Editorial

by Ernest Pinson

Between these covers are the offerings from nine individuals including three public presentations, an excerpt from a manuscript in progress, an original short story, original art work and photographs, an interview, poems, and other short works. They range in style from the conversational question and answer interview, to the rich metaphorical verse of poetry, to the formal citational style of scholarly essays. The subject matter is equally diverse—ghosts, backyard bird conversations, thinking machine detectives, job changing, London, Union, Debussy, Shakespeare, and “Christ on Celluloid.” Speaking of celluloid, the photographs of Frank Lower compel pictorial reflections of their own rivaling the verbal “Reflections on London” by Lytle Givens, or the poetic “Meditations” by Ruth Witherington.

A small, private, moderately ambitious school such as ours, quietly snuggled on flat land surrounded by less and less pine trees and more and more traffic, has little need to pressure its faculty into research and publications. It is doubly pleasing, therefore, to present Union faculty members faithful to upgrading their minds and daring to test their pedagogical principles without being pushed or lured into it!

Such professorial efforts recall to mind a Union professor now retired, but not forgotten, who also struggled not only to better himself, but the whole spectrum of this University—one called Eldon Byrd. It is to that Christian gentleman that this issue of JUFF is solemnly and respectfully dedicated. I remember an Eldon who dared to ask questions that challenged the impurity of the cause and the fallacy of the logic, and he did so in a kind, unthreatening way. He was witty, he promoted scholarship, and he lived by the principle of “thank you for doing that for me, please find something I can do for you.” Long may his spirit wave over this institution, and long, Eldon, may you be emulated.
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to
Eldon A. Byrd
Professor Emeritus
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Meditation

by Ruth Witherington

Rocks
gray and pitted
by eons of exposure
to rain and wind;

Carp
swimming aimlessly
in a mysterious pool,
their colors reflecting
the
glancing
rays
of
sunlight;

A Bonsai
planted and shaped
by an ancestor who is remembered
only
because
of
the
perfection
of his artistry;

A lantern
offering light
as it has for
countless
nights;

Buddha
whose inscrutable, unblinking gaze
contemplates
with
omniscience
the
messages
left

In a Japanese garden.
Christ On Celluloid: Beyond Theology And Narrative In The Gospel According To St. Matthew, Jesus Christ Superstar, And The Last Temptation Of Christ

by Roger Stanley

As Cheryl Forbes reports overhearing one of her fellow film patrons say in the aftermath of a 1973 screening of Jesus Christ Superstar, "No matter what you believe, Jesus makes a good story." In fact He does, though Forbes is perhaps ill-advised to lament at the end of her review that "What we need . . . is a Christian filmmaker to produce the true story." Now that the furor over Martin Scorsese's 1988 film The Last Temptation of Christ has subsided, perhaps it would be well to examine a triad of films which utilize the Jesus "story," not to distill a core of celluloid truth from His figure, but to express in cinematic terms three vital dimensions of Christ's being and mission according to the predilection of their respective scenarists/directors. Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1966 The Gospel According to St. Matthew thus projects a polemical, politically charged Jesus; Norman Jewison's Jesus Christ Superstar plays up the flamboyant yet compressed poetry of His final seven days; and Scorsese's The Last Temptation of Christ poses a philosophical problem through His portrayal.

It would be wrong to expect any of these screen treatments to evoke a "true" picture of Christ palatable to believers everywhere. Instead, the commonalty of their being produced outside the Hollywood mainstream should suggest artistic visions and purposes quite different from the standard Cecil B. DeMille epic or the bombastically named The Greatest Story Ever Told (whose title itself has connotations of "fiction" with which truth-aspiring director George Stevens might not be entirely comfortable). For the Sicilian Marxist Pasolini, the Canadian Gentile (surname notwithstanding) Jewison, and the Catholic from Little Italy Scorsese, "truth" is far too elusive and complex to be gleaned readymade from the New Testament and transmitted universally on the wide screen. Each filmmaker has an agenda; each film works best not within the realm of theology, but in terms of politics, poetry, and philosophy respectively.

Titles are both instructive and misleading. The Gospel According to St. Matthew is in many ways as literal and text-bound as its name implies—a stark, black-and-white treatment of the first gospel which opens with a close-up of bemused, pregnant Mary and closes with the words of the Great Commission. But its interim portrayal of the adult Jesus as strident and ne'er-smiling, one whose gospel is largely "spat forth" (Schickel) over His shoulder while the camera tracks the apostles on their various countryside jaunts, suggests a broader political aim. Pasolini's Savior is angry, petulant, given to demagogic fervor—yet the screenplay remains doggedly faithful to the Bible, as rendered in the English subtitles of Monsignor Ronald Knox.

The appellation Jesus Christ Superstar suggests rabble-rousing excess, and its portrayal of a put-upon Jesus fendng off the idolizing hordes met with controversy, mainly along the lines of its contemporary tenor and its alleged anti-Semitism. Jewison, incredibly enough also the director of Fiddler on the Roof, was chided for deemphasizing the role of Romans such as Pilate and having Jewish functionaries
like Caiaphas and Herod strike villainous or campy poses. *Superstar*, based on the Tim Rice/Andrew Lloyd Webber “rock opera” of the same name, thus doesn’t have the original directorial vision discernible with Pasolini and Scorcese; yet it is perhaps the “purest” of the three films by virtue of its concern with the formal problem of conveying Christ’s passion in oblique, lyrical terms with virtually no dialogue.

*The Last Temptation of Christ* refers not to the third offering by Satan to Jesus of the kingdoms of the world, but to the conceit of Scorcese (and novelist Nikos Kazantzakis) that our Savior was presented, while actually nailed to the cross, with an alternative to fulfilling His divine destiny—namely, an acknowledgement of His fully human status so far as to encompass sexual relations, marriage, and fatherhood. Indeed the entire movie purports to be a meditation upon this “incessant, merciless battle” between the spirit and the flesh, the divine and the mortal. This dream sequence, in the hands of an American Catholic filmmaker by way of a Greek orthodox novelist, ignited much controversy as extraBiblical (which it certainly is) and sacrilegious (which is open to question). But the picture in fact ends with Jesus clearly opting for the divine, a choice decidedly in line with orthodox Christianity.

The role of language, specifically Holy Writ, in each of these three pictures is instructive when contrasting their artistic purposes. Each screenplay is necessarily selective, yet Pasolini’s film alone, as suggested by its title, is confined to a single New Testament source. Though Lawrence Meredith maintains that the book of Matthew is unique in identifying the locus of sin as “the inability to love the community in which the (salvation) event takes place” (800), Pasolini’s protagonist is an angry young man, emphasizing not love but the sword. The Beatitudes get short shrift in *Gospel*, and our Savior smiles but once in the entire film, at a gaggle of swarthy bambinos milling about Him. There is an extended diatribe near the end of the film in which Jesus indicts Romans, Jewish elders, and apostles alike as unworthy of His austere, demanding kingdom; the terms of revolution do not admit of benevolence, still less of compromise. A six-minute medley of parables and sayings in the middle of the movie is near-literal New Testament, but the spare, sun-drenched natural backdrops against which this stern prophet declaims them produce an effect of Christ haranguing the masses rather than dispensing to them loving wisdom.

*Jesus Christ Superstar*, a film which “no dialogue intrudes to impose prose” (Wall 693), makes no such claim at Scriptural fidelity. Covering only the final week in Christ’s life, Jewison’s film handles such crucial events as the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, and Christ’s betrayal via contemporary song and dance numbers from key players like the Zealots, Caiaphas, and Mary Magdalene. Petulant and hitting all the falsettos, Jesus here nevertheless bestows multiple smiles upon both children and adults and seems to proffer a vaguely pacifist message in contrast to Pasolini’s militant Marxism. Both Christs are eminently countercultural, staunchly anti-establishment, but *Superstar’s* hero owes more to the psychedelic, apolitical “New Left” than to “Old Left” social action crusades. Too, the Savior of *Superstar* is a bridge toward the doubting, ambivalent Jesus of *Last Temptation*, with his railing against and acquiescence to the “card-holding” Father. Jewison’s Jesus is
fundamentally uncertain, far afield from the polemical sureties He mouths in *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*.

Scripture is nothing more than contextual backdrop in *The Last Temptation of Jesus Christ*, whose opening disclaimer, notes that it is “not based upon the Gospels but upon this (the Kazantzakis novel) fictional exploration of the eternal spiritual conflict.” Paul Schrader’s script is the stuff of myth and philosophical debate; lines form Jesus such as “I’m a heart.” “I want Him to hate me” and “I am the end of the old Law” may be true in spirit to some of the words recorded in the Gospels, but the letter is forever lacking. Indeed Schrader has come under fire for possible parodic or campy elements in his dialogue, as when John the Baptist sends Our Lord forth to the desert with an admonitory “Be careful; God isn’t alone out there” (Hill Street Blues?), or when the slow-on-the-uptake apostles jostle for cot position and bid each other good-night singly (there is a John, though no Johnboy). Despite the agonies of the Garden recorded by all four Gospel writers, Christ decidedly never begged his Father to take the cup from Him with quite the disillusionment He expounds in *Temptation*. This ambivalence culminates in Christ’s dream, the source material for the film’s title.

As a corollary to language, music is an important factor behind each film’s artistic vision, a dominant factor in *Superstar*. Tune titles here betoken the attitude of various figures toward the lead character, from the bemusement of the apostles expressed in “What’s the Buzz?” and “Strange Thing Mystifying” through the unrest among the priestly guard in “This Jesus Must Die” to the epiphany granted Mary and Peter too late in “Could We Start Again, Please?” Musical conductor Andre Previn sets a kinetic aural pace in keeping with the chaos of Jesus’ final earthly hours, and the go-go choreography granted the Zealots as they writhe their way around “JC,” each demanding that He “tell me that I’m saved,” fits well with *Superstar’s* original stage rendering. The music is the medium for Jewison’s film, taking its cue from the Webber/Rice musical’s notion of “Jesus as rock idol” (Zimmerman).

