre. "I think we should go with them."

Pierre grew flustered at Aleena's sudden recklessness. "Woah! Hold on there, Madam Petite. You said it was dangerous."

Aleena would not relent. "This is important," she said righteously. "They need our help."

"How do we make a difference? We're just young," Pierre replied with a quick shake of his head.

"Age is just a number," Aleena declared. "Besides, it's either this or we find our way back to Fisher River."

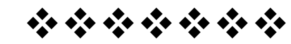
Pierre sighed. He saw the determination in Aleena's adorable face and realized he'd be spending the next days -perhaps weeks- wandering the forest with two girls and a baby. "Iya-maria," he exclaimed in defeat.

Flower Blossoming could only look on as her two companions spoke a language she didn't know.

"Then its settled," Aleena concluded.

Pierre noticed the baby gazing up at him and smiled. "Guess you and me gotta look out for these girls, oui?" He allowed his frustration to fade as Pierre sighed, "Wish I had a blanket at least!"

"*Akoo*," Achakos Awasis called happily.



The clouds sailed across a mid-afternoon sky like herds of grey and white buffalos moving across the celestial plains. A crisp, northern wind carried with it the scent of Birch, Pine, and Trembler. A swirl of autumn leaves danced in the breeze that day. The murky waters of the Paskwa lapped against the grassy banks as the bow of a canoe cruised down its narrow waterway. When the orange horizon above the Arm of the Praying Mountain gave way to a bruised skyline the four companions took shelter below a warm Trembler.

They continued their journey the next day, occasionally stopping to rest and talk amongst each other. As the companions traveled through the Greywood, they came upon an unfamiliar sight. Pierre was the first to spot it.

He said something in French that Aleena didn't understand before pointing in out. "What is that," he asked in absolute amazement.

There, beyond their port side, lumbering through the copse was a thick, hairy beast walking on four paws. At first glance, the muscular beast looked like a bear in all respect except for one thing. Its head was shaped like an owl and covered with brown and white feathers. The creature opened its golden beak and let out a guttural "Hoooooo!"

Flower Blossoming was paddling the rear of the canoe when she heard the beasts'

wild call. She smile briefly when she realized that her companions were startled by the sound. The Ininew had a name for such a creature. "*Muskwa-ka-hoo,*" Flower Blossoming called it.

"*Muskwa-ka-hoo,*" Aleena repeated.

Sitting at the front of the canoe, Pierre turned to the two women with a bewildered look. "Is that what they call it?"

"What a magnificent creature," Aleena said.

"Well, what does that word mean," Pierre asked. The excitement in his voice was beginning to show.

Flower Blossoming explained what the creature was - in her own language of course.

When the young French boy heard Flower Blossoming speak, he turned to Aleena. "Translation, please?"

"She said it's an Owl-bear."

"An Owl-bear?

"An Owl-bear," Aleena repeated.

Pierre let out a shrill laughter when heard the name. "You crazy Cree," he finally said after a moment. "I love it!"

The Owl-bear clicked its beak once more and scanned the forest with its great yellow eyes. It let out another "Hooooo!" before disappearing into the forest foliage.

The day soon passed into evening then dwindled as the orange sun dipped behind the northern mountains. The next morning they broke fast on a meal of dried fish and berries wrapped in thick, green leaves. For three days, they traveled, ate and slept. Time among them passed rather pleasantly because the children of Fisher River are ever curious and very good listeners. The farther west they sailed, the thicker the forest grew and the distant mountains drew further away till they were lost beyond the dark valleys and rolling hills of the Greywood Forest. It was on the afternoon of the second day when the companions saw the golden sun - Grandfather Sun, Flower Blossoming remarked - appear from behind the receding canopy above. Brilliant light spilled from the celestial scuds like water from a ridge. Their canoe gently rowed down the stream beside large patches of grassy plains undulated by an easy-going wind. The companions continued until they reached the edge of a gloomy swamp.

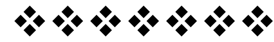
Pierre stared into the black pools of murky water and noted the green slime lapping its boarders. He would've preferred taking the canoe into the swamp but Flower Blossoming made it clear they would walk the rest of the way. They shoved the canoe behind the decaying trunk of a dead Trembler. As the companions began their hike into the gloomy swamp, Pierre glanced back at the canoe and wondered if anyone would steal it.

