

A Tribute to Irving Howe

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#### H. R. Stoneback

On April 6, 1989, the English Department at New Paltz held its first Graduate English Symposium. The event coincided with the visit to this campus of Irving Howe, distinguished literary critic and historian, author of numerous books, including the following: Politics and the Novel, Sherwood Anderson, The American Newness: Culture and Politics in the Age of Emerson, Decline of the New, William Faulkner: A Critical Study, Thomas Hardy, and World of Our Fathers. Students in our graduate program were invited to submit formal papers, dealing with questions raised by Professor Howe's work.

Four papers were selected for presentation at the Symposium and for publication in this, the first number of the English Graduate Review. The papers are published here as prepared for an oral presentation. John Burdick, in "One Mind Less, One World Less: Politics and and Psychology in Orwell's Essays," discusses Orwell's essays in the light of questions raised by Howe in Politics and the Novel. Dennis Doherty, in "The Significance of Section IV in 'The Bear'," repudiates the reading of "The Bear" presented by Professor Howe in William Faulkner: A Critical Study. Joshua Mark, in "The Invisible Trial: A Question of Heroic Virtue," takes issue with Howe's reading of Hemingway as the "inexperienced American." Arnold Schmidt, in "The Political Evolution of Irving Howe," provides an overview of Howe's political thought, tracing his "move from political radical to centrist." All of the Symposium speakers have served as Teaching Assistants in our graduate program and are pursuing the MA in English.

Professor H. R. Stoneback, Director of the Graduate English Program, presided at the Symposium and introduced the speakers. Professor Richard Fein served as faculty respondent and discussion leader. The graduate student session was well-attended, and the papers were followed by a lively question-and-answer period. In the evening, Professor Howe gave his address "Characters and People: Characterization in Literature" to a large and enthusiastic general audience in Lecture Center 100.

The design of the Graduate Symposium and this review is to encourage critical and scholarly activity by our graduate students, to engage them in an academic conference setting and thus cultivate a sense of professionalism, and to contribute to the intellectual life of the campus. It is intended that the symposium, as well as the publication of the *English Graduate Review*, will be an annual occurrence. Faculty and graduate students are encouraged to participate in planning for future symposia and forthcoming numbers of the *Review*. Proposals for symposium topics may be presented to the Department Chair, the Graduate Chair, or to the Graduate Committee. Items for the "Announcements" section of the *Review* are also invited.

There are certain acknowledgements that must be made here: I am particularly grateful to the graduate students who participated in the Symposium, to the faculty who supported it, and to the Graduate Committee who approved my prosposal at the outset. I should like to acknowledge most especially Professor L. Sullivan, Acting Chair of the English Department, who encouraged everyone involved with the Symposium and who gave most generously of his time and editorial labors in the production of this review.

#### John N. Burdick

The climax of George Orwell's "A Hanging" occurs halfway through the essay, when the prisoner to be hanged steps aside to avoid a puddle, triggering a brief and abrupt departure from the subdued veneer of the narrative into a fit of exposition, a revelation uttered and swallowed so that the narrative, the procession toward the gallows, might continue. The passage concludes:

He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone—one mind less, one world less.

The procession resumes, the narrator rejoins the ranks of the well armed Indian warders, and the prisoner is hanged. But this compact, paradoxical phrase—"one mind less, one world less"—has exposed the naked, individual complicity that weapons, uniforms, processions, and the rituals of legal murder attempt to disguise.

"One mind less, one world less" formulates a principle that is essential in Orwell's brand of humanism. A whole humanity can only exist when the possibility for expression, compassion, and heroism exists for each individual. And by Orwell's logic of reciprocality, the loss of one is the loss of all. Irving Howe writes of 1984 that "Orwell's profoundest insight is that in a totalitarian world man's life is shorn of dynamic possibilities." Orwell's essays, which can be read as preludes to 1984 with some success, suggest that the fate of humanity rides less upon political policy and our coarse understanding of history than it does upon dynamic possibilities, the crucial and routine decisive moments of daily life, the immediate conflicts between courageous and conforming behavior.

The essays "A Hanging," Marrakech," and "Shooting an Elephant" explore such conflicts, intimate intersections of politics and psychology. They are superficially topical, each taking place in some oppressed and impoverished area, and each describing some ugliness of imperialism, "the dirty work of Empire at close quarters" (Orwell, p. 155). But more than any other, the world scrutinized in the essays is the mind of the narrator. The political system at hand is but one internalized agent struggling with another will, ideology, or simple sensitivity. And through this balance, Orwell generates a sympathetic and volatile environment in which simple gestures and salutations stir with political overtones.

The essays stem from Orwell's experience as an imperial police officer in Burma, and from no other perspective could he have observed the obscure, emotional complexities of the oppressor-oppressed relationship. As an underling in the empire and a secret sympathizer with the Burmese, Orwell straddled the central paradox of oppression.

That paradox, as Orwell renders it, is three-fold. First there is the prevalence of anonymity in the essays, enforced upon the oppressed and opted for by the oppressor as a means of denial. Second is a principle more difficult to tag: the essays suggest that with every act of courage and compassion declined, the possibility of such an act diminishes. More so, a society or relationship founded on enforced compliance has a way of perverting kindness and charity into something hideously vain and ironic, something that punishes emotionally the kind and the charitable. Thus, callousness perpetuates itself as sensitivity starves itself. Finally, and most importantly, Orwell's essays are centered on the notion that oppression in every form is reciprocal. Those with power are as anonymous, emotionally imprisoned, and ultimately stripped of humanity as those without.