Though present primarily as backdrop, soundtrack music haunts the cinematic worlds of *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* and *The Last Temptation of Christ* as well. The eclectic score of *Gospel* features high church strains of Bach and Mozart alongside tribal instrumentals suggesting a more primitive milieu in keeping with the barren locales of Southern Italy, where the movie was shot. Its lone lyrical piece is the Negro spiritual “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,” crooned in English at two different points of Jesus’ fledgling preministry days. Similarly, rocker Peter Gabriel’s score for *Temptation* is a study in electric eclecticism, often pulsating in contemporary counterpoint to this centuries-old story, filmed in modern Morocco. Significantly, the soundtrack goes mute and the dream commences in dumb show as Jesus descends the cross upon accepting the terms of His “last temptation.”

In the necessary role of Messianic follower, the portrayal of Christ’s chosen twelve apostles is a vital element in all three films. In *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, the calling and subsequent service of the disciples is handled straightforwardly, with little attempt at individual characterization. Indeed it is not one of the dozen but John the Baptist who functions as a frame or point of interlude for the story. His maltreatment at the hands of Herod and Salome interrupts the film
narrative of Jesus' mission, and it is hard upon a quick cut away from John's fiery visage that the adult Jesus is first glimpsed. The twelve, along with various other Italian rustics of both sexes, do little more than trudge behind their leader in a number of tracking shots, ultimately proving unworthy of this "uncompromising revolutionary who is out to change the world as he knows it, and being pretty exclusive about it, too" (Alpert 46-47).

Although the betrayal by Judas and his subsequent suicide is treated by Pasolini his character does not stand out after the fashion of the black, nationalistic Judas of Superstar. As the self-proclaimed "right-hand man" for Jesus, Judas echoes many of Christ’s followers at large in his concern for political release from the menace of Roman might. The film’s opening number is Judas’—for him, Jesus and His groupie devotees have too much "Heaven on Their Minds." Goaded, almost commanded by Christ near the end of the film to betray Him, Judas professes to approach the Jewish leaders reluctantly and is riddled by remorse. According to James M. Wall, Judas is "the film’s 'everyman;' the figure drawn to Jesus and yet unable to comprehend the strange demands he makes both on himself and on his followers" (694). Like the other eleven disciples, Judas worries about posterity’s view of him, yet his characterization is distinct from their essentially passive, anonymous portraits.

In Temptation, Judas is more of a conscience or alter ego for Jesus, determined and sure of himself. Indeed it is Judas who shames Jesus near the end of His dream into getting back upon the cross and fulfilling His appointed mission. Scorcese’s Judas wants “freedom for Israel” over against the “freedom for the soul” which Christ espouses, and at one point in the film he is even sent by the Zealots to kill a Jesus who is parlaying His carpentry skills into a tidy business making crosses for the crucifixion of Jews. Yet Judas becomes drawn to Christ and His mission, to the point of eventually having to be urged to enact his role as betrayer. The rest of the apostles, who enter the film by twos and threes in gimmicky dissolves, spend much of it debating the nature of this enigmatic personage who leads them; Judas proves a man of action, a pillar of strength for a wearied, vacillating Jesus who literally begs him at points for proximity and comfort.

Finally, the crucifixion and resurrection (or implied resurrection, or absence of resurrection) as staged in these three movies needs to be examined, along with precursory events in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Christ of Gospel does not rail against His Father or show uncertainty concerning the nature of God’s plan, only mildly crying out in the Garden. On the heels of a frugal Last Supper whose cinematic conception has been dubbed by one critic “a poor meal in a bad tavern” (Schickel), the betrayal and the agonies of Gethsemane are remarkably understated. Significantly, The Gospel According to St. Matthew is the only one of these movies in which a risen Christ is actually visible on screen. Unsteady camera movement produces an earthquake-like effect which prefigures the bodily resurrection, and the stone blocking Jesus’ tomb literally pops away in a “trick” shot uncharacteristic of this otherwise realistic film. The movie’s final frame encompasses both the disciples and their risen leader, with a voice-over intoning the Great Commission’s eminently social gospel.

Far from the cramped “bad tavern” setting is Jewison’s lush, pastoral last Supper milieu in Superstar, possibly the most mellow, least raucous sequence in the
entire movie. The impending betrayals of Judas and Peter are alluded to by a weary Jesus who then departs for the Garden to declaim stridently against His agonies. This “sad, tired, no longer inspired” Messiah does eventually yield to divine will, but only after incessantly querying the Father as to “why” He must bear the cross. Superstar’s final image, an empty cross at sunset, may imply a risen Savior, but its chief effect is to instill a sense of wonder in cast and audience alike. Employing the framing device at beginning and end of a touring company debarking from and then reboarding the bus, Jewison leaves us with the players casting awed glances at the empty cross, more caught up in the poetic spectacle of what they have just staged than in an affirmation of the theological doctrine of the resurrection.

All the philosophical polarities embodied in the character of Jesus throughout The Last Temptation of Christ—human versus divine, love versus the axe, barren desert versus domestic hearth—are touched upon in the scenes in the Garden and on the cross. Scorcese in effect offers dual endings to his film, though the first “version” is meant to represent a dream or vision, the second reality. Tortured and unable to view himself either as fully human or fully divine, Christ is coaxed off the cross shortly after being nailed to it, His temptress a blond female guardian angel who ultimately proves to be the devil in disguise. In the intervening twenty—twenty-five minutes, He fantasizes about a decades-long normal life as patriarch and sire. It is only through the apostle Paul, curiously conceived as a sort of Grand Inquisitor/myth-monger who has “created the truth” about Jesus quite apart from His historical existence, and through Judas, that Christ is able to resist the lures of this dream. The film’s closing shot features Jesus back on the cross, His final words “It is accomplished” faithful to the finale of the novel. There is no resurrection, only the playing out of a philosophical parable—“the film’s Jesus appears more interested in overcoming his temptations than in bringing salvation to humankind.” (Geduld 42). It is this aspect of the film, not its treatment of Christ as a sexual being, which viewers might well bemoan in a Christian context—but only if unwilling to approach the movie first and foremost in its rightful sphere of philosophical meditation.
The Ghost

by Ruth Witherington

I never met him, yet I know him as well as I have ever known anyone in my Arkansas valley. It struck me as odd that I dare to make friends with someone as ethereal as he, yet my will-of-the-wisp relationship with him was one of the most intriguing I’ve every had. It has also profoundly affected my outlook on the true meaning of life.

We were made aware of his presence by our grandchildren in the autumn of the year.

“Joey,” Monica called, “there’s someone in the woods across the road.”

A typical big brother, Joey argued a bit, until he too saw a wraith-like form in the dusk. “Howdy,” Joey hailed. “Come on over and sit a spell,” borrowing a hill-country expression.

“He’s gone, Joey. You scared him away. Why’d you have to yell like that anyway? You sounded like a wild Indian,” Monica admonished, and turned with a bewildered face to me as I stood on the steps. “Grannie, we saw a man in the woods, but he ran away when Joey screamed at him.”

“I didn’t scream, dummy,” Joey replied, and, deciding to have some fun with his little sister, he added, “he was probably the Creature from the Black Lagoon or the Boggy Creek Monster anyway.”

A look of fear darted across Monica’s upturned face, and she clutched my knee. “It wasn’t a real monster, was it, Grannie.”

“No honey, Joey’s only teasing. It was just that old white dog that we’ve seen before, the one Gramps calls the ghost. Now come on inside and let’s have a game of Monopoly before we go to bed. Remember we’ve got a big day tomorrow.”

“It wasn’t a dog, Grannie,” Joey said positively. “He was standing up! It was a person; I know it!”

“That’s enough, Joey. Come inside.”

After a rather subdued game of Monopoly, both children got their baths and I tucked them in. However, neither was ready to go to sleep, and my husband and I had to wait longer than usual for our nighttime walk down the country road. After assuring myself Monica was really sound asleep, I picked up my old sweater and joined George in the kitchen. “I really feel a bit apprehensive about leaving them here alone,” I said, as we started out the back door.

Suddenly my foot touched something. Switching on my flashlight, which I always carried with me as I walked down the rock-filled road, I saw a crudely-fashioned basket with four apples in it. As I picked the basket up I saw that these apples were unlike those in the grocery stores. They were small and knotty, as if they had come from a tree which had been allowed to grow free, untreated and unpruned. I was sure that they were inedible, or at least not tasty to eat, but was I surprised! I bit into one and, wow—! They were crisp, tangy, and tasted of long hours in the October sun. It occurred to me that these apples were perhaps a gift
had no folks that we could find, the undertaker called Brother Adams out at Pilgrim
Rest and ask him to say a few words over the body at the cemetery. His old dog
hung around for a day or two, whinin' and scratchin' at the dirt, then he disappeared
and no one saw him again.

"Well, that's the story. The church made up money to buy a rock but we didn't
know nothin' to put on it 'cept 'Crazy Ben, died 1967.'"

I remembered seeing the marker at the cemetery, but I never dreamed that it
had such a strange, sad story. Without any other comment, I said goodbye to the
men in the store and returned to the car. As we drove home, I briefly related to
George the story I had heard. After I finished, neither of us said much. We each had
thoughts that were too private to share with the other. When we pulled into the
driveway, I didn't even look at the steps where I had left the basket; I knew that it
was still there. I picked it up and carried it in with the rest of the things, and later
unpacked it and put the gifts away. Somehow, I felt that the "Ghost" wouldn't be
back, although for the life of me I couldn't have told you why.