That's silly, he thought. It's not like an owl-bear is going to come along and steal the damn thing. An image of those wild, yellow eyes and muscular, brown frame flashed in Pierre's mind and he thought how easily a creature like that would tear their small watercraft apart.

Aleena must have sensed what Pierre was thinking. "Don't worry about it," she said.

The smile he saw on her face gave him some comfort.

Pierre shrugged it off. “If you say so, *petite*.”



They broke for camp that night.

Awasis Achakos lay sound asleep in his kodka. After she put her baby brother to bed, Flower Blossoming began speaking that archaic language Pierre didn’t understand but enjoyed hearing. She spoke eloquently, occasionally moving her slender brown hands in gesture. When she finished, Aleena translated this to Pierre:

“She says we must go into the swamp and enter the village of the insects. Their chief, *Manchu-kamow,* and his council will meet with us. There, we will talk about our people. She also warns we must respect their hospitality and honour their authority.”

Flower Blossoming laid a large, buffalo blanket on the driest patch of soil she could find. They huddled closely together that night without a lighting a fire. Thankfully, the heavy, star-shaped blanket made from animal hide was comfortable enough. Aleena was the last to fall asleep because she was too excited to see what the insect people would look like.

What she and the others saw that morning was both great and terrifying.

The village was not what they expected.

Flower Blossoming was thoughtful but didn’t expect to see the insects dressed as people. There were no large cluster of teepees or houses as Aleena imagined except for one large tent with a plain, brown top. Pierre was astounded by the bustling activity throughout the insect “village”. Awasis Achakos, however, had a gleam in his young eye as if he knew what was about to take place.

Upon entering, one of the village helpers approached the companions and asked who they were. When Flower Blossoming explained who they were and where they came from the village helper led the companions to an area near the big, brown tent. As they walked among the busy village, Pierre noticed some rather odd things. For one thing, the village helpers wore a green coloured sash and spoke to no one. They worked diligently under the morning glow. Their faces were solemn and their hands worked thoroughly.

“Who are these people wearing the green?” Pierre asked after they were shown the area they had to wait in. It was quaint with its circular fire pit and small pile of branches for sleeping on.

When Aleena told Flower Blossoming what Pierre asked she given an easy reply. “She says those people are the village helpers. *Manchu-kamow* has taken them into his camp to help with the gathering.”

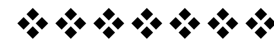
“Gathering?” Pierre sounded perplexed. “You mean there are others who are here to see this ‘Mangchukaamaw’?”

Flower Blossoming tilted her head at Pierre’s mispronunciation.

“It’s *Manchu-kamow!*” Aleena corrected him.

“Okay, okay. You don’t have to yell,” Pierre said, feigning a hurtful tone.

The two children from Fisher River laughed. Flower Bloosoming spared them both a wondering look before smiling herself. She thought about how strange and delightful her new companions acted. Her smile soon waned when she thought of someone like them who once visited her village…



Unbeknown to you, dear reader, is the full magnitude of what was taking place at the Village of the Insects. This gathering had summoned Inninew from every high foothill to the lowest flood plains, from the heated deserts of Kestenak and from the watery caverns of the Mayahaya. Whispers among the people of the high north were exclusive yet doubtful. Women of the central flood plains gossiped about the coming of a 'star child'. The men of the Pesem Hills brought rumours of entire tribes disappearing on the west coast - likely due to the sickness which afflicted every Inninew. It was the children who spoke honestly about the 'other' reason why the Inninew had gathered.

Aleena and Pierre were about to find out what that other reason was.

The children of Fisher River sat at their campsite while Flower Bloosoming fed her baby brother on the morning of their second stay. The previous night was quiet and most of the Inninew kept to themselves. They were quite surprised when the children from other campsites came in groups. Their young eyes had never seen the Inninew from the Greywood, or children from Fisher River residential school for that matter.

Pierre leaned over to Aleena and covered his hand close to his mouth. "Why do you think they stare at us like that?" he asked. All their scrutinizing looks and strange language were beginning to make him nervous.