The conditions described above are not absolute in the essays. They are a trend of behavior consistently challenged, and the challenges are the essays. "A Hanging", for example, both studies the mechanics and reveals the flaws of the self-supporting network of anonymity that defines imperialism. The crime for which the prisoner hangs is never revealed. No pretext of justice, punishment, or revenge dignifies his end. To match, throughout most of the essay the narrative perspective is the collective "we", the official procession whose brand of anonymity is darker than the prisoner's, as it is to some degree volitional. Given the prisoner's puny stature, one must wonder why six warders with rifles, bayonets, and handcuffs are required. The tools of their trade, no doubt, are more shields than swords. They are distancing devices that cast the harmless and quiescent prisoner as dangerous criminal in order to justify and absolve his killers. And as the handcuffs suggest, prisoner and guards collaborate in the denial of guilt and identity, drawing all attention to the motiveless, mechanical killing itself.

The escape from anonymity, desirable or not, requires the recognition of complicity. In "A Hanging", Orwell suggests complicity through an unobtrusive grammatical device. Along the way to the gallows, the procession is interrupted by a frolicking dog whose brute and sensual freedom so challenges the "civility" and emotional discipline of the procession that it warrants the description "a dreadful thing" (Orwell, p. 124). After several attempts to chase the dog away, the narrator's handkerchief is used to restrain it. In this moment, eight paragraphs into the essay, the first person singular appears for the first time; it is "my handkerchief" (Orwell, p. 124), and the narrator has matured from an anonymous observer into a distinct accomplice. The ordeal at once implicates the narrator and makes possible the expression of conscience that is the heart of the essay.

While "A Hanging" may, in its own way, affirm the persistence of individual feeling in a world that chooses to relieve us of it, "Marrakech" studies the difficult translation of independent thought into deed, the perversion of affirming actions by a system that is incapable of receiving them. In one of "Marrakech's" many brief episodes, the narrator feeds bread crusts to a gazelle. The gazelle alternately nibbles out of the narrator's hand and attempts to butt the narrator away. Orwell explains, "Probably its idea was that if it could drive me away the bread would somehow remain hanging in mid-air" (Orwell, p. 188). Next, an Arab navvy working in the vicinity observes the feeding and says "I could eat some of that bread," (Orwell, p. 188), a request cautiously phrased as a simple observation.

The physical ploy of the gazelle matches the rhetorical evasion of the man: both go for the goods while avoiding any recognition of the source. The narrator complies, but the exchange is devoid of personality, charity, or gratitude. To satisfy hunger and somehow maintain dignity is the dilemma faced by the navvy, the dilemma of physical and emotional survival. But the full, degrading dimensions of the encounter are only apparent to the narrator, for to be ever aware of arbitrary good fortune is the curse of the oppressor, a condition as persistent in its daily reminders as hunger.

The reciprocality of oppression, implicit in all passages examined above, is most intimately realized in "Shooting an Elephant." Here, the arena changes from social interaction to internal conflict. In short, to shoot the elephant is to conform to expectations, give cowardice reign over will, and corroborate the natives' image of the "Sahib." To watch the elephant closely and wait for the return of its master is to contest the mindless execution of the social contract, to act in the name of reason and good sense, and to follow a higher agenda within.

That the narrator sees the shooting of the elephant as an inescapable conclusion is not surprising: throughout the essays, the "system" governs outcome: the prisoner is hanged, the navvy eats bread crust, the elephant is shot. Orwell reserves for himself only the opportunity to identify, understand, and express what has happened. In "Shooting an Elephant," however, Orwell moves one step closer to the absolute loss of individuality and conscience.

In the end, when the narrator recalls the aftermath of the incident, he confesses that he is glad that the elephant killed a native: "it put me legally in the right and it gave me sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant" (Orwell, p. 162). This final corruption of ideals represents a closing of the open ended conflicts in the other essays. In "A Hanging" and "Marrakech," the system imposed a silence upon Orwell, a quiescence that, however uncomfortable, was still somehow compatible with internal defiance. A silent human, like the prisoner in "A Hanging", is still capable of dignity, even if his environment is unable to outwardly recognize it, even if he is unable to translate it into action. But in "Shooting an Elephant", quiescence would have been the heroic act, and Orwell realizes that "I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind" (Orwell, p. 159). The loss of physical control is the final, irrevocable concession, the subordination of identity to politics.

"Shooting an Elephant" ends where the world of 1984 begins. In many ways, the novel and the essays are and mutually illuminating. In the chapter of *Politics and the Novel* that deals with 1984, Irving Howe notes several significant absences in the novel, information withheld or novelistic conventions neglected, intentional cavities that activate the knowledge and experience of the reader into participation. Howe observes that Orwell does not "pretend to investigate the genesis of the totalitarian state" (Howe, p. 240). The reader, cued by the title, brings the novel its history, in much the same way that the end of "Shooting an Elephant" transfers the burdens of perspective and conscience from author to reader.

Here enters significant absence number two: Howe notes that one of the frequent criticisms of 1984, that it lacks rich characterization and psychological depth, is in an indirect way, a testimony to the seamless conception of the novel. Howe writes, "Were it possible, in the world of 1984, to show human character in anything resembling genuine freedom, in its play of spontaneous desire and caprice—it would not be the world of 1984" (Howe, p. 238). Again, a salient absence elicits an inference; by his very capacity to recognize the psychological flatness of 1984, the reader recognizes his own capacity to avert it. In the essays, man's dynamic possibilities are not impossible, but endangered. The two works lead the reader to the same decisive moment, 1984 by implication and the essays by example.

Finally, in describing 1984's effect upon the reader, Howe writes that the dominant emotion evoked is regret: "what haunts us is the sickening awareness that in 1984 Orwell has seized upon those elements of our public life that, given courage and intelligence, were avoidable" (Howe, p. 236). In this way, the novel and the essays approach the same crux from opposite temporal perspectives. The novel projects the reader into a possible future so that he may view the consequences of his own life and times in retrospect. 1984 is an implicitly didactic novel. The essays more resemble confessional lyrics in tone, starting in the present and showing Orwell himself as participant in the action of history, losing more than he wins. By morally uncertain and sometimes dubious example, he teaches a plain appreciation of the crucial moments in daily life that bear on the course of humanity, where the call to courage and intelligence is distant but still audible.