Two days later the snow began, and our valley was caught in the grip of the
worst winter in memory. For nearly three months we were virtually isolated,
struggling out in the four-wheeled drive when it was necessary and praying that we
could get back safely. However, it was a pleasant time. I had filled the freezer with
vegetables and meat, George had cut wood for the fireplace, and we also had
kerosene heaters when we needed them. Our well was too deep to freeze up and the
pipes were well insulated. We enjoyed the wildlife that found its way to our feeding
stations, and if the "Ghost" ever crossed our minds, his memory was only
momentary. You have to work hard to maintain a place in the cold and the snow,
and we were so tired when the night came that we were asleep immediately.

Suddenly it was mid-March, and as quickly as the snows came they went away.
The air softened; the flocks of birds who had been concerned only with eating for
themselves concentrated on their sexual counterparts. I could almost hear the woods
begin to grow. Each day the trees were greener, and forest plants began to push their
way up through the rich soil. I found some daffodils in the woods, and the banks of
the creek were covered with a little green parachute-like plant that I was unable to
identify. It was glorious, and I sang aloud as I measured off a place for my garden.
George tilled the soil, and together we planted the vegetables which we had ordered
from the seed companies during the cold winter.

Each day now I look forward to getting up and looking for something new hear
in our valley. I do miss seeing the old dog off in the woods or wandering down the
road; I wish they hadn't shot him.

This morning I got up earlier than usual and walked out to the back yard to
greet the Lord and thank Him for another beautiful day. As I started out the door,
there at my feet lay a bunch of trailing arbutus, still wet with the dew, and Solemn
smiling with delight.
Photograph by Frank Lower
Claude Debussy, Father of Modern Music

by Pat Pinson

Claude Debussy is a startling figure in history. He was the supreme innovator of early twentieth century music who virtually invented a new musical language and aesthetic. Yet, because he was a silent and even secretive man with a retiring nature, and because of the overwhelming belief at the turn of the century that it was Wagner who was the harbinger of the new age, Debussy’s importance was often overlooked and understated. For many years he was dismissed as a composer of rather inconsequential music—impressionistic fluff (a purveyor of “first class bonbons and you can’t live on bonbons all the time” according to musicologist W. J. Turner)—but such a renowned 20th century composer as Igor Stravinsky said “the musicians of my generation and I owe the most to Debussy.” His place in history has become clearly established as the significance and the influence of his work has become more apparent during the progress of the century.

By the end of the 19th century Wagner’s ideas permeated aesthetic thought, paintings, poetry, sculpture, most music, and the discussions of the artists who produced them. His synthesis of the arts and “gesamtkunstwerk” heralded the advent of a new epoch. France had been slow to be influenced by Wagner’s music, and it had been the writers and artists who succumbed first without having heard a note of it. Instead, they read his prose and aesthetic theories. Being a Frenchman, Debussy was somewhat free of the obsessive cult which surrounded the work of Richard Wagner even though he served his time paying homage to the great man. Debussy was able to distance himself, and then bypass, Wagnerism. His work continued to show some traits prevalent in Romantic music—an interest in the dream world and escape from reality, fascination with exotic places, an avid interest in poetry (he even tried his own hand in writing), and a strong love of nature. But at the same time, his music shows other traits—an almost scientific detachment, interest in acoustics—which are not Romantic, and the traits of economy, clarity, and logic from his own French heritage. Until Debussy, Wagner was considered to be the composer of the avant-garde, the father of the new music, and his influence was pervasive over the European musical world. But with the advent of Debussy’s work, the perspective changes, and Wagner must be reclassified as the culmination of the Romantic tradition. It is Debussy who initiates the new epoch in the history of music.

Just as great rivers often emerge from numerous streams, Debussy’s music emerged from several sources of his experience. One of those sources was a broader view of the world than most musicians had before him. Paris was the site of many expositions during the latter half of the 19th century and these provided a window into many little known regions of the world, as well as an opportunity to showcase new technology. The World Exposition of 1889 was especially significant with the new Eiffel Tower constructed for the occasion, the mammoth Hall of Technology with its moving sidewalks, the Vietnamese village and villagers set down in the heart of Paris, concerts by musicians from many parts of the world, and other rich exotic flavors permeating the life of the city for the summer months. Perhaps most
important to the arts however, was the impact of the Far East. The prints from Japan with their different uses of space were already influencing French painting, and the gamelan orchestra from Java with its music based on a different scale in this Exposition had a profound influence on Debussy’s music.

Debussy had opportunities to travel away from the heart of France as well. His winning the Prix de Rome at the Paris Conservatoire took him to Italy which was the customary cradle for award winning musicians. But while there he made the acquaintance of the Russian Nadia von Meck (who was also Tchaikovsky’s patron) and was subsequently employed as pianist to the household. That gave him the opportunity to travel in Russia for two seasons absorbing the rich folk melodies of Musorgsky and Glinka.

There were also strong ties with the world of literature and art, since Paris was a city with a Bohemian culture more aligned with the arts of painting and literature than with music. French culture 1880-1914 teemed with new movements in painting and in literature, innovations in dance with the Ballet Russe, new translations of Russian novels, and exhibitions of Oriental and African art. Throughout the 19th century, the French had continually produced great paintings which broke away from the style established and accepted by the French Academy. In fact, the most notable exhibitions were those of paintings which had been rejected by the Academy. Those exhibitions usually aroused the ire and contempt of the general public. The Impressionist movement followed in this tradition and actually got its name from a derogatory remark made about Monet’s painting of a sunrise. On the other hand, poetry tends to be a quieter art and attracts less publicity probably because poets do not “exhibit” their poems in one very visible public place, but publish them in periodicals which usually have limited distribution. There was a certain shyness evident among the artists of this movement—Paul Valery was unknown until age 46 and then his work was published against his will, and André Gide published only limited editions until 1905. Sometimes a poet would wait for months for the right word to conclude a phrase. Debussy was seen more frequently with the poets and the painters than he was the musicians because that is where the new intellectual thought was occurring. All the time he was absorbing the ideas about art and the meaning within it, and he was storing up a hoard of sensations from nature for recall and translation into sound.

The two most significant movements of late 19th century art and literature were Impressionism and Symbolism. Impressionism was a relatively small movement with a very large influence in the field of painting. It reinterpreted the visual world to be what the eye actually saw rather than the more traditional approach of what the brain told the eye it saw. Impressionism was perceptual rather than conceptual, and strove to capture the immediate sensory perception of an object as it was revealed by light. Impressionism took place mainly between 1870 and 1887 in a series of eight collective exhibitions of paintings in Paris, and centered around the work of Claude Monet.

The Symbolism movement took place primarily in poetry and included the work of French poets Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarme and Rimbaud among others. It did not stress a logical train of thought, but expressed emotions and feelings by means of obscure, heavy, colored words, a dream-like atmosphere, a half-illusive
world. Symbolist doctrine was firmly established in 1886 in the publication of *Traité du verbe* by Rene Ghil for which Mallarme wrote the preface.

Both Impressionism and Symbolism broke away from traditional viewpoints and initiated new concepts. They changed the primary impact of the work away from the rational meaning to emphasize instead the sensual immediacy of the work. In painting, the surface texture attracted attention to itself, the colors and the brushstrokes became more apparent, and the uninitiated turn-of-the-century viewer was often repelled by the emphasis on the paint rather than on the illusion of reality. The image on the canvas represented the surface of the object as it appeared at a given moment and under certain conditions of light. Light was translated into color, which was often juxtaposed rather than blended, and laid on the canvas in short and obvious brushstrokes. Monet progressively decomposed the shapes of objects and translated them into energy, and an new concept of reality and of space was introduced. The old realistic visual approach was no longer sufficient to contain the ideas of a world which was assimilating the works of Darwin, Marx, Pasteur, and Proust.

Symbolism changed some of the formal structures of poetry as well, and the poets concern cut directly to the very language they dealt with. Words were used more for their sound than for their sense, and the poems became evocations of an emotion rather than descriptions of it. Where Impressionism changed painting from an intellectual to an actual physical presentation, Symbolism moved from the physical representation or narratives common to poetry, to an emotional evocation. To actually name an object meant to suppress parts of the enjoyment of a poem—that enjoyment was meant to develop gradually as you experienced the poem. To suggest the object of feeling was the ideal. The old rules for writing poetry ceased to apply.

There are similarities between the music of Debussy and the work of both the Impressionists and the Symbolists. But the style in music which he originated was unique and not a derivative of either. Just as Monet and the Symbolist poets were reexamining the very essence of the art, Debussy reshaped music away from its traditional structure and means of organization. Just as painting and poetry focused attention on the sensual qualities of color and sound rather than recreating an object or event, Debussy’s music often emphasized the momentary aural sense impressions over the more rationally determined melody, harmony and form. The new style emerges through the use of brief melodies which seem formless and lacking in direction to set a mood. Rather than writing in a major or minor mode, Debussy uses whole-tone and pentatonic scales which color the music with pseudo-Oriental and Spanish effects. Sonorities shift often, and contain chords with added seconds, fourths, sixths, and sevenths which are often suspended, and he uses ninth chords extensively. The well traveled path of tension/release and “drive to the cadence” is replaced by movement of chords in parallel motion in “chord streams” or other non traditional combinations, dissonances are left unresolved, tritones and open fifths are common. Strong metric accents are absent (although he has a predilection for waltz rhythm). Just as in painting and poetry, form disintegrates—or rather, it changes from the forms commonly used to convey meaning—to new forms necessary to convey new meaning. In general, the musical forms are
non-developmental. The careful balances of repetition and contrast of the past are replaced with apparently random organization, or the reliance on other devices to determine the shape of work (such as the complex numerical systems based on the Golden Section). This music was not so much an extension of or deviation from the Classic/Romantic tradition as much as it was a by-passing of it.