"Maybe it's the way we're dressed," Aleena said as she studied her wrinkled gray dress with its fading diamond pattern. Her buckle-shoes were the same as Pierre's: gaudy, muddy, and in terrible need of caring. She glanced to her French companion and noted his attire was in the same shameful state. Dry splashes of mud coated Pierre's school-issued pants. The threads of his olive button shirt where brittle and threatened to undo. Neither of them had bathed for days and smelled of campfire.

There was one among the curious crowd of children named Waposis. The people of her village called her this because of the rabbit skin blanket she wore. When Waposis heard a special child was staying in the village of the insects she went to see for herself. The sight of that tender babe laying in Flower Blossoming's arms almost moved her to tears. Waposis removed her beautiful rabbit skin blanket and kneeled beside Awasis Achakos and his sister. She placed the blanket before them and spoke kind words.

Pierre grew muddled by what he saw. He leaned over to Aleena. "*Petite*, what's going on here? Did that child just give away her clothing?"

"That is Waposis," Aleena explained. "The rabbit skin blanket is a gift to Awasis Achakos. Waposis says her grandmother from the place of many hills made it for her. Her grandmother had told Waposis that she would someday meet a special child who comes from the Arm of the Praying mountain."

Now Pierre was twice as confused as he was before. The traditional beliefs of these people were indeed strange to him.

Flower Blossoming accepted the gift from Waposis with a smile and bowed her head respectfully. She wrapped her brother in the rabbit skins and Awasis Achakos cooed

with delight as if to say thank you. Those who gathered around nodded with admiration.

Then, from among the gathering Inninew, a second came forth holding a mysterious circular instrument. He was a lanky youth with a smooth, copper-brown complexion. The red beads around his long neck glimmered like campfire embers. He sat beside Flower Blossoming, spoke a few greetings and showed his circular instrument to her and her brother. Aleena recognized the beautiful drum immediately and wondered if the drummer would honour them with a song.

He did, in fact.

It was the most rhythmic and gorgeous sound Aleena and others had ever heard. The beat flowed around the campfires and lifted the spirits of the people. When the song was done and the listeners sighed with admiration, the youthful drummer placed the drum into a leather bag and gave it to Flower Blossoming. She humbly thanked him before the solemn drummer excused himself.

Pierre trembled for an explanation. He looked to Aleena for answers.

"It's called a drum. It is the sound of our mothers' heartbeat." Aleena knitted her brow when she saw the drummer melt back into the gathering crowd. "He didn't say his name. But he did say the drum was made by his grandfather who came from the southern plains."

Before Pierre could indulge his curiosity further, more visitors came to their campsite. They were three men dressed in the finest blankets Aleena had ever seen. Their long, black braids hung over their bulging shoulders and their stoic countenance bore the fissures of manhood. Behind them a column of helpers dressed in pale sashes carried many baskets and clay pots. As each of the finely dressed men introduced themselves to Flower Blossoming and her brother, their helpers laid the bountiful contents before them. The wafting scent of roasted ducks, stewed caribou and 'Indian' pudding watered the children's mouths. Each man spoke this owns words in turn and Flower Blossoming listened. When the talking was done, the three braided men bowed their heads and returned to their own camp.

Flower Blossoming placed her brother in his kodka and set him gently beside her. She took an empty clay bowl and began filling it with all the food that was offered. Aleena and Pierre watched as her hand went into her side pouch and produced a morsel of dry tobacco. After she sprinkled the tobacco over the food she lifted the bowl and began murmuring. When Flower Blossoming was done she asked one of the helper in a green sash to take the bowl away.

"Where do they taking that bowl, *petite*?" Pierre asked as he watched the helper disappear.

Now, dear reader, an important ritual had just taken place that none but Aleena and Flower Blossoming knew of. It was the first time Pierre and the other Inninew had ever seen a prayer offering. The people whispered to each other in fascination. Pierre could only watch with a head full of question marks. You see, the knowledge of prayer was something the Inninew of the Sleeping Birches had received from the grandcestors of the Arm of the Praying mountain. It was unique gift only they knew.

"That was a prayer offering," Aleena said solemnly. "The three men you saw bringing all that food were from the great northern lakes. They brought this food when they heard a special child had come to the village."