#### Endnotes

- 1 George Orwell, A Collection of Essays by George Orwell (New York: Doubleday, 1954), p. 123.
- 2 Irving Howe, Politics and the Novel (New York: Meridian and Horizon, 1957), p. 240.

#### The Invisible Trial: A Question of Heroic Virtue

#### Joshua J. Mark

In his Nobel prize address, Ernest Hemingway said, "Things may not be immediately discernible in what a man writes, and in this sometimes he is fortunate." By qualifying his statement with 'sometimes', Hemingway was, perhaps, acknowledging the fact that a good portion of his work was largely misunderstood by the public as well as the critics. Sometimes, one may be fortunate in not having one's work immediately apparent to a reader in that such a work calls upon that reader to search beneath the surface, to dig for what the author is trying to say between the lines, or beneath them. Yet this same quality can easily be a detriment to an author's reputation when, having not quite understood a work, or having understood it only in part, a critic makes a definitive statement concerning it.

It was Irving Howe's chapter on The Wild Palms in his book Faulkner: A Critical Study that first gave me insight into the structure of that novel. In another article I found Mr. Howe's insights into James Baldwin's Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone fascinating and accurate as far as I myself understood that novel. It is for these reasons that I found it hard to understand what Mr. Howe meant when he stated, in Politics and The Novel, that "For Hemingway heroism is always a visible trial, a test limited in time, symbolized in dramatic confrontations... Hemingway's heroic virtues are realized in situations increasingly distant from the social world, among bull fighters and hunters and fishermen..." (p. 226) and that, because of this, Hemingway is an "inexperienced American" when compared with Ignazio Silone.

It is certainly true that in Hemingway's works one finds "a visible trial, a test limited in time" and that the characters are often hunters or bull fighters or fishermen. Yet it could be argued that any dramatization of an abstract idea like heroic virtue would necessarily need to be illustrated by a concrete example of that virtue in action. A visible trial is required to show the invisible trial that occurs within the soul of an individual.

It is in *The Sun Also Rises* that the code which is the requisite for heroic virtue, or any virtue at all, is first expressed. The Count says to Jake Barnes:

"You see, Mr. Barnes, it is because I have lived very much that now I can enjoy everything so well. Don't you find it like that?"

"Yes, Absolutely."

"I know," said the count. "That is the secret. You must get to know the values." (p. 63).

The values that the Count speaks of are those inner truths held by a man or woman that that individual may live by. This is a kind of moral code and does not seem to be at all a subjective or relativist idea of each person "doing their own thing." There are certain values, they exist, and one must get to know what they are before one can begin to be alive in the truest sense of that word.

Jake Barnes and the Count, having lived "very much," know the values in life precisely because they know the value of life. Having participated in wars, having a keen awareness of the brevity of life, they have come to realize those things that are of consequence in the world. They believe in a code of conduct that exemplifies their values and because it may appear that Jake Barnes' values are exemplified in drinking and drifting, a reader may miss the idea that, though he may sometimes fail, he is trying to live the code he believes in.

Even so, it is not in Jake Barnes that the values are throughly expressed, but, more dramatically, in the bull fighter, Romero. Here is a "visible trial" and the individual undergoing the trial is a bull fighter. Yet to see only that is to miss what Hemingway is trying to say about values and about heroic virtue. Romero fights the way he does because of who he is and what he holds true. The bull fight is the physical manifestation of the man's heroism. His view of life and death, of himself and his world, are all expressed in the way he handles the bulls in the ring. Hemingway seems to go to some lengths to show that Romero is always brave, always perfect in his movements and actions. In facing potential death in the form of the bull, Romero rises above himself to the stature of a hero and demonstrates to the crowd what a man can do when he believes in a strict code of conduct.

Mr. Howe would assert that such an action is "distant from the social world" and so it is. But it is not only the actual, physical bull fight that is of importance here. The bull fight is the forum in which the individual proves himself against the greatest adversary and shows himself as he truly is. Any situation that calls upon an individual to display herself or himself truly, that calls one to act heroically, is necessarily distant from the social world. One man in a crowd outside a burning building rushes in to the fire to save someone he does not know —in that instant he removes himself from the world and is alone.

The example of Cristina in Silone's *Bread and Wine*, is an illustration of this idea. In hope of helping Spina in his escape from the authorities, she leaves everything behind and runs after him into the mountains (to bring him provisions). She does not find Spina and, in fact, this action leads to her death, but by this act she displays the virtue that Spina has recognized in her all along.

It is always the individual's choice of behavior in a situation that calls for correct and immediate action, where that one risks himself or herself, that makes one a hero or a coward. Because Hemingway chooses the arena of the bull ring to illustrate heroic virtue to his readers instead of a burning building or a mountain blizzard does not remove what is going on inside Romero from the "social world" when Romero chose to live as he wanted, it was then that he removed himself from the social world.

Hemingway uses dramatic confrontations, whether they are between a guerilla band in Spain and an army or one man and a great marlin, to demonstrate heroism because heroism consists of dramatic confrontations. Mr. Howe's assertion that for Silone "it is possible for heroic action to consist of nothing but stillness" is quite accurate, and yet he seems to dismiss the idea that that same heroic action may be made manifest in a visible trial. That "stillness" of the individual that in Silone's work constitutes heroic virtue, in Hemingway's work becomes the first step toward knowledge of right action. In that condition of the soul in which one decides (as Pietro Spina does, as Romero does) to live according to a private code without regard for consequences, there is heroic virtue born.