Debussy has traditionally been regarded as the leading exponent of Impressionism in music. It is a designation which has been sometimes misleading because one automatically supposes that Debussy was trying to do in sound what Monet was doing in paint. However, Debussy did not consider himself to be an Impressionist. He had deeper roots with the Symbolist poets both in friendship and in common aesthetic purpose. Debussy spoke of music as a mysterious agreement between nature and the imagination—it could establish a connection without words. He was not a tone painter of a momentary idea, but he strove to capture the symbol instead. He regarded music as being symbolic of something inexpressible which is probably why he often placed the titles of works at the end of the piece rather than the beginning. "Music," he wrote, "is precisely the art which is nearest Nature. Despite their claim to be expert translators, painters and sculptors can only give us a fairly free and always fragmentary interpretation of the beauty of the universe. They can capture and fix only one of its aspects, only for a single instant: only musicians are able to capture all the poetry of night and day, of heaven and earth and to re-create their atmosphere and give rhythmic form to their intense vibrations."

Debussy, like Monet, often turned to nature for subject matter, yet he always rejected using a program, "as I have a profound contempt for music which has to follow some silly little story" or, one may add by implication, some particular scene in nature. Instead, he sought to "evoke" the essence of a phenomenon, and to do this through an unconventional use of harmony and texture. Already one can see that the sheer act of "evoking the essence" was not the same as rendering an "immediate visual impression" which was the intent of the painters. The outward appearance of Debussy's music does seem impressionistic, but the content or the heart and meaning of it was different. Debussy's use of nature was one which explored the dynamic event, where the painters were exploring the way an object was experienced through light. Yet in both arts, line began to disintegrate. Just as the shape of an object was no longer realized by outlines in Monet, the lines of melody in Debussy often dissolve into directionless fragments.

From the beginning of Symbolism, music and poetry were almost synonymous. Ghil wrote that the "Poem" becomes an actual piece of suggestive music providing its own instrumentation: "a music of words evocative of colored images, but in no way detrimental to idea," and Mallarme proclaimed that "the acme of the intellectual Word must... result in Music, and that Poetry, most nearly approaching the Idea, is Music par excellence. Symbolist painting also aims towards the indefinite state of sound. "My [Odilon Redon] drawings inspire and cannot be defined. They determine nothing. They place us, in the same way as music does, in the ambiguous world of the indeterminate. ... They are a kind of metaphor." Monet was to arrive at a similar state of synthesis in his latest work. Water became more than a resource to show reflections of light, it became the symbol for the fluid, dynamic of life.
The poem that was practically the manifesto of Symbolism was *Art Poétique* by Paul Verlaine. It, like much Symbolist poetry, is not about love, emotion, or personal experience, but it is a poem about poetry. Symbolist poetry usually did not deal with idealized representations of reality but about analysis and decomposition, and this poem is a prime example of impersonal, intellectual poetry with strong musical language.

De la musique avant toute chose  
Et pour cela préfère l'Impair,  
Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air,  
Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou qui pose....

Music above all,  
and for that reason prefer uneven rhythms  
vaguer and more soluble in the air,  
with nothing that weighs or settles.

Car nous voulons la Nuance encor,  
Pas la Couleur, rien que la nuance!  
Oh! la nuance seule fiancée  
Le rêve au rêve et la flûte au cor!...

For we still want Nuance,  
not Color, nothing but nuance!  
Oh! nuance alone binds  
dream to dream and the flute to the horn!

Prends l'éloquence et tords-lui son cou!...

Take eloquence and wring his neck!...

(translation—W. Robert)

Debussy’s music fulfills this statement in its search for evocation, and in its reticence, its disregard for rules, its sensitivity and subtlety. It is an evocative art as well as an art full of sonorous textures, but it would be entirely wrong to think that in using sonorous elements taken from his surroundings that Debussy confined himself to a photograph of Nature. He uses elements and tools from Impressionism, but the sonorous suggestions are for him a means—ingenious, elegant, and refined, but not an end. Evocation, a dream suffused with all the nuances of poetry, was his ideal. Debussy goes beyond Impressionism into Symbolism. And unlike the composers who were his contemporaries, he goes beyond Romanticism into the cosmopolitan, changing world of the 20th century. He becomes the Father of Modern Music.

This paper is part of a manuscript in progress being written in conjunction with Professor Walter Robert, Indiana University.
Cafe Audubon

by Ruth Witherington

Buxom matrons preen themselves
 as they admire each other’s plumes and feathers,
 and gossip noisily about who is seeing whom,
 or whose home was broken up by
 that winter visitor from the North.

Staid, gray-clad businessmen eat quietly and try to ignore
 the clamor of the arrogant intruders who have somehow
 managed to slip in uninvited.

Saucy youngsters protest loudly at any and everything,
 turning even on each other if their own freedom
 is threatened.

Gaily dressed belles watch with interest as individuals
 come and go,
  hoping to catch the eye of an unattached male.

A pair of lovers at a corner table are unaware of anyone else,
 his red crest shining
  as he offers the choicest bits from the table
  to his love.

SUDDENLY

the area is emptied
 by a cacophonous blast
 from a blue-clad policeman
  who patrols the neighborhood,

And once again,
  my backyard is deserted
 by all of those who dine
  in my restaurant for the birds.
An Interview with Dr. Howard Newell

JUFF has made a practice of interviewing a member of the Administration each issue both in the interest of informing the faculty of that area of Union and attempting to engender dialogue between the faculty and administrative offices. In the past Dr. Craig, Dr. Barefoot, Mr. Stewart, and Dr. Brewer have been the focus of attention. This year JUFF thought it appropriate for Dr. Howard Newell to have a chance to express his views in the relatively new position (January 1989) of Academic Vice President. Dr. Newell came to Union in 1982 from Murray State, KY, as Chairman of the Business Department. He oversaw the construction of the new Business building complex and is largely responsible for the success of that school in recent years.

JUFF: How would you describe the function of your office?

NEWELL: If I understand my responsibilities correctly, the person who holds the office of academic vice president is to be the chief academic officer at Union University. The chief academic officer should be the principal academic leader on campus. In this capacity, he/she must establish an environment which is conducive to high academic expectations and work cooperatively with the faculty and academic administrative team to achieve these results.

Establishing an environment which is conducive to high academic expectations requires that the academic vice president be an advocate for the faculty in those situations where the interests of the faculty are consistent with what is best academically for Union University.

JUFF: Do you consider yourself as an advocacy in behalf of the faculty or as an administrative director of the faculty?

NEWELL: I do not consider myself simply to be the chief salary/fringe benefits/working conditions negotiator on behalf of the faculty. Rather, my role is to be the chief advocate of high academic standards/expectations including the idea of leading/encouraging the faculty not to be content with the status quo. We are doomed to academic mediocrity when we become comfortable with our current results. I have concluded, in recent weeks, that I need to become a more forceful advocate of higher academic expectations and, therefore, in the faculty best interests, than I have been during the past two and one-half years.

JUFF: Do your feel pressures from both sides of the fence—the faculty and the President—in the performance of your duties? Explain.

NEWELL: The answer to this question is a hearty “yes” which, I believe, is indicative of the fact that we have a president who is alive and well and a faculty who is alive and well. If either party were dead, there would be no pressures. The objective is not to eliminate pressures; the objective is to manage these pressures (i.e., evidences of life) in such a way that the institution and those associated with it grow/mature in very healthy ways. The key is to successfully manage the pressures open communication between the parties involved.
JUFF: Do you see Union growing numerically or staying about the same in the next five years?

NEWELL: Union’s ability to grow numerically during the next five years depends on two critical factors. First, can we significantly increase our full-time, residential student body from areas beyond West Tennessee? Second, can we significantly increase our part-time day and evening enrollment? My conviction is that Union is prepared to accomplish both results. It would be in Union’s best interests academically to demographically and geographically diversify its student population even though at least for the next five years West Tennessee will continue to be our principal market.

JUFF: How would you rate Union’s students academically in comparison to, say, the students you taught at Murray State, a public institution?

NEWELL: As you are aware, Union has made excellent progress in recent years raising its mean ACT score for entering freshman. Because Union adheres to a minimum ACT requirement for entering freshman, we are able to avoid a situation where academic standards must be sacrificed to accommodate students with very low academic preparation. Personally, I hope we never become an academically elitist institution even though most of us, if given a choice, would readily “trade” a mid-range ACT student for a 30+ ACT student. My experience is that in many cases the mid-range ACT students turn out to be the best achievers. Additionally, it is a real joy/reward to experience first-hand in the classroom, studio, or laboratory the blossoming talents of a student who had never experienced the joy of learning.

JUFF: How would you compare academic freedom at Union with a public institution?

NEWELL: The academic freedom we experience at Union is certainly different than that experienced at most state-supported institutions. The difference or constraint upon our academic freedom is, of course, directly associated with the Christian/Baptist nature of Union University. I make no apologies for this; we are different because we have decided to be different. It is very important that all faculty and particularly potential faculty prior to employment, understand Union’s values and priorities and be willing to teach in an academic environment which is consistent with what Union stands for.

JUFF: What formulae do you use in determining faculty salaries?

NEWELL: The two principal factors used to determine faculty salaries are (a) the performance evaluations coming from department chairs and college/school deans and (b) equity adjustments for faculty whose salaries, for a number of reasons, are significantly out of line relative to their colleagues with similar credentials and experience. A third factor, not popular to discuss but in fact reality, is market conditions including Union’s desire to retain faculty with proven performance records.

JUFF: Is there a need for faculty to move away from or at least supplement the lecture method of instruction?