Flower Blossoming made a gesture to Aleena and Pierre.

"I think she wants us to eat," Aleena said.

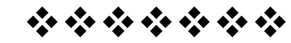
Pierre gaze at all the wonderful food. "All this for all of us!?" He could hardly contain himself. For the past few days they'd been living on berries and dried fish - even the food at Fisher River didn't look this good. The Inninew feast was a welcoming sight.

Those who came to their campsite were invited to feast with the four companions. News of their generosity spread throughout the village of the insects. When everyone had their fill they gathered around the campfire and told stories into the evening. It was the first time laughter and chatter filled the village. Admiration soon turned to reverence.

It was toward the end of the night when the orange horizon gave way to a star filled sky and the Inninew made ready for sleep, the last visitor came to speak with Flower Blossoming. He was an elderly man who moved very slowly beneath his heavy blanket. A pair of twin girls in yellow moccasin wrappings helped the elderly man as he eased himself beside Flower Blossoming. Awasis Achakos and Pierre had already fallen asleep. Aleena lay curled beside the warm camp fire listening as the two of them talked. The elder's archaic words flowed like a strong wind through steady mountains and Aleena often misheard what he had said. When the elder finished speaking, the twin girls helped the elder return to his campsite.

When the last visitor had left, Flower Blossoming hugged her knees and stared into the glowing fire pit. She buried her head between her knees as if the elder's parting words had weighed her down. Aleena could see the burden that had been put on this young woman.

Flower Blossoming has much the think about, thought Aleena. She glanced to where Pierre snored and Awasis Achakos laid in his new rabbit skin kodka. At least she won't be alone.



The second night in the village of the insects passed peacefully into the third morning. Pierre was awaken by the smell of fresh burning logs and sweet tea. He brushed the pine needles from his hair and looked for Aleena. She was sitting beside Flower Blossoming and a few of the village women. Awasis Achakos sat in his sister's lap with a wide eyed interest. When the women clapped and laughed at something funny he would sense their joy and mimic their hands.

When he joined them, Aleena brought him a clay bowl filled with the Inninew's sweet tea. "The people of the Shaman Forest have come to share their tea with us," said Aleena.

"Don't suppose they have any sausage and eggs," Pierre asked as he took the bowl of tea. He sipped it with cautious lips only to find the tea had a refreshing mint flavour.

"This isn't a farm, Pierre. Things are different here than they were in Fisher River." Aleena saw a flash of remembrance in his blue eyes.

"You're right," he answered honestly. He gazed out at the lively landscape before him. He imagined all that open free land they had seen as they came down the Sleepy Birches. "But don't you ever think about the people back home?"

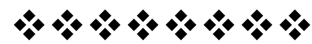
Aleena smiled and said, "These are my people. I'm part of their community."

A midwife from the Shaman Forest made a comment to Flower Blossoming and the other women. Aleena and Pierre noticed they being subject of a joke.

"What are they laughing about?" Pierre asked nervously.

Aleena gave a shrill laughter before saying, "She thinks we act strange for a married young couple."

Pierre forced a nervous laugh.



The four companion sat with their guests until noon.

When a helper in a green sash brought an invitation to the companions, everyone knew it was time to speak with Manchu-kamow and his brethren council. They approached the main tent of the Insects with a kind of bravery only young people know of. Flower Blossoming held the rabbit skin kodka that carried her brother Awasis Achakos. Pierre presented himself calmly despite an overflowing sense of enchantment. On every side he saw the gathering Ininew gazing at him curiously yet cautiously like a strange creature from beyond Creation. Aleena noticed the uneasiness filling her French companion.

A pair of dignified helpers lifted the tent entrance with a hollow flap. Their hopeful eyes watched as the four companions entered the main tent of the insects. The inside was dark and warm like the belly of a beast. Pierre was about to complain when a dull light from the opposite side began to glow. The embers from the central fire pit crackled and popped to life until an orange-red light illuminated the darkness.

Aleena was the first to see the leader of the insects, Manchu-kamow. He sat cross-legged beneath his heavy, tattered robes and concealing hood. His brethren council were dressed in the same manner and sat in two rows behind Manchu-kamow. Their figures cast deep and ominous shadows. The leader of the insects offered a bandaged hand to the companions gesturing them to sit.