Far from being the "inexperienced American" when contrasted with Silone (the "mature European"), Hemingway takes the heroic virtue from the inner world where it exists and demonstrates how that virtue becomes right, proper action in the external and visible world. The heroic virtue, inwardly, must always be the same, must always be the rising of the individual to a challenge that seems greater than the

average person could overcome. This, it would seem, is nothing less than what Hugo does in *Les Miserables* or *Toilers of the Sea*. What else is Jean Valjean doing at the barricade or Gilliat alone at the ship than rising to a challenge and displaying heroic virtue in "a test limited by time, symbolized in dramatic confrontation"? What is one to make of Dumas' Edmund Dantes if heroic virtue can only be expressed in "stillness." It would not seem that these Europeans are less mature than Silone nor would it appear that they are doing anything more than what Hemingway accomplishes with his bull fighters, hunters and fishermen.

As far back in European literature as the courtly romances of Chretien de Troyes, virtue is demonstrated by trial and a Launcelot or a Percival is proved virtuous by being tested. The idea is not exclusively American nor at all the product of the mind of an "inexperienced American" but is simply the manner in which heroism has always been expressed in the world, whether in literature or in one's own life. The fact that this may not always be "immediately discernible" in what Hemingway writes is not, I think, Hemingway's fault but rather the fault of a reader who, for one reason or another, does not pause to discover what is actually going on in a situation. In the case of Hemingway, with his popular image of the sportsman, a worse fault is to exclude the possiblility that perhaps something deeper is happening than one expects and, having that image in mind, one sees what one wishes to or expects to see, instead of what is actually there in the text.

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#### The Political Evolution of Irving Howe

#### Arnold Schmidt

The genesis of Irving Howe's political thought has its roots in the Socialism of the New York immigrant community of his childhood. By the late ninteen thirties, he was a Trotskyist active on the intellectual Left. However, as Howe viewed events of the next two decades through the prism of his political ideology, he found it inadequate and inched slowly but inexorably toward Liberalism.

According to his autobiography, A Margin of Hope, Howe grew up in the Bronx, "with Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, almost all of them poor" (Margin, p. 1). In addition to its culture, the Jewish community carried a political heritage, writes Howe. "Socialism, for many immigrant Jews, wasn't merely politics or an idea, it was an encompassing culture, a style of perceiving and judging through which to structure their lives . . . almost everyone seemed to be a Socialist of one sort or another" (Margin, p. 9). This milieu had its effect, for Howe became "a Socialist . . . at the advanced age of fourteen" (Margin, p. 1). He did not join the Communists, he writes, because, "while I had a sharp hunger for the coherence of disciplined thought, I also felt strong resistance to the discipline of coherent organization" (Margin, p. 12).

Part of the Socialist movement's appeal for Howe was that politics provided a purpose, a sense of destiny, a world view and social rituals. At the time, he says, "Marxism advanced a profoundly dramatic view of human experience. Its stress upon inevitable conflicts, apocalyptic climaxes, inevitable doom, and glorious futures gripped our imagination. We were always on the rim of heroism; the mockery we might suffer today would turn to glory tomorrow; our loyalty to principle would be rewarded by the grateful masses" (Margin, p. 53).

Attending the City University of New York from 1936 to 1940, with all-day political discussions in the "class, lunchroom and corridor" (*Margin*, p. 61), and debates with Young Communist League members, Howe's exposure to Thirties radicalism left an indelible mark. It provided him with a "distinctive style: a flair for polemic, a taste for the grand generalization, an impatience with . . . parochial scholarship, an internationalist perspective, and a belief in the unity of intellectual work" (*Margin*, pp. 158-9).

Debate with the YCL often centered on the Soviet Union's political excesses, and Howe held that "an unqualified and principled opposition to Stalinism was a first premise" (Margin, p. 205). Though a Marxist, his roots in European Socialism and involvement in the American labor movement convinced him that freedom of expression and democratic procedure had a role in Leftist politics. About another writer supporting Soviet totalitarianism, Howe asks: "What are the drives to self-destruction that can lead a serious intellectual . . . to support a movement whose victory could mean only the end of free intellectual life" (Margin, p. 158)?

The Spanish Civil War illustrated for Howe the tenuousness of his and other moderate political positions. "Spain show[ed] us finally that . . . it was Stalinism, and only Stalinism, that commanded power on 'the Left,' just as it was Fascism, and only Fascism, that commanded power on 'the Right'. . . . We of the independent Left . . . could play the role of critics declaring outrage to a world gone deaf" (*Margin*, p. 76).

Called up for the draft after Pearl Harbor, Howe spent two of his four war years stationed at an isolated base near Anchorage, Alaska. There, performing clerical duty, he briefly made the acquaintance of Dashiel Hammett, who was also stationed at Fort Richardson. With time on his hands, Howe read randomly and voraciously, everything from anthropology to Roman history. The experience had a profound effect on his ideology, says Howe. "Enforced isolation and steady reading, together, brought about a slow intellectual change. I lost the singleness of mind that had inspired the politics of my youth" (Margin p. 95). This was the beginning of Howe's political shift from far to center Left.

Returning to post-war New York, searching for what he termed "culture after the Holocaust", Howe realized "the idea of centrality [had] replaced the ideology of Marxism . . . To be central meant to engage with questions that gave our time its peculiarly terrible character" (Margin, p. 131). A new ingredient in the intellectual stew was the onslaught of Existentialism "not as a formal philosophy but as a testimony springing from the ordeal of Europe . . . Elswhere Howe writes " more attractive in voice than doctrine, it swept aside the rigidities of deterministic systems, the Left's traditional reliance on 'historical forces'" (Margin, p. 132). As opposed to Marxism, Existentialism focused attention not on mankind but on man, For Howe, "the only thing that made sense was that part of man which remained outside of history" (Margin, p. 132).