NEWELL: The answer is a resounding “YES.” All that I know about learning theory, although I am far from being an expert, is that once a knowledge base has been established, students learn more—and in many cases far more—when they become actively involved in the learning process. Art, music, and science faculty
know this well; some of us who come out of more lecture-oriented disciplines (particularly lecture-oriented in graduate school) have some real learning and retraining to do before we can become most effective in our instruction. Our job is not to impress students with our accumulated knowledge; rather, it is to inspire both as individuals and as members of a group or team. For an introduction to increasing student involvement, I would recommend Chapter 4 in Glenn Johnson’s *First Steps to Excellence In College Teaching* (on reserve under my name in the library).

**JUff:** What do you consider your most difficult decision(s) as Academic Vice President?

**NEWELL:** The most difficult situation for me to cope with is when two or more faculty or when faculty in two or more departments seemingly cannot get along with each other. I feel essentially helpless in these situations; certainly there appear to be no easy “fixes.” The best I know to do is to talk openly and candidly with all parties involved in the hope problems can be resolved or at least tensions reduced.

**JUff:** Do you enjoy administrative duties or do you long to return to the classroom?

**NEWELL:** This is a difficult question. On some days I thoroughly enjoy my administrative responsibilities; on other days I long for a return to the classroom. With the exception of grading papers, I greatly miss the close association, both inside and outside the classroom, with students which certainly must be the greatest reward associated with teaching. It is my full intention to return to full-time classroom teaching before retirement.

**JUff:** What, in your view, are the most pressing needs of Union University?

**NEWELL:** I would prefer not to answer this question. I think the answer should come from the President and/or Board of Trustees.

**JUff:** What image would you like to see this school become? maintain? drop?

**NEWELL:** I would like Union to become known, nationally and even internationally, as a school with a very strong academic reputation and as a school where the Gospel of Jesus Christ has not been watered down in a vain effort to achieve academic distinction. It is clear that there can be a real struggle and much conflict between high academic standards and a spiritual atmosphere on campus. Apparently, many schools have concluded that one goal (usually spiritual atmosphere) must be sacrificed to promote the achievement of the other goal. This does not have to happen; we must not let it happen. It will not happen if Union is careful in the selection and nurturing of its employees, particularly faculty. We must increasingly insist upon strong, well-prepared faculty who are equally strong in their commitment to Christ and to His church.
Jacques Futrelle of Georgia

by Ernest Pinson

One way to weaken the resistance of students to what they see as stodgy, old fashion literature is to incase it in a more modern context. One can, for example, describe *Oedipus the King* as one of the earliest murder mysteries written, and thus argue that the detective story is among the oldest forms of literature in existence. It is not too far fetched to make a case for *Oedipus* as a master detective in search of a master criminal. Hence, Oedipus, unbeknown to himself, is a detective in search of himself, and as such is therefore detective, victim, and criminal all in one. A case could also be made for master detectives in *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoyevsky, in *Les Miserables* by Hugo, in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* by Dickens, in *The Confidence Man* by Melville, and in any number of stories by Poe, Borges, or Chesterton.

The detective I have in mind is not as ancient as Oedipus; in fact he flourished as recently as 1915 AD. Nor is he a king, unless one can claim that being the “Supreme Intellect” is a “kingly” title. Nor is he cursed, except insofar as a “Thinking Machine” may assume a curse in absence of human feelings. Nor is the author a famous champion of literary contest like Sophocles, although I would like to argue that this little known Jacques Futrelle wrote detective fiction that rivaled writers like the Frenchman Francois Vodocq, the Englishman Arthur Conan Doyle, and the American Edgar Allen Poe at a time when the detective story matured.

Jacques Futrelle, the creator of this “Thinking Machine,” was born to French Huguenot parents in 1875, just southeast of Jackson in Pike County, Georgia. He died heroically while saving others when the Titanic sunk in the Atlantic ocean on that fateful night of April 15, 1912. He literally pushed his wife, mother, and others into life boats leaving no room for his own person to board.

I. The Thinking Machine Detective

Futrelle wrote 7 novels and 47 short stories. Some of his stories went down with the Titanic; others are lost in basements of warehouses among old newspapers and magazines where they were first published. Two of his novels and almost all of his stories feature a detective named Prof. Augustus Van Dusen, or just “The Thinking Machine.”

There can be little doubt that Futrelle’s detective owes much to Poe’s Auguste Dupin (notice the similarity of the first names—Auguste/Augustus) and to Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes. Indeed, the similarities of Dupin, Holmes, and Van Dusen are striking: all three detectives are endowed with super human brains, all three have peculiar idiocentric qualities, all three are unmarried, all three apparently have no family ties or travel restrictions, all three delight in solving the mystery ahead of the pack, all three tend to employ the same modus operandi (what we might call arm-chair detection wherein they do little physical lab work), and all three emphasize that the powers of deduction must be tempered with native ingenuity or imagination. Poe calls this last trait “ratiocination,” Doyle calls it “creative
deduction,” Futrelle calls it “the supreme intellect.” Of the three detectives only Holmes and Van Dusen use a side-kick or helper; Dupin prefers to work alone.

Although Holmes and Dupin offer more exaggerated idiocentric traits than does Van Dusen, they all have similar peculiarities in personality. Holmes, for example, is a good boxer, partakes of occasional cocaine, solves mysteries while playing his violin, smokes a meecham pipe, and delights in showing his mastery over Dr. Watson. Dupin similarly wears spectacles, reads voraciously, insists on interbreeding Calculus of Probabilities with poetic instinct, solves mysteries from his favorite arm chair, hides his meecham pipe, and delights in outshining the Paris Prefect. Likewise Van Dusen is 50 years old, yellow-haired, 5-foot-2 in 107 pound frame, blue slit-eyed, son-of-the-son-of an eminent German Scientist, wears a size 8 hat, smokes a pipe, and delights in outshining his side-kick. Just recently, we are told, he held the chair of philosophy in a great university, and has spent the last 35 years “devoted to logic, study, analysis of cause and effect, mental, material, and psychological. He is fond of repeating phrases like “2 + 2 = 4,” “nothing is impossible,” “simple logic can reveal anything,” “mind is master of all things,” and insists that “by the force of pure logic, one can receive one day of training in chess and beat the greatest chess masters at their own game.” “You are not a man; you are a brain—a machine—a thinking machine,” exclaims the world chess champion after he has just been beaten by our hero. These statements, as I will argue later, are points of satire on the deity of Logic.

II. Futrelle’s Distinctiveness

What makes Futrelle distinctive as a writer, then, are the following.

(1) I have already noted how Futrelle has developed an unusually eccentric and unique detective, who on a chart system I recently saw, was ranked among the top 5 detectives in fiction. (2) The second trait that makes Futrelle important is his approach. Writing at a time when it was fashionable to emphasize quick action, trite incidents, and criminal violence—devices later made popular by tough-talk detectives like Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Ellery Queen—Futrelle, instead, created plausible stories of ideas and analysis which contain insoluble problems, puzzles, locked rooms, and surprise endings. He helped reverse the trend toward violence and raised the level of detective fiction to intellectual duels along the lines of Dorothy Sayer and G. K. Chesterton. One critic, Benedict Freedman, has calculated that in Futrelle’s stories the percent of murder cases to other crimes is .421% compared to Poe’s .600%. I would add that even where murder is the crime, Futrelle is fascinated more with the solution than the murder itself. Thus mental tension rather than physical action becomes the focus of his plots. (3) Further, he emphasized (some would say over-emphasized) the power of precise reason as applied to seemingly insolvable problems. I shall argue later that Futrelle deliberately exaggerates the reasoning powers of his hero in order to promote an ambiguous result. For example, one is never sure if “The Thinking Machine” detective incarnates an idol of the super-sleuth, like Sherlock Holmes, or if the ultimate end is ridicule and satire of an overindulgent, big headed computer-like logic. His solutions to criminal puzzles, as we shall see, are always unique and often
border on the bizarre for purposes of attacking logic, rather than championing it as does Poe and Doyle. (4) Futrelle is often praised for what are called “locked room” mysteries; indeed with the exception of certain Sherlock Holmes’ stories, no other story is printed as often as Futrelle’s famous “Problem of Cell 13,” a story written in 1907 that set the tone and perimeters for the rest of his detective fiction. Almost all his stories use Van Dusen/“The Thinking Machine,” and at least half deal in some manner with a locked structure—prison cells, simultaneously locked hotel rooms, a dentist office, a boat at sea, a strip of highway stone walled on both sides, an impregnable science lab, a boarded-up antique house, a cave trap, even the escape of a 14 month-old baby alone from an isolated house. Most of the stories employ unusual means of escape such as an orangutan swinging a baby through the trees, a series of reflecting mirrors, or in the case of the Problem of Cell 13, an escape from a maximum security prison with only polished shoes, tooth powder, and $25. Such near-impossible escapes has earned Futrelle the title “Master of Closure.” Mystery critic/writer Howard Haycraft warns all writers to avoid the locked room formula. Since Futrelle, warns Haycraft, “only a genius can invest {locked room stories} with novelty of interest today.”

III. Satire

The final point that sets Futrelle apart is the subtle, satiric strain in his stories not always recognized by readers, yet it is his most important element as a writer. It was the well known Baltimore Sun critic H. L. Mencken who first claimed that Futrelle’s “true field was humor.” When I found that statement I had already read 20 stories by Futrelle, and I confess I didn’t agree. After reading 20 more stories and noting an apparent shift in Futrelle’s later works, I see Mencken’s point. The whole field of writers at the time—Vodocq, Poe, Doyle, Collins, Garboriau—wrote stark serious, often grim realism. In the case of Francois Vodocq, his Memories recount real life stories of how thievery, crime, and prison experience helped sell his knowledge to the Paris police, thus turning him into one of the most successful detectives of all time. In 18 years with the police he claims he placed 20,000 culprits behind bars, all faithfully recorded in four volumes totaling 1600 pages. As a result a whole generation of writers including Poe, Hugo Dumas, Collins, Dickens, Doyle, and Futrelle drew from these accounts of actual police records. Only Futrelle, however, saw the humor in a super criminal becoming a super detective, and he cleverly turned his sources into a satire of the intellect, of which several examples follow.