Flower Blossoming was not impressed by the insect people's theatrics, nor was Awasis Achakos accepting their deceptive hospitality. The importance of this meeting was forthcoming and the companions agreed to sit.

It was Manchu-kamow's voice that began speaking, filling the tent space with its deep, hoarse vibration. He spoke in the ancient language of the Ininew. Flower Blossoming listen with keen ears and a sturdy countenance while the others sat by. The leader of the insects spoke from beneath his hood for a very long time. As he spoke, Aleena leaned to Pierre and translated what Manchu-kamow said. His foreboding words went something like this:

"When the world was made, broken and remade, the Ininew stood proud yet alone. They lost all the wonderful gifts our Grandcestors had given them because of their pride. There was a time when our grandfather and grandmothers sent their best daughters and sons to grow with the Ininew. That time is gone now, and the people are alone."

"When word was brought to our village that the Grandcestors had forgiven the Ininew, we grew jealous. Why did the grandmothers send the 'star child' to the Ininew? Why have the grandfathers given the sacred medicine bundle to the people of the Sleepy Birches? The insects are also related to the Grandcestors, just as the Ininew."

"My grandson, Little Wings, was a good child. His great grandmother was related

to Grandfather Wind, but his father was Inninew. For many years, Little Wings would fly about the village, smelling all the campfires and resting under the sun. When word of his death reach our village we grew angry. And with one great cry the insects brought all the sickness of the heavens down on the Inninew."

Here, Flower Blossoming spoke in turn, asking why the insects had brought sickness to her people. Her voice was stern and demanding.

"When the sacred medicine bundle was opened, the Inninew were given the gifts of prayer, hunting and knowledge of the land. Proud of their success, the Inninew set out on their first hunting expedition. They killed many animals and gathered many berries for a great feast. Little Wings and his party also wanted to join the Inninew feast in remembrance of his father. But when the Inninew saw Little Wings and his party flying above the fresh kills they thrashed at them. He was squished against a Trembler tree," said Manchu-kamow as he made a harsh clapping sound with his bandaged hands. "My grandson, Little Wings, will no longer fly among the campfires and rest under the sun."

A vague memory struck Flower Blossoming instantaneously. She recalled her brother, High Wind, and his hunting party returning to the village when she and Awasis Achakos went to greet the hunters. Then, Flower Blossoming asked why she and her brother were not affected by the sickness.

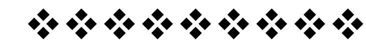
Manchu-kamow replied in a stingy tone, "*Tapwe!*"

Pierre was absolutely astonished by Manchu-kamow's story. His lips quivered sweetly like a child wanting string candy. He was about to ask Aleena what that word meant when a murmur began filling the tent. Manchu-kamow and his council repeated the word '*Tapwe*' in sorrowful unison. The fact that this sickness didn't affect Flower Blossoming or Awasis Achakos upset the insect people greatly.

"What is this?" Pierre cried as he covered his ears.

"I don't know," Aleena mimicked.

Flower Blossoming knew. She watched as Manchu-kamow and those bandaged figures stood full height, casting long shadows behind them. Their distorted voices shattered into a whirl-wind of angry buzzing. The forms beneath their clothing began to shrink as if its corporeal substance were gelatinous. A steady stream of slithering and crawling insects fled beneath their robes. From their hoods and sleeves more insects swarmed until their angry cries filled the fire-lit canopy. Outside, the Inninew watched in horror as clouds of insects flew across the sky while others crawled and slithered away from the tent.



When the four companions emerged from that tent they were met with many confused and frightened faces. So much uncertainty was written on their faces as Aleena thought about it later that evening. It was the same look she had seen back at Fisher River when she and the other children arrived at the school for the first time.

"I can't let it happen again," Aleena muttered as she, Pierre and Awasis Achakos sat around their campfire.

"Can't let what happen again, Aleena," Pierre asked. The wonder and enchantment of the morning had fizzled out of his system leaving him with many questions of his own.

"Didn't you see their faces? The Ininew had hope that something would be done this day."

"The only thing they can hope for now is a giant fly-swatter," Pierre joked.