By now, Howe was one of a group of writers known as the New York critics. Not an organized group as such, he characterized them as "cut off from the mainstream of American culture . . . assertive in affirming their minority splendor . . . ideological in styles of thought . . . [and] on the lookout for centrality" (Margin, p. 141). The appearance of such writers as Saul Bellow, John Berryman, Randall Jarrell, and Delmore Schwartz, writes Howe, was not just "a rude, alien intrusion . . . but . . . a step in the 'Europeanizing' of American culture . . . . There was a conscious intent . . . to capture the idea of Europe for America . . . an older culture, one richer in moral possiblilities, steeped in bloodier experiences, and closer to the tragic than ours could ever be . . . . Themes of cultural return figure strongly in their work: the dessimination of Russian modes and sensibilities . . . the championing of the great modernists . . . the popularizing of Marxist ideas . . . [and] the insistence that, to be serious, literature must now be international" (Margin, pp. 136-7).

The New York critics were in part a reaction to the New Critics, whose, "stress upon complexity of thought," Howe states in the *Decline of the New*, "could be used as a rationale for conservatism" (*Decline*, p. 237). However, "[a] useful tension was . . . set up between the New York critics, whose instinctive response to literature was through a social-moral contextualism, and the New Critics, whose formalism may have been too rigid yet proved of great value to those who opposed it . . . . In the criticism of men like [Lionel] Trilling, [Philip] Rahv, Stuart Chase, and F.W. Dupee, there was . . . a more authoritative relation to the literary text and a richer awareness of the cultural past" (Decline, p. 238).

The impact of politics on form is central to Howe's analysis of the political novel, fiction in which "the idea of society, as distinct from the . . . unquestioned workings of society, has penetrated the . . . characters . . . [engendering] some coherent political loyalty or ideological identification" (*Politics*, p. 19). In *Politics and the Novel*, Howe cites such examples as Conrad's *Nostromo*, James's *The Princess Casamassima*, Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* and Malraux"s *Man's Fate*, though he feels the "greatest of all political novels . . . [is Dostoevsky's] *The Possessed*" (*Politics*, p. 22). "I find it hard to imagine a serious socialist being dissuaded from his belief by reading. . . The Possessed," writes Howe, "though I . . . think . . . the quality and nuance of that belief can never be quite as they were before he read The Possessed" (*Politics*, p. 22).

The problem with writing the political novel, notes Howe, is that "to be a novel at all, it must contain the usual representation of human behavior and feeling; yet it must also absorb into its stream of movement

the hard and perhaps insoluble pellets of modern ideology" (*Politics*, p. 20). The author strivs to create an authentic world, while making his political opinion, "one of the most active yet not entirely dominating movers" in that world (*Politics*, p. 23). "Because it exposes the impersonal claims of ideology to the pressures of private emotion, the political novel must always be in a state of internal warfare" (*Politics*, p. 22).

In the 1950s, when Howe began teaching at Brandeis, the onset of the Cold War presented him with a quandary. He faced the possible victory of totalitarian Russia under Stalin on the Left, and the activities of Senator Joseph McCarthy on the Right. This led Howe and other New York critics "to basic revisions of thought", to the conclusion that "the prime value was democracy" (Margin, p. 108). Without it, he writes, "we could not even imagine a desirable Socialism. . . . We were becoming Social Democrats" (Margin, p. 108). Howe "wanted to oppose not just Communism but also Joe McCarthy," and says, "we hoped to see the happy moment when not only the Fascist but the Communist dictatorships would fall" (Margin, p. 210-11).

Simultaneously, Howe sensed a growing inner contradiction between himself as political activist and as a writer. "I bridled at the notion that the literary life was inherently more noble than the life of politics . . . because acknowledging this could have been politically disabling at a time when politics remained essential, but also because I knew it held a portion of obvious truth—otherwise, how explain my inner divisions?" Howe further asks "had not . . . so entirely political a man as Trotsky once remarked that for him the world of letters was always 'a world more attractive'?" (Margin, pp. 231-2)

During the next ten years, now teaching at CUNY, Howe's politics continued to moderate. By about 1960, he says, "most of us no longer thought of ourselves as Marxists" (Margin, p. 238). He sees his abandoning of "yesterday's radical politics" as "partly adaptation" to the idea that American capitalism was "here to stay," partly a response not only to "the sly workings of prosperity... but also to a certain loosening of society," to American's "readiness to abandon traditional precepts... its increasing permissiveness toward social criticism, arising perhaps out of indifference, or self-assurance, or even tolerance" (Margin, p. 171).

Perhaps Howe's move from political radical to centrist echoes the assimilation of his immigrant forebearers, who also moved from the periphery to the mainstream of American life. Describing himself and the New York writers who are his peers, Howe observes that "for all their gloss of sophistication, they had not yet moved very far into the world, and the source of their discomfort lay more in their origins than their situation. The immigrant milk was still on their lips" (Margin, p. 172).

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## The Significance of Section IV in "The Bear"

#### Dennis Doherty

Essential to any reading of William Faulkner's Go Down, Moses is the understanding that the book is a novel and all its "stories" must be considered as chapters. The central chapter is the famous story, "The Bear," and the pivotal point of "The Bear," that which colors all that went before and is yet to come in the book, is the embattled Section IV. Irving Howe, in his book, William Faulkner: A Critical Study, treats "The Bear" as a discrete entity, saying that "in its more important half, 'The Bear' is primarily a story of hunting," and that "whatever the justification for the presence of Section IV, there can hardly be any doubt that as a piece of writing it is much inferior to the other parts." I believe, however, that putting "The Bear" in context with the greater story adds magnitude and eloquence to Section IV and leads to a quite different conclusion than that Isaac McCaslin, the story's protagonist, is "the moral hero of Yoknapatawpha County."