(1) We are told that the Thinking Machine’s size 8 hat is intended to emphasize his over-sized brain. Contrarily, an inept rival detective named Mallory is reduced to a size 6 hat, which, Futrelle says, “happily combined with his No. 11 shoe” to counterbalance his “wee” brain. How can that be read as simple realism?

(2) Furthermore, when Futrelle tells us that in a tense moment of debate, “the Supreme Intellect” squared off to duel with the “Thinking Machine” how are we to read those labels—“Supreme Intellect vs. The Thinking Machine?” Surely satire reigns here, and if the 18th Century of Enlightenment (of which, by the way, Futrelle was a student) is not being attacked, then he is at least taking shots at reasoning
powers assigned to supersleuth detectives like Holmes, Dupin, Johnny Dollar, Sam Spade, Father Brown.

(3) My third example pushes that theory even further. Van Dusen’s definition of simple bedtime reading, is “page after page of encyclopedic readings and discussions on ‘ologies’ and ‘isms’ with lots of figures in ‘em.” Now some of us may try a bit of Milton or Chaucer at bedtime, but encyclopedias, dictionaries, and discussions of “ologies” is not the usual food for snack reading.

(4) Another quick example of such satiric elements can be seen in the playfulness of Van Dusen’s title: “Prof. Augustus S. F. X. Van Dusen, PH.D., LL.D, F R S, M D, M R, M D S, M R S, ETC, ETC, ETC, ETC.” We are reminded that such degrees were bestowed upon Van Dusen by German, French, and Italian Universities in honor of his intellectual achievements. Is Futrelle satirizing the much abused system of handing out honorary degrees, or is he reinforcing the satire on our hero’s intellectual powers, thereby mocking any homage to a “supreme Being,” a “Thinking Machine,” or a “Master Creator?”

(5) Additional support for Futrelle’s humor can be observed in the character of Van Dusen itself, especially in contrast with Poe’s Dupin and Doyle’s Holmes. The latter two detectives are softer, more erudite, more delicate, more culturally developed, of higher economic class, certainly more human. In the case of “The Thinking Machine” the emphasis initially is on the word “machine”—the hard, exacting, mechanical, precision of cold logic. He is never flamboyant like Holmes, never in a hurry or consumed by passion, always in control. He is called “Thinking Machine” precisely because he doesn’t permit emotion of feeling to intervene.

(6) This brings up another play on the precision of logic. “2 plus 2 always equals 4” the Thinking Machine says again and again. This is countercommanded with the disclaimer, “Nothing is impossible.” Indeed the 2 + 2 = 4 equation is refuted in more baffling cases where the Thinking Machine tells us logic is limited and 2 + 2 sometimes = 5 when the creative imagination is mixed in. It becomes clear that Futrelle’s stories are not concerned with the impossible, but with tight situations. What makes his stories readable are elements of doubt which lead to mockery of deductive reason.

(7) Futrelle’s satire perhaps can be more readily examined in a story humorously, I hope, called “Baby Blake, Millionaire.” A 14 month old baby named Blake has been kidnapped from a house isolated in a snow storm. No footprints are found in the snow leading from the house, no break-in is evident, no trace of the kidnaper. It turns out that an “orang-outang” stole the baby while it was asleep, leaped through the window, swooped through branches and vines of trees with babe in arms, ended up blocks away on a fire escape without ever touching ground. The animal’s owner then sends a note demanding one million dollars ransom. By what stretch of logic can this story be termed realism? Surely satire is the intent here.

True enough, Poe’s Murders in the Rue Morgue has an orangutan in similar circumstances, but Poe has a believable solution, not a preposterous one, and he convinces us that he is serious, that he has faith in his detective accomplishing those feats in a real world. Not so with Futrelle and his “Thinking Machine.” In the examples I’ve sketched, the reader sees Futrelle telling his stories with more amusement and greater detachment; his arguments for the “supreme logic” of his
detective appears hollow and over wrought. The Enlightenment’s reliance on reason, logic, and science is surely in for a letdown. I'm not claiming for Futrelle a well worked out system of satire on the order of, say, Pope’s mock-epic, but I am suggesting that his satire set him apart from others, and that his untimely death at the age of 36 snuffed out a writer destined to be among the top 2 or 3 detective fiction writers of his generation.

IV. Conclusion: Can 2 + 2 = 3 Or 5?

What I have argued, then, is (1) that Futrelle has talent—subtle, subsurfaced, detached though it be—in the field of satire not found in the verisimilitude styles of Doyle, Poe, Chesterton; (2) that he is attacking both the 18th century concept of supremacy or rationalism and the detective fiction genre which champions it; and (3) that he sets up his satire by contrasting the mechanical, exacting, failsafe computer logic of The Thinking Machine against the mysterious, perplexing, often illogical and contradictory universe.

In the opening sentences of his first short story Futrelle set his course. His hero was to be a Brain, nothing else. But something along the way changed that. The Thinking Machine became a person with feelings and, lo, the human dilemma of head in conflict with heart comes to fruition. This absence of the capacity for human sympathy became the “real” subject of Futrelle’s acid pen. Rather than a tool for insight and accuracy, logic is seen by Futrelle as limiting and rigid. Clearly 2+2 will always equal 4 given the limits of human senses and our system of learning. But what a bore! It’s a deadend closure, a locked room that needs opening, a restriction of man’s self-awareness via the limits of reason. If 2+2 could equal 3 or 5, how much more exciting, open ended, creative, imaginative, and unlimiting life would be. Futrelle has launched an attack on the deity of “cogito ergo sum.”

*Parts of this presentation appear in a different format in Magill’s Critical Survey of Detective Fiction.*
Reflections On London And Its Environs

by Lyttele Givens

A bustling, crowded (especially during the summer days) city offering many opportunities to shatter your budget. Diverse and exciting possibilities exist for theater buffs ranging from Shakespeare to Christie and Webber at reasonable costs. Multitudes of matinees and night performances confer upon unwary individuals the likely prospect of theater fatigue.

Also, music concerts galore, ranging from classical Mozart and Strauss to rock. Regular tourist fare (Tower of London, St. Paul’s Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, British Museum, National Gallery of Art, Picadilly Circus etc.) simultaneously delights and exhausts the typical tourist. An outlying part of the city offers Henry the VIII’s Hampton Court Palace with its gorgeous garden and classical architecture; in another direction, the suburb of Hampstead with its Hampstead Heath and Kenwood House.

Charming places only an hour’s train/bus trip away beckons the adventurer. To the east, Canterbury with its cathedral (shades of Thomas a. Becket); Dover’s historic and dramatic castle (not to mention the white cliffs). Additionally, Hastings, where the famous 1066 battle was not fought (actually it transpired a few miles east at Battle). To the south, the coastal resort town of Brighton with the Brighton Pavilion (a kingly hideaway of the early nineteenth century rendered in an oriental style).

To the southwest, the ancient Saxon capital of Winchester; nearby on the Salisbury plain are the fascinating remnants of an ancient civilization, Stonehenge. Even further southeast lies the hills, valleys, villages and towns extolled by Thomas Hardy in his Westchester writings. Due west is the pristine 18th century town of Bath with its magnificent Roman ruins.

Attractions northwest of the city are world-famous, especially Oxford, Stratford-upon-Avon and the Cotswolds (villages such as Broadway, Stow-on-the-Wold, Lower Slaughter, and Chipping Campden famous for their stone buildings derived from wealth gained in the wool trade during the Middle Ages). Due north is Cambridge, a lovely town of approximately 100,000 population that embraces in its downtown area almost thirty colleges which have large open green areas (similar to parks) and medieval buildings.

In summary, it is a city and surrounding area where can be spent many an alluring day or week.
On Blazing New Trails

by Frank Lower

How does one know when the time has come

to end one endeavor and take up a new?

You ask all your friends, who smile and shrug;

You turn to the sages, but the answers are few.

It’s never easy to undo the past, forsake the present,

and turn your face to the future and the dare.

The dreams that you had when you came to this place,

though faced with delay are still there.

There are dreams, and there are DREAMS, each of us create.

Then comes the time when we have a choice to make.

Do I cling to this present dream, and stay in this place?

Do I pass through door to the DREAM I can take?

At this stage of my life, I continue the tale,

And boldly step forth to blaze a new trail.
Familial Rivalries In Shakespeare: Persons Poised On The Precipice

by Lillian Baggett

Familial malice generally is blamed for having set the stage for all subsequent social disorder (Selden 147), and the infamous Cain looms larger than life on that stage when he kills his brother Abel, thereby committing the first fratricide. Family rivalry has not abated since the days of Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers. The corridors of Time continue to overflow with the blood of brothers. Consumed by jealousy an unrepentant Cain sacrifices his brother upon an altar of hate. When this first murderer is asked by his Maker, “Where is Abel thy brother?” Cain responds, “I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen. 4:9). No sooner had Abel’s blood soaked the ground than the blood of other brothers widened that archetypal stain. And brothers continue to kill brothers even in the “Holy Land.”

William Shakespeare paints on a gigantic canvas characters in conflict with each other and/or with themselves. Shakespeare’s canvasses provide windows into the psyches of his characters, permitting his readers or playgoers to know them almost as well, and in some instances better, than they know their own families. These canvasses reflect intra/inter-family rivalries that eclipse by their dramatic intensity rivalries depicted in contemporary works of art.

Shakespeare’s canon contains brilliant instances of family rivalries—far too numerous to cite in this brief a paper. Consequently, this paper will explore familial rivalry in just two plays: King Lear and Hamlet, The Prince Of Denmark.