"That's not funny, Pierre!" Aleena rebuked.

"Wah!" came Awasis Achakos from his rabbit skin kodka. Aleena cradled the baby in her arms and rocked him softly.

"Okay, okay," Pierre eased back. He was silent for a long time before speaking again. He thought about his family farm and the river which curved beyond the western prairies. "Sometimes an adult problem need a childish solution. That's what my pompei used to say in our language."

"What's a pompei?" Aleena asked.

"That's what I called my grandfather. Pompei."

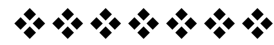
Aleena thought about what Pierre's grandfather had said to him. She knew it was good when elders spoke to the young people about growing up. They were the pivotal influence that Fisher River could never snub out. It was in that train of thought where Aleena found her answer. She grabbed Awasis Achakos and a pouch belonging to Flower Blossoming. Then she told Pierre to follow her.

In the meanwhile, most of the Ininew leaders, including Flower Blossoming, had gathered in the plain, brown tent. (Manchu-kamow and the insects had fled their swamp to prepare for the possibility of war.) At first they sat and argued among each other in an angry cacophony of 'what-if' and 'so-and-so'. Flower Blossoming stood up and pounded her foot the ground like how her father, Noble Bull, would do when he grew strict with her and High Wind. Each person would have their say, she told the Ininew leaders. That was the important rule her father upheld during a community meeting. First, the tribe from the high foothills had their say, followed by the men of the northern lakes, then the elders of the southern plains spoke. Flower Blossoming listened for the wisdom of their words. When the women of the Shaman forest finished speaking a deafening silence ensued. Flower Blossoming lowered her heavy head and sighed at the consensus of the Ininew: It would be war.

Flower Blossoming couldn't believe that she and her companions had come all this way to wage conflict with their ancient relatives. She was the daughter of a great leader and the great-great grand daughter to one of the Four-Directions grandfathers. She pleaded with the Ininew leaders that war was not an answer to their sickness. Her words were comforting like a mothers' but also carried the authority of a father. Some of the leaders were swayed by her speech and began to doubt their original thoughts. Others grew angry and more resolute in their choice. A peaceful resolve was the only path Flower Blossoming offered.

A youth from the high foothills asked how they would attain peace.

Flower Blossoming had only one answer. She and her companions would travel beyond the river called Nesto-meskanow and climb the sacred mountain to ask one of the Four-Directions grandfather, the Sun, to help them. Among the Ininew, none spoke when they heard Flower Blossoming. It was an inconceivable idea that bordered on blasphemy.



When the community meeting was adjourned the Ininew leaders agreed to meet once more on the subject of warring with the insects. In six moon phases, the Ininew and their war parties would gather on the eastern bank of the Nesto-meskanow and decide a course of war if no resolution was to be found.

Flower Blossoming returned to her campsite and found her companions to be nowhere. Her pouch containing her medicines and ceremonial pipe were also missing. Tears welled in her soft eyes. Exhausted and alone, the young Ininew woman collapsed where she sleep till morning.

Her dreams that night were mixed with horror and bliss. The grandcestors showed her visions of her people warring with the insects. The conflict would spare neither Ininew or insect. She heard her brother crying distantly in that dream. Flower Blossoming would run toward the fleeting darkness where she thought her brother was. The darkness groaned and reached out with its inky tentacles to grab her. They caught her, slowed her to a crawl. She was about to scream when a familiar voice pierced the night. A glowing hand reached out and took Flower Blossoming by the hand. She looked up and saw the face of a man she had not seen since he and his companions came down from the Arm of the Praying mountain.

"*Astum, niki-eskwew!*" the man called out. A pillar of light surrounding the man swelled and pushed back the wall of darkness. He held Flower Blossoming close until the brilliance ceased

"*Kee-see-kay,* Noah," she remembered saying before the dream ended.

The scent of campfire filled the morning air as rays of sunlight spilled through the grey skyline. Flower Blossoming picked the pine needles from her mouth and looked around the camp. The plain, brown tent was not gone and several of the fire pits had burned to ashes. The people who came to the village of the insects had gone back to their home fires. Flower Blossoming was glad when she saw Pierre and Aleena playing with Awasis Achakos. When her companions noticed she was awake they ran to her side with eager things to say. They began talking at once, sprouting sentence that Flower Blossoming couldn't follow or understand.