In his Critical Study, Howe devotes short chapters to several of the other great novels in their totality, but he limits Go Down, Moses to a study of "The Bear." The other so-called stories are treated but they are not accorded their full breadth. "Pantaloon in Black" is called a "not quite successful sketch" of a grieving Negro widower who is lynched for killing a white man. "The Fire and the Hearth" is seen as disappointingly comic in its treatment of Lucas Beauchamp, who will be given greater scope later in Intruder in the Dust. Howe calls the story that follows "The Bear," "Delta Autumn," a "confirming postscript." In his criticism of Section IV he asserts that with its omisssion the "narrative would flow more evenly toward its climax." In fact, it is the very presence of Section IV, with all its give and take of rhetoric and tortured reasoning, with its revelations of the true nature of Isaac McCaslin's legacy, which informs and enriches the earlier chapters and finally lets us into the mind of the man who we already know has for some reason repudiated this legacy, but who we only actually know as a woodsman and hunter. This does not impede momentum toward the climax, because the climax does not occur with Isaac and Boon Hogganbeck returning to the woods; it occurs in "Delta Autumn," which, far from being a confirming postscript, is a damning assessment. The postscript, if there can be said to be one, comes with the return of Mollie's grandson's body from the city in "Go Down, Moses," which is an affirmation of connection—not severance—connection to community, blood and land.

The very method Faulkner uses to achieve unity in his novels—sections that shift in perspective and time to achieve a wholeness through opposition—has led to charges of disunity. Complicating this effect in *Go Down, Moses* is the fact that the chapters are taken as self-contained units. And then there's that disruptive Section IV. Unity in the world of *Go Down, Moses* occurs through the subtle and effective method of telling a series of stories that are not immediately linked by time or even by character. Isaac McCaslin barely figures in some of them, but each story is an evocation of the world that informs his sensibilities from youth to old age. The chapters sit next to each other in a jarring fashion, such as the leaping in time from the 1859 of "Was" to the 1940 of "The Fire and the Hearth," or the leaping in style from the comedy of "The Fire and the Hearth" to the tragedy of "Pantaloon in Black." The oppositions serve not to confuse or obscure, but to throw each other into relief and add depth. The story of Tomey's Turl's chase in "Was" is such broadside comedy as to be farcical, but it is the discovery of the miscegenation and incestuous circumstances of Tomey's Turl's conception that alters Isaac irrevocably in Section IV of "The Bear;" and the tenacity of Tomey's Turl's love for Tennie is echoed tragically in the desperate grief of Rider in "Pantaloon in Black." Both these chapters are tempered by the passionate, comic-near-tragic story of Lucas Beauchamp which intercedes them in "The

Fire and the Hearth." When Rider—the pantaloon in black—lights a fire in his own hearth on Lucas's example, the reader is aware of a whole life's story, not just the fact that Rider had an Uncle Lucas who did this; and again, Lucas, who refuses to let the fire die out of his marriage, stands in direct contrast with Isaac, who finally fails everything that he loves. When in "Delta Autumn" Old Uncle Ike gasps at his relative, Tennie's Jim's grand daughter, "You're a nigger!" we are aware of the years of struggle and torment and ramification that is culminating. This is hardly a postscript.

As always with Faulkner, the stories feed and stimulate each other, and bits of them—particularly the central act of Isaac's repudiation of his land and history—surface again and again within each other, almost as a reminder that the characters are bits of each other, through blood, through community, through history. They are about each other. After reading Section IV, one can't look back on the lark of "Was" or the humor of "Fire and the Hearth" or the pathos of "Pantaloon in Black" without feeling Isaac McCaslin's outraged sensibilities stewing in the background, or without considering the themes of the hunt and the pull of blood in a deeper vein. Though Isaac has nothing directly to do with the dramatic action of the opening story, "Was," which occurs eight years before his birth, we are told in the first paragraph that "Isaac McCaslin...past seventy and nearer eighty" is "uncle to half a county and father to no one." We are immediately confronted with his presence, even though he is then dropped entirely from the story.

We subsequently learn that he himself is many-fathered: Cass Edmonds is his practical father and connection with the plantation and society; Sam Fathers is his spiritual father and connection with the land; Buck McCaslin is his biological father and connection with the blood and evil of old Carothers McCaslin. Buck is a man large enough to contain the apparent contradictions of manumitting his slaves and serving in the Confederate army. But Isaac, a good man, to be sure, a man of sensitivity and fine morality, must make a monolithic decision. He chooses Sam Fathers, denying and cutting himself off from his inheritance of blood, property and community. Perhaps this enormous sacrifice is "Christly," as Howe sees it, in that it is a willful act of ending and repudiating evil; but Carothers McCaslin's bloodline continues, as does evil, in the form of racism and desecration of the land. Isaac tries to remove himself from future evil by refusing his legacy, but in so doing still manages to affect the future negatively, while also managing to forget the good. The sins of old Carothers McCaslin continue to reverberate, as we see when Isaac is confronted by his "nigger" relation and her baby, the unacknowledged offspring of his nephew Roth. In horror he tells the girl to go North and marry a black man. She replies: "Old man. . . have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you don't remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?" Roth's subsequent shooting of a doe on the last hunting trip makes it clear that Isaac has not even managed to pass on his principles by example. He has forfeited his inheritance as steward of the land and people he loved. He is "father to no one," and that is pathetic.