King Lear’s tragedy piled upon tragedy entices scholars to compare it with the Book of Job. However, King Lear, while highlighting Christian-like virtues, or the lack of them, is pagan. Its characters call upon the gods, not God, and they never ask, as did Christ on the cross, “My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). Contrariwise, in King Lear man forsakes man: father forsakes daughter; daughters forsake father; father forsakes son; and son forsakes father. Shakespeare reveals rivalry on a rampage and vanity pursuing vanity. From this perspective Shakespeare’s King Lear more closely resembles Ecclesiastes, the book of man “under the sun,” reasoning about life:

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever. (1:4)
The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. (1:9)
For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun? (6:12)
For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. (7:20)
Professor Arthur Kirsch of the University of Virginia sees “Christian evocations in the pagan world of King Lear” (169) in his “The Emotional Landscape of King Lear” and hears “unmistakable New Testament echoes” (168), which he associates mostly with Cordelia. He invites attention to the King of France’s words to Cordelia just after Lear has disowned her:

  Fairest Cordelia, thou art most rich, being poor;  
  Most choice, forsaken; and most loved, despised:  
  Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon. (I.i. 250-52).

and says that they allude to 2 Corinthians 6:10: “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” The oxymora are indeed similar. Kirsch (169) likens Cordelia’s words to her father upon her return from France: “O dear father, / It is thy business that I go about” (IV.iii.23-24) to Christ’s words to Mary and Joseph when they find their son in the temple: “And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49)

Another critic, Professor Stephen Booth of the University of California, Berkeley, perceives Cordelia not as a Christ figure but as a Cinderella (110). His analogy is somewhat flawed; for example, although Goneril and Regan certainly are wicked, they are not stepsisters. Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan share the bond of blood though not the bond of love. In comparing Cordelia to her father, Booth states, “Cordelia’s premises do not present a clear antithesis to the faults in Lear’s. Her ideas are not only a variation on Lear’s; she too thinks of affection as a quantitative, portable medium of exchange for goods and services” (110). This “Cordelia-Cinderella” stands mute amidst the soon to be ashes of her incinerated world. When she does find her tongue, she speaks the truth but so dispassionately until her words have an effect diametrically opposed to the one she seeks:

  Good my lord / You have begot me, bred me, lov’d me:  
  I return those duties back as are right fit,  
  Obey you, love you, and most honor you.  
  Why have my sisters husbands, if they say  
  They love you all? Happily, when I shall wed,  
  That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry  
  Half my love with him, half my care and duty  
  Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,  
  [to love my father all]. (I.i.95-102)

Instead of divining sincerity in Cordelia’s response, her father hears indifference, and since he has loved her more than he has loved anyone else, he is deeply offended, so much so that he immediately disinherits her and withholds the dowry he has promised the suitor who marries Cordelia. Spinsterhood could have been the price Cordelia would pay for the unintended affront to Lear. For instance, as soon as the Duke of Burgundy, one of Cordelia’s suitors, learns Lear has no plans for revoking his edict, he bids Cordelia adieu. Another suitor, the King of France, recognizes Cordelia’s true worth: he knows that the virtuous Cordelia will be “a crown” (Prov. 12:4) to him; that “her price is far above rubies” (Prov. 31:10); and that “she will do him good and not evil all the days of her life” (Prov. 31:12); therefore, he invites Cordelia, “dow’rless daughter thrown to my chance” (I.i.256), to
be his queen. She accepts his proposal, but before departing her father’s palace, the dutiful daughter tells her sisters that she knows “what [they] are” (I.i.269), and implores them to “love well [their] father” (I.i.271).

Although Cordelia, as has been pointed out by Professor A. C. Bradley, “speaks scarcely more than a hundred lines . . . , no character in Shakespeare is more absolutely individual or more ineffaceably stamped on the memory of his readers” (26). Cordelia has given the wrong answer for all the right reasons to her father’s “Which of you shall we say doth love us most?” (I.i.51). Lear, eager to hand over to his three daughters the reins of power, nonetheless desires to maintain some hold over them. Like other unenlightened parents of yesterday and today, instead of earning his children’s love or asking for their love, Lear demands it. His emotional rape is spurned by the daughter who loves him the most, but it is overlooked by Regan and Goneril, neither of whom values integrity.

Every woman who experiences the tug at her heart when she leaves her parents and her childhood home for a new life with a man who compared to her family seems a stranger identifies with Cordelia’s plight. To her family, and perhaps to herself, her husband-to-be seems a rival for her affection formerly reserved for “family.” Janet Adelman, editor of Twentieth Century Interpretations of King Lear, sees a Cordelia “fighting for the right to a love separate from her love for her father” (7).

Depth of feeling rather than deafth of feeling prevents’s Cordelia’s offering a glib response to Lear’s question, for she says, “Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth” (I.i.91-92). When Cordelia leaves Britain, goodness accompanies her, and evil in the form of her two sisters, Regan and Goneril, remains behind to torment Lear. Soon these monstrous daughters renounce their father. Once Lear relinquishes his throne, he strips himself of any further power, and like the mythological emperor who found he was wearing no clothes, Lear discovers that divested of his royal robes and crown he stands exposed to the elements, naked and forced to brave the storm alone.

Hearing of her father’s plight and unwilling for him to brave the storm alone, Cordelia returns to Britain; when Lear sees her, he says:

Be your tears wet? yet, faith. I pray, weep not;
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know you do not love me; for your sisters
Have (as I do remember) done me wrong;
You have some cause, they have not. (IV.vii.69-72)

Cordelia magnanimously replies, “No cause, no cause” (73). Lear has turned his back on this daughter, he has disinherited her, and he has robbed her husband of a promised dowry, but the generous Cordelia feels “no cause” to do her father “wrong.” Lear, buffetèd by the winds of misfortune and assailed by the ingratitude of two of his daughters, now stands on the precipice of the unknown, expecting the daughter he has wronged to shove him into the abyss. Instead she embraces him, absolving him of any offense, and helps him shoulder his misfortunes.

Family rivalry destroys another family in King Lear. The Earl of Gloucester, deceived by his bastard son Edmund, believes that his legitimate son Edgar stands ready to betray him. Gloucester has loved Edgar as much as Lear has loved Cordelia, and his is a similar sorrow when he is duped into believing that Edgar is false.
Shortly after Edmund shows him a letter which he claims that Edgar wrote, Gloucester says:

These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us...love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinees; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father...there's son against father: the King falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time: machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorder, follow us disquietly to our graves. (I.ii.103-14)

Gloucester's assessment of his environment differs dramatically from Charles Dickens' assessment of the tumultuous setting of his A Tale Of Two Cities, even though they share some similarities. Both works involve Britain and France, but in King Lear the revolution occurs not in France but in Britain. Gloucester's "We have seen the best of our time" closely resembles Dickens' "It was the best of times," but Dickens' scope is much more expansive. Gloucester limits his statement to "the best of our [italics mine] time," which he says is over; his account is dismal indeed because he does not envision better days before he dies. Betrayed by his son Edmund, Gloucester has turned on Edgar, his true son who loves him and wishes him no harm. Booth mentions the irony in Gloucester's recognizing "Lear's blindness about Cordelia" but failing to comprehend his own blindness towards "Edmund's wickedness and Edgar's virtue" (109-110).

Gloucester's baseborn son, Edmund the Machiavellian, adroitly manipulates him into believing that Edgar, the legitimate son, is base. Professor John F. Danby points out that "bastard" is "the Elizabethan equivalent of 'outsider,'" and that Edmund is "outside society,...outside Nature,...outside Reason" (53). Edmund wants it all and is willing to go to any lengths, including committing patricide and fratricide, to get it. Compulsively competitive, Edmund lunges toward what is not rightfully his: Edgar's inheritance, the love of two married women, and a kingdom. This man who simultaneously repels and entices bears considerable resemblance to Milton's Satan. Perhaps this ambivalence evolves from what Danby calls Edmund's "tremendous gusto," and his "energy, emancipation, a right-minded scorn of humbug." Danby compares Edmund's courage to that of a "lissome...tiger" (55). In contemplating this tiger, one recalls William Blake's rhetorical question: "Tyger, Tyger! burning bright / In the forest of the night, / What immortal hand or eye / Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?" The speaker in Blake's "The Tyger" asks: "Did he who made the lamb make thee?" (lines 21-24). Paraphrasing one might ask himself, "Did he [Gloucester] who made Edgar make Edmund too?" "Did he [Lear] who made Cordelia make Goneril and Regan too?" In Shakespeare's King Lear both the lamb and the tyger go to their deaths.