Finally, it was Aleena who explained what they had done the previous night. As the adults met with Flower Blossoming and the other Ininew leaders, Aleena, Pierre and Awasis Achakos took her medicine pouch and pipe deep into the swamp. There, Aleena performed a prayer where she asked the grandcestors for guidance to save the Ininew from sickness. Their prayers were heard when a wisp of dancing light came and told the children how to reach the grandfather Sun.

"The grandfather's messenger said we had to bring the Mother of the North to the sacred mountain beyond the Nesto-meskanow river." Aleena gazed at Flower Blossoming with a renewed sense of hope and reverence. "You are our northern mother."

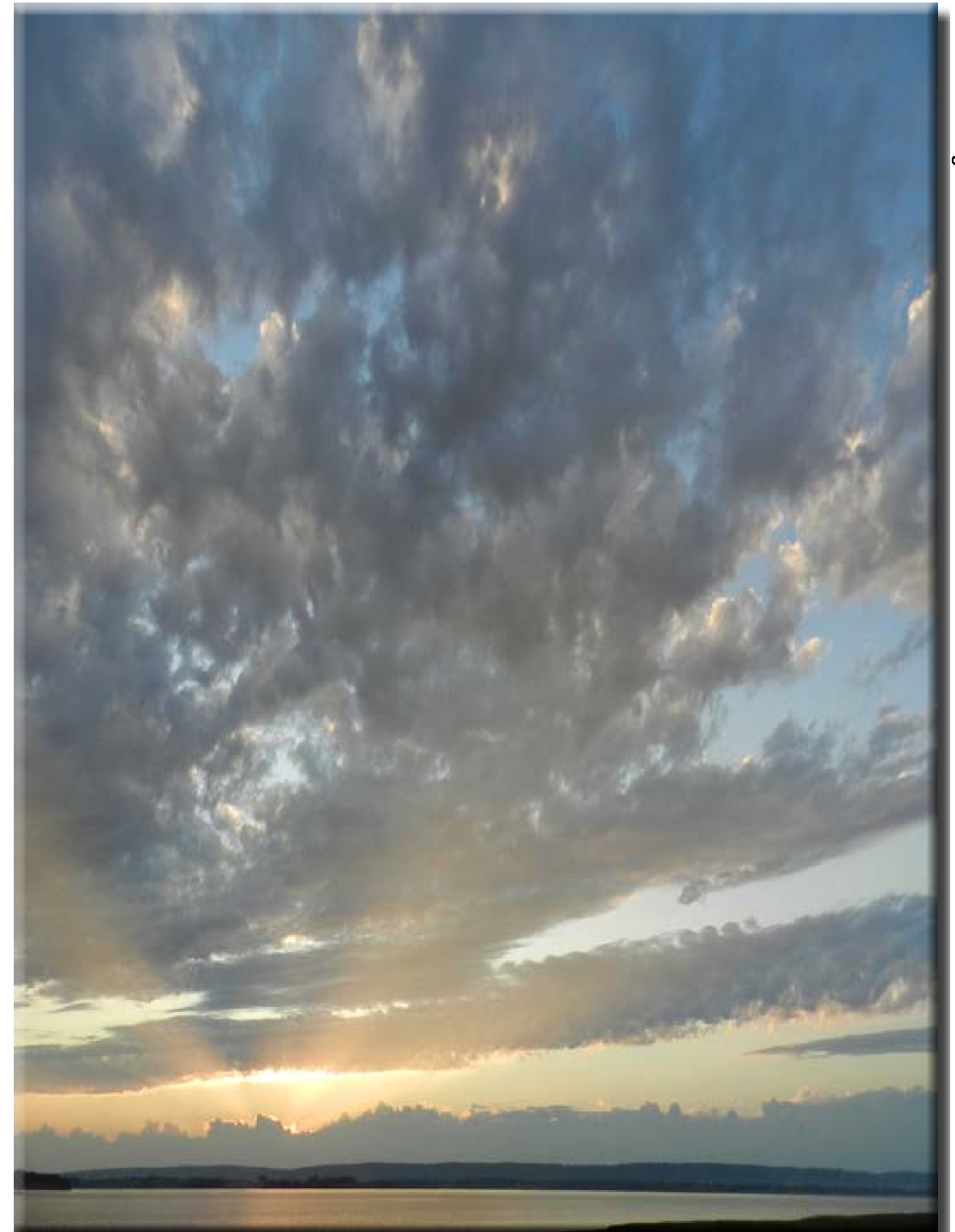
Flower Blossoming was overwhelmed by Aleena's revelation. The fate of her people was now place in her lap. There was only one thing left to do.