Absolutely crucial to all of this, the hub from which all the spokes of meaning in the novel radiate, is the ledger scene in Section IV. It contains the core of what Cass Edmonds calls "All things which touch the heart—honor and pride and pity and justice and courage and love," as well as the themes of sin, responsibility, blood, land and history. Here is the central act that will bring an end to the McCaslin line; the original sin that gives life to the Beauchamp line. Carothers McCaslin buys the slave Eunice and couples with her, then seduces their daughter, which produces Tomey's Turl and spurs Eunice's suicide. The boy Isaac's revelation and the things that will determine his future actions come upon reading the correspondence between Buddy and Buck in the ledgers. First there is Buck's business-like account of Eunice, ending simply with: "Drownd in Crick Christmas Day 1832." Then there is a terse reply from Buddy, months later: "June 21th 1833 Drownd herself," to which Buck responds: "23 June 1833 Who in hell ever heard of a niger drownding him self," and Buddy's final, emphatic reply: "Aug 13th 1833 Drownd herself." In pursuing the

question why, and finding the answer, Isaac will finally reject Cass and Buck, embracing only Sam Fathers, who he claims set him free in the spirit of the woods.

So it is integral to the novel's unity, but even when he cedes that there are justifications for its inclusion, Howe complains that it is often inflated to Confederate rhetoric, that the dialogue is pretentious and that the narrative breaks down except where it is dramatized, as in the scene of Isaac's visit to the freed slave, Fonsiba. But again we are talking about the strategy of the dynamics of opposition. Fonsiba's story is illustrated because her supposed freedom in the Arkansas waste with her carpetbagger husband compares starkly with Isaac's. "I'm free," she says amid her squalor, to which Isaac's response is "Freedom from what? From work?" But later he will tell Cass, "I'm free. . . Sam Fathers set me free."

As for the rhetoric and pretentious dialogue: there is a need at this point in Isaac's crisis to hear opposing voices, voices of the Confederacy, of history and inheritance, of the land and place. There is a need to hear the rhetoric of the mind with all its fine sounding arguments and surprisingly shifting conclusions. Faulkner is faithfully and roundly recording the human experience; but the true answers aren't in his rhetoric, which Howe sees as his shortcoming, or even in the characters' voices, but in the solid reality of land and human action. Both discourse and image are called for here. And though the dialogue may sound pretentious, it isn't really direct dialogue so much as a kind of removed stream-of-consciousness, or what Howe calls in another place, a stream-of-eloquence. It is like the dialogue between Quentin Compson and his father in *The Sound and the Fury*, which no one has called pretentious, or inflated with classical rhetoric.

The result of all this is Isaac's choice. In choosing Sam for his father, in willing change within himself without working for change in the greater world, Isaac is in a sense being born-again, but it is the still birth of the self-made man, denying history, denying family, denying community, denying responsibility. He has struggled for change, but the change doesn't help the world. He has done nothing to preserve his beloved woods. They will be owned by someone, despite his wavering arguments about land ownership and against its inheritance. He has failed Sam in not passing on the same lessons he holds so dear, in having no spiritual heirs. He has had no positive impact on the strange, cruel, tacitly interdependent relationship between whites and blacks. In fact, his giving up the plantation forever changed the course of events in the county, but it did not put a dent in evil.

Works Cited

Faulkner, William. Go Down, Moses. New York: Modern Library, 1955

Howe, Irving. William Faulkner: A Critical Study. New York: Vintage Press, 1962.

## NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## CONTRIBUTOR PROFILES

PROFESSOR H. R. STONEBACK (Ph.D., Vanderbilt University) is Director of Graduate Studies and Professor of English at SUNY/New Paltz, where he has taught since 1969. He has published extensively on Faulkner, Hemingway, and modern fiction, and he is currently working on a book-length study of Hemingway.

JOHN N. BURDICK expects to receive his MA degree in English in May 1990. His major literary interests are in 16th-century poetry and in the novels of James Joyce. Burdick is presently the Writing Laboratory Supervisor for the Department's Journalism major program and teaches two sections of Freshman Composition on the computer.

JOSHUA J. MARK is an MA candidate in English with a special interest in medieval and twentieth-century literature. He is presently engaged in research on the heresy of the Catharists in the writings of Ernest Hemingway for a Master's thesis. Mr. Mark teaches in the Freshman English Program at the College.

ARNOLD SCHMIDT, screenwriter, novelist, playwright, and journalist, expects to complete his MA in English at the College in May 1990. In planning his future study, he aims to specialize in English Romanticism and is presently revising an article on William Wordsworth. Mr. Schmidt is a Teaching Assistant and currently teaches Freshman Composition and Dramatic Writing at the College.

DENNIS DOHERTY is an MA candidate in English whose focus is the study of twentieth-century literature with a particular interest in the works of William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway. Mr. Doherty teaches in the Freshman English Program at the College.

## PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Master of Arts Graduate Program at New Paltz offers several graduate curricula emphasizing the study of English and American literature and language. The MA degree requires ten courses (30 credits) at the master's level; the writing of a thesis is optional. The MA, MS (7-12), and MAT degrees may lead to New York State certification in secondary-level English.

### TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

Teaching Assistantships are available to qualified MA candidates. A teaching assistant normally takes two or three courses while teaching one freshman course each semester. Stipend: approximately \$3,300 per year and free tuition for six credits per semester. The degree program for Teaching Assistants requires 30 credits in language and literature and 3 credits in Modern Theories of Writing.

# RESEARCH AWARDS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS IN LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

To encourage and facilitate research by outstanding Master's candidates in Liberal Arts and Sciences, awards will be made for expenses incurred in the preparation of a Master's thesis. This program has been made possible through the generosity of the Arethusa Society. While most of the awards will be for amounts of \$400 or less, the review committee will award the maximum dollar amount for those projects with budgets that justify the expenditure. Students are encouraged to submit applications with budgets that call for \$400 or less.

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Eligibility: Applicants must be matriculated Master's candidates who have completed and filed a formal thesis application approved by their department. Applicants must be presently enrolled in a course for preparation of a thesis or have registered for such a course in a previous semester and presently have an H (Hold) on their record. Except for extenuating circumstances, previous recipients of these awards are ineligible. Projects must be sponsored by a member of the Graduate Faculty who will direct the project. Upon completion of the project, awardees will be required to provide a report on their accomplishments during the grant period.