Although Edmund [Shakespeare's tyger] has considered his actions self-initiated, he has in fact relinquished control to the Ring Master of "competition, difidence, glory," Thomas Hobbes' three principal causes of quarrel in human nature: the impulse to acquire, to provide for one's security, to extend one's prestige" (cited in Danby 52-53). Edmund the tyger discovers that "the paths of glory lead but to the grave" (Gray 559).
Professor G. Wilson Knight refers to "the fantastic incongruity of parent and child opposed." Regan and Goneril unite to defeat their father, but Edmund severs their fidelity to each other when the married sisters vie for the love of that villain. The ensuing rivalry leads to their deaths. Goneril poisons Regan before stabbing herself to death. Edgar kills his wicked half-brother, but before Edmund dies, he revokes the death sentences he has passed against Lear and Cordelia; however, this bit of charity from the bastard comes too late for Cordelia who has already been killed. Yale University’s Professor Maynard Mack says that "man’s tragic fate, as King Lear presents it, comes into being with his entry into relatedness, which is his entry into humanity" ("The World of King Lear" 65). Mack’s “When we come crying hither, we bring with us the badge of all our misery; but it is also the badge of the vulnerabilities that give us access to whatever grandeur we achieve” (69) echoes Innocent III’s De Contemptu Mundi’s “We came crying hither. . . . When we are born, we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools” (114), and Lear’s rendering of those words in Act IV, vi., 183-84. Elated that Cordelia loves him, Lear displays grace under pressure when he extends this lighthearted invitation to her:

Come let’s away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i’ th’ cage;
When thou dost ask me blessing, I’ll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness. So we’ll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
As gilded butterflies. . . . (V.iii.8-13)

The tragic figure of Lear is the embodiment of everyone who has lost someone dearer to him than life itself; whether that loss occurs as the result of rivalry over a kingdom, or an inheritance, or simply the inevitable consequence of having lived. Kirsch speaks of “the universality of this experience [death] and of its immeasurable pain” (170). The pain proves to be too much for Lear who follows his daughter in death as she had endeavored to follow him in life. In his provocative article “On the Greatness of King Lear,” Booth refers to Lear’s entrance with Cordelia in his arms as "the most terrifying five minutes in literature...for the audience" (101). Rife with rivalries, King Lear’s rivals litter the stage with bodies in the closing scenes. Death claims all three sisters, as well as the evil half-brother. Too late Lear learns that love is far more precious than kingdoms; too late Gloucester learns to differentiate between true and counterfeit love; and too soon Edgar, the survivor, experiences the emptiness that so often accompanies victory.

Although Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Prince Of Denmark, is a revenge play, the revenge flows from intra/inter-family rivalries. Rivalry sets in motion the domino effect that ends in the fall of the play’s most important characters as well as the fall of Denmark to Norway.

Family rivalry causes Claudius to murder his brother Hamlet. This Cain-like action accomplishes several objectives: Claudius wins the crown he covets, he satisfies his ambition, and he marries the lovely Gertrude, his brother’s widow. Briefly it appears that Claudius has murdered with impunity, but then his brother’s ghost appears and poisons the air of Denmark with his tale of murder most foul. Mack says, “The juice he [Claudius] pours into the ear of the elder Hamlet is a combined poison and disease. . . . From this fatal center, unwholesomeness spreads
out till there is something rotten in all Denmark” (“The World of Hamlet,” 58). Sickness and disease metaphors abound throughout the play. Poison begets poison and that poison begets death. The original murder [Claudius’ murder of King Hamlet], which occurs in a garden and leads to more deaths, resembles Satan’s miasmic intrusion into the Garden of Eden and man’s subsequent fall. Whereas the Edenic fall was symbolic or figurative, in Hamlet the fall is literal, with bodies falling all over the stage.

Although Hamlet is distressed when his mother, Gertrude, marries Claudius so soon after King Hamlet’s death, it is not until Hamlet speaks with his father’s ghost that he views his Uncle Claudius as an intended murder victim. However, once the older Hamlet reveals Claudius’ role in his death, Hamlet begins to consider ridding the world of his and his father’s rival for Gertrude’s love. Now he has a stronger reason for despising his uncle. Now his actions will be justified by his commission to murder that “smiling, damned villain!” (I.v.106). This despicable villain, according to Professor Fredson Bowers, has “killed [Hamlet’s] father, whored his mother, popped in between the election and his hopes” (90), and if that were not enough, the villainous uncle plots the young Hamlet’s assassination.

Professor Ernest Jones speaks of Hamlet’s “long, repressed” desire to take his father’s place in his mother’s affection,” which Jones says is “stimulated to unconscious activity by the sight of someone usurping this place exactly as he himself had once longed to do. . . . This someone was a member of the same family, so that the actual usurpation further resembled the imaginary one in being incestuous. Without his being in the least aware of it these ancient desires are ringing in his mind...” (108). Consumed by jealousy and righteous indignation, Hamlet watches his mother and uncle enjoy each other’s company. Unable and unwilling to stem his grief over the loss of his father as readily as have Gertrude and Claudius, Hamlet stands silhouetted in sorrow and muses:

But two months dead, nay, not so much...
So excellent a king...so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. . . .

Frailty, thy name is woman! (I.ii.138-42)

A few months earlier Claudius had berated Hamlet for continuing to grieve for his father: “How is it that the clouds still hang on you?...to persevere / In obstinate condolement is a course / of impious stubbornness, tis unmanly grief” (I.ii.66; 92-94). And Gertrude in turn had reminded her son: “Thou know’st ’tis common, all that lives must die, / Passing through nature to eternity” (I.ii.72-73).

As Marcellus says in Act I, “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark” (iv. 89). The ghost of the murdered king walks abroad, frightening a few former subjects and alarming his son by describing his assassination and commissioning young Hamlet to avenge his father’s death. Thus a rival rises from the grave to demand revenge. He pours into his son’s ear a poison quite as deadly as Claudius had poured into his brother’s kingly ear. The newly-commissioned son, already deeply saddened by his father’s death and by the unseemly haste in which his mother had remarried, must now set aside his grief, forsake his scholarly pursuits, alienate his
beloved Ophelia, and devise a scheme that will end in the appeasement of his father’s ghost: regicide! The ghost recreates the murder scene:

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother’s hand
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch’d,
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin…
No reck’ning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head. (I.v.74-76; 77-78)

Earlier in that scene, the ghost has told Hamlet, “My hour is almost come / When I to sulph’rous and tormenting flames / Must render up myself” (I.v.5-7). The elder Hamlet has lost his heavenly paradise as well as his earthly kingdom. Bereft of hope and obsessed by his monomaniacal desire to be avenged, this man recoils back from the grave to destroy his survivors—loved ones as well as enemies.

Instead of assuring Hamlet that Gertrude played no role in his murder, the elder Hamlet just says, “Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive / Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven…” (I.v.85-86). Thus Hamlet must act while believing that his own mother had conspired against his father. No wonder he begins to think of Denmark as a prison and to marvel “that one may smile, and smile, and be a villain!” (I.v.108). In accepting his father’s commission Hamlet forfeits his own freedom, never to regain it. He feigns insanity to accomplish his deadly purpose, but the many tragedies that occur almost shove him over the brink into insanity. When he leaps into Ophelia’s grave, he never really emerges alive. He goes through the motions of living, but he no longer prizes life: “I lov’d Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers / Could not with all their quantity of love / Make up my sum” (V.i.269-70).

Mack sees this scene as pivotal, noting that following the grave scene, Hamlet is “ready for the final contest of mighty opposites.” He states that Hamlet now “accepts the world as it is, the world as a duel, in which whether we know it or not, evil holds the poisoned rapier and the poisoned chalice waits; and...if we win at all, it costs not less than everything” (“The World of Hamlet” 63). This writer feels, however, that an earlier scene, the “To Be, Or Not to Be” soliloquy, determines Hamlet’s course. Indeed, William Butler Yeats’ “Why should we honor those who die on the field of battle? A man may show as reckless a courage in entering into the abyss of himself” seems especially applicable to Hamlet, for in his famous soliloquy he explores the abyss of self and rises from his search with renewed determination to destroy his father’s and his rival.

Although Hamlet welcomes an opportunity to kill Claudius, murderer of his father and thief of his mother, he feels overwhelmed by the ghost’s command and he wishes that circumstances were different: “The time is out of joint—O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!” (I.v.188-89). David Kesten observes that Hamlet reluctantly finds that revenge is a “desperate mode of imitation, avenging wrongs with wrongs. The revenger is prevented from originating an action. He is allowed only to re-act to—and to re-enact—the original crime” (113). When Hamlet holds up before Gertrude and Claudius the mirror [the play within the play], he sees himself reflected therein. He and Claudius are both murderers or would-be murderers. Shortly after this unsettling scene, Hamlet hears a sound behind the curtains of his mother’s bedchamber and thinking it is Claudius lurking there, he stabs at the curtain and kills the unfortunate Polonius, guilty only of nosiness, pomposity, and
loquaciousness—all irritating traits but hardly sufficient cause to be murdered. Now Hamlet’s hands, like Claudius’ hands, are stained with blood.

Boris Pasternak, Russian translator of Hamlet, views the Play not as “a drama of weakness...but of duty and self-denial” (cited in Levin, 80). In order to kill his father’s rival, Hamlet must lose everything, including the love and life of his beloved Ophelia and his own life. Rivalry between two brothers results in a rottenness in Denmark. Each brother precipitates the deaths of several people. Each brother has tunnel vision and each little cares that his actions will incur misery and death. Hamlet the avenger—son and nephew—is swept along by the tide of events as he moves toward the final reckoning. Poison—the poison of rivalry at its most despicable level—leaves yet another stage strewn with bodies. Sounding like an echo of his father’s ghost, the young Hamlet, as he is dying, speaks to Horatio and asks to be remembered:

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story. (V.ii.346-49)

Hamlet implores his friend not to join him in death but to live and tell his story. Referring specifically to King Lear, but applying equally as well to Hamlet, Mack says that King Lear “begs us to seek the meaning of our human fate not in what becomes of us, but in what we become. Death...is miscellaneous and commonplace; it is life whose quality may be made noble and distinctive. Suffering we all recoil from; but we know it is a greater thing to suffer than to lack the feelings and virtues that make it possible to suffer” (“The World of King Lear,” 69).

No one can see the tragic figures of Lear, Gloucester, and Hamlet on the stage without being very much aware that these figures’ feelings ran deep and that their “virtues...[made] it possible to suffer,” even to suffer the angst of familial rivalry. According to Mack, “tragedy never tells us what to think; it shows us what we are and may be” (69). Therein lies the palpable poignancy one experiences when he perceives the unrealized heights these characters could have reached had they not fallen while poised on the precipice. Lear’s words regarding Cordelia say it all:

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life
And thou no breath at all? Thou’lt come no more
Never, never, never, never, never. (V.iii.307-09)
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Yeats, William Butler.
Photographs by Frank Lower
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