Flower Blossoming gathered her belongings and placed her brother in his rabbit skin kodka. As she walked to the edge of the swamp she turned back and asked, "Kina, awasisak?"

Aleena grabbed Pierre's hand and pulled him away. "Yeah, of course we'll come with you!"

Pierre stumbled and feigned his annoyance. "Can't we at least have breakfast?!"

The children of Fisher River, along with the Mother of the North, and Awasis Achakos travelled to the sacred mountain beyond the mighty Nesto-meskanow river. How they got there and saved the Ininew is an entirely different story…



Mackerel Morning

Sue Matheson

CONTRIBUTORS

Joshua Adair is currently an associate professor of English at Murray State University, where he also serves as the coordinator of Gender and Diversity Studies. Some of his recent publications may be found in *COLDNOON: International Journal of Travel Writing and Travelling Cultures*, and *The Apollonian*, *The American Isherwood* (U of MN Press 2015), and *Expanding the Circle* (SUNY Press 2015).

David Aworawo received his Ph.D. degree from and is currently working in the Department of HIstory at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. He has published widely on aspects of Africa's development, politics and international relations as well as Atlantic history.

Jill Darling is the author of *a geography of syntax*, *Solve For*, and *begin with may: a series of moments* (Finishing Line Press). She's also had work published in journals including *Something on Paper*, *How2*, */NOR*, *Aufgabe*, *580 Split*, *Quarter After Eight*, *Phoebe*, *factorial*, *Horse Less Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, and *Two Serious Ladies*. She has an MFA in Creative Writing from Colorado State University and a Ph.D. in Twentieth-Century American Literature and Culture from Wayne State University. She teaches at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and Dearborn.

Kaley Jemison, a third generation Floridian, is pursuing a Masters in literature at Florida State University. Hersenior thesis , "Punishment and Prophecy: Blindness in Oedipus Rex, King Lear, and Jane Eyre," examines the enduring pattern of vision loss as a form of moral castigation, resulting in higher capabilities, from Sophocles's time through contemporary literature and film. Her passion for the written word also extends to creative writing. She was editor-in-chief of *Cliché*, and recently published her short children's story, "To Catch a Prince."

Demetrios V. Kapetanakos is an Associate Professor of English at LaGuardia Community College. He has received his Master's Degree in Cultural Studies from Goldsmiths College in London and his Doctorate in English from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He has taught a variety of composition and literature courses at Queensborough Community College and New Jersey City University. Since coming to LaGuardia, he has taken on a leadership role in the ePortfolio program, co-leading the Center for Teaching Learning professional development seminar "Connected Learning: ePortfolio and Intergrative Pedagogy" and actively participating in the ePortfolio Leadership Team. His research interests include race theory in the United States and Britain, film studies, and popular culture. He has published an article on Isaac Julien and his depictions of urban space and has presented his work at major academic conferences..

Sue Matheson is an Associate Professor who teaches literature and film studies at the University College of the North. Her interests in cultural failure underpin her research: currently, she specializes in popular American thought and culture, Children's Literature, Indigenous Literature, and the Western.

R. Eric Tippin is a Ph.D. Candidate in English Literature at the University of Cambridge. His research focuses on the essay in the long nineteenth century, as understood in the framework of play and as practiced by those such as G. K. Chesterton and Virginia Woolf.

Tyler Turcotte is a baseball enthusiast and has lived on and traveled to several treaty territories in Manitoba and Saskatchewan as an educator.

Walter M. Young is a proud member of the Opaskewayek Cree Nation. He is currently finishing his Bachelor of Arts at the University College of the North.

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