Evaluation: Projects will be judged by a faculty panel on the basis of merit, design, and feasibility.

Application Procedure: Applications are available from the Dean's Office (Faculty Tower 614). Deadline: April 15, 1990. Awards will be announced by the Dean on May 1, 1990.

#### **DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Master's Comprehensive Examination Dates:

Fall 1989 — Saturday, November 4th

Spring 1990 — Saturday, March 24th

Both MA and MS candidates take Part I of the examination, given in the morning (9-12 AM). MA candidates take Part II, given in the afternoon (1-4 PM). Sample examinations are on file at the Reserve Desk in the Library.

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE MID-HUDSON MLA will not be held this year due to the sudden illness of Professor George Sommers of Marist College, Conference Chair. In the past, SUNY/New Paltz English Department faculty and graduate students have participated in this regional MLA meeting. Graduate students are strongly urged to attend this regional MLA conference. For future conference details and registration information, call the English Department, Marist College, at (914) 471-3240.

A FILM ADAPTATION of Ernest Hemingway's "Indian Camp" is currently being made in the New Paltz area. Brian Edgar (Columbia University Film Program) is producer-director. English Department faculty and students are participating in the making of this film. John Burdick is chief production assistant. H.R. Stoneback is script and location consultant. The world premiere of Indian Camp will be at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston during the International Hemingway Conference in July 1990, after which the film is slated for PBS distribution.

THE THOMAS WOLFE SOCIETY announces a student essay contest with a \$500.00 stipend as a prize. All essays submitted must be in English, related to Thomas Wolfe or his works, between 8 and 15 pages, typed double-spaced, with documentation according to the current MLA style manual. Essays will be judged on originality, style, clarity, documentation, and contribution to knowledge or understanding of Thomas Wolfe. Judges will be appointed by the President of the Thomas Wolfe Society. The original of each submission will be retained in the archives of The Society. The winner will receive a \$500.00 stipend, deliver the essay at the May 1990 meeting of The Society in Richmond, VA, and have the essay published in the Proceedings of the May 1990 meeting. Deadline for submission: January 15, 1990. Mail all manuscripts

to Dr. Frank C. Wilson, The Thomas Wolfe Student Prize, 603 Laurel Hill Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. Announcement of winner: March 15, 1990.

THE SIGMA TAU DELTA INTERNATIONAL ENGLISHHONOR SOCIETY announces to the members of the Society its annual awards of three scholarships and one award, at \$1,000.00 each. Eligibility for these awards are open to a junior, a senior, a graduate student, and a senior who will teach high school English upon graduation. In addition, Sigma Tau Delta offers writing awards from \$200 to \$1,000 for outstanding work published in the STD journal, The Rectangle. The categories are poetry, short story, the critical essay, and an open category awarded to the best piece of creative writing in any genre, appearing in The Rectangle. For further details, contact Professor Francis X. Paz, CHE 104.

IN A RECENT ISSUE of The Hemingway Newsletter, the following competition was announced:

In May of 1922, Hemingway's first literary publication —"A Divine Gesture"— appeared in The Double Dealer. Although many have remarked in passing on this apparent satire/parody/allegory, no one to date has been able to say anything sensible about it. . . . Therefore, I offer the 1989 Reynolds Prize in Hemingway Studies for the best detailed explanation of this enigmatic story. The only ground rule is this: you must account for the allegory in historical terms. The winner will receive a prize of \$100.00, and his/her essay will be published in The Hemingway Review. Entries must arrive by 25 December 1989 to be considered.

Essays are to be mailed to Professor Michael Reynolds, Campus Box 8105, English Department, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695. [A copy of "A Divine Gesture"—two pages in length—may be obtained from Professor Stoneback.]

To encourage participation in the national competition announced above, we hereby proclaim the New Paltz Hemingway Prize, with the same guidelines as given above. Essays on "A Divine Gesture" should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies before December 15, 1989. The writer of the winning essay will receive a prize of a hardbound Hemingway volume and encouragement to enter the national contest.

THE JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY IN BOSTON has openings for paid archival internships (for undergraduate and graduate students) in the Hemingway Collection. These internships may take place during winter or summer intersessions. Applications may be requested by writing to Archival Internships, JFK Library, Columbia Point, Boston, MA 02125.

## GUIDE TO CONTRIBUTORS

The English Graduate Review is an annual publication by the Department of English, SUNY/New Paltz, carrying the best papers submitted by the graduate students enrolled in the program. All submissions are restricted to graduate students in good standing at the institution. Manuscripts submitted should be original material on literary biography, history, theory and methods, analysis and interpretation, and critical syntheses that may emerge from courses or seminars taken at the College. Manuscripts are blind reviewed by the Director of Graduate Studies and the journal editors. Manuscripts should be prepared in the preferred style published by the Modern Language Association Manual of Style or in that of the Chicago Manual of Style. Please submit three clear copies of the manuscript. The entire manuscript, including notes, bibliography, and indented long quotations should be double-spaced. Illustrative materials, such as tables, maps, and graphics, should be done in black ink and should be in camera ready copy. Photographs should have a glossy finish. All manuscripts, on a separate page after the title page, should include an abstract of

50 words or less and biographical information of four to six lines that indicate the author's professional, research, and literary interests. The deadline for submission is April 15th of each year. All manuscripts should be sent to the Director of Graduate Studies, College Hall E, 105.

BOOK REVIEWS are invited that relate to specific courses or to literary interests having general appeal to the graduate student body. Please submit two copies. The heading should include the name of the author (s) or editor (s), the title of the book (underlined), place of publication, publisher, date, number of pages, (cloth or paperbound), and price. Approximate length of a book review is 1,000-1,500 words. The review should be scholarly in orientation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR are invited to promote scholarly discussion and debate.