

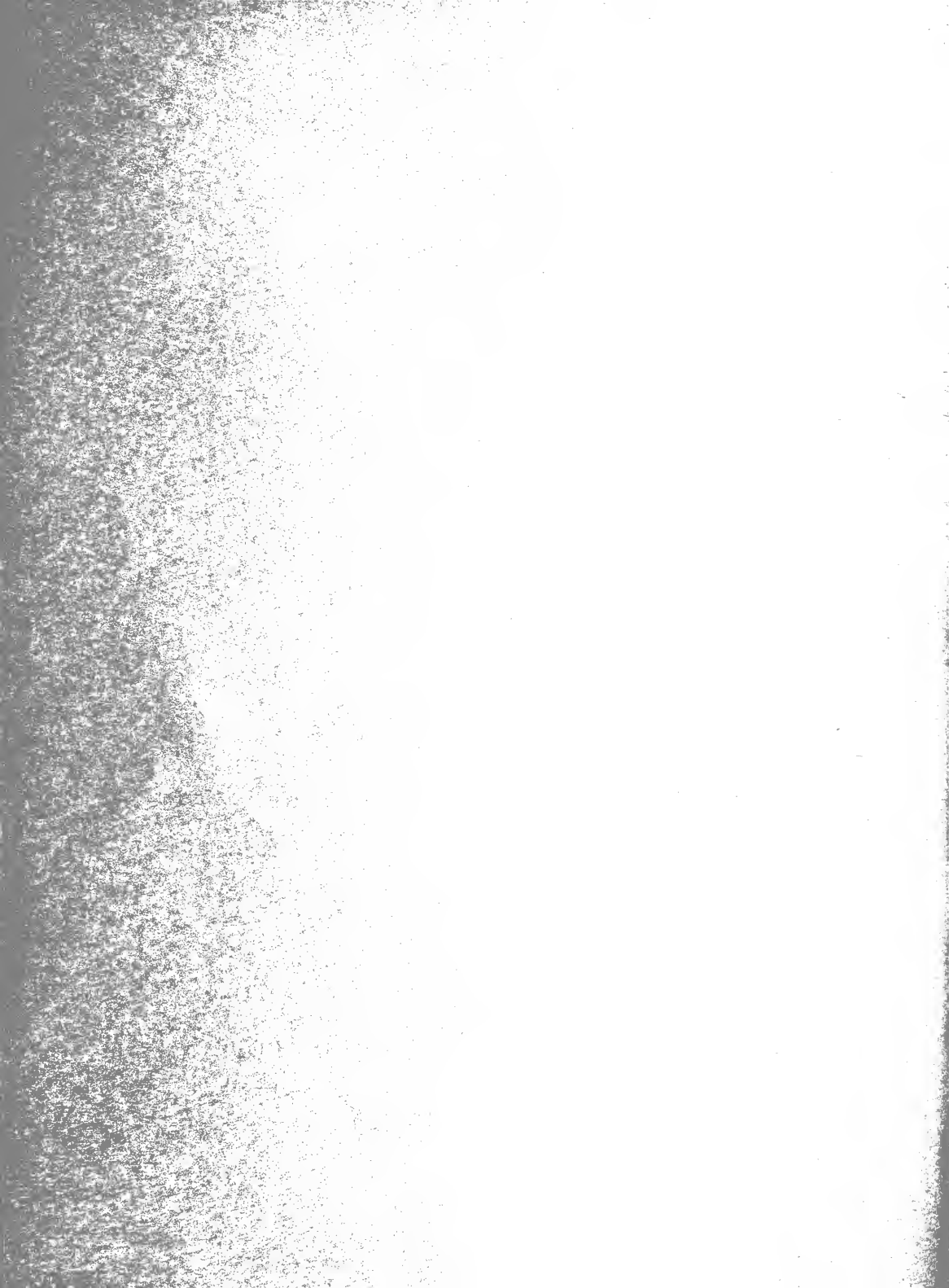


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1901 - 1962



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The Hunt  
To Tempe Franklin

It is said  
There was idiocy in the murmurs she heard  
Blotting the pre-dawn dark,  
And dark forms bent to the water-troughs  
In beast odor stables—  
Forms swirling in savage motion  
Or frozen in waxen poses, broken  
Only by the blood beat.

The morning of the hunt:  
And the sand and pine wooded land  
Were clotted by ugly wind shapes.  
She rode a black horse  
Drifting through shadow  
Riding in the hunt as one beast-shape  
Stalking another

As if a burial procession  
Moved across the silent land.  
And squealing dogs spun  
In long circles  
As the dark forms of the wood watched  
the game  
That lingered in long morning shadows

And then  
To hear the rifle shot  
Spattering the sand—  
Seeming as stones indifferently tossed  
In a day wind

Long nights ago  
She stared at old hoofs beating into the sand  
Monotonous silent hoof sounds against the sand  
Shadow poses merging in drifting  
fading patterns  
Until they became wooden things  
Of every night, over over

And in the black, secret night  
With the summer heat-winds gutting  
The land, she hid her breast  
In pale white gauze,  
And her breath sighed in wind-ripples  
As she stroked her husband's thighs  
With dutiful fingers  
As some long dead child.

ANNE DAUGHTRIDGE

perception

His eyes imprison  
the blue of the original sea  
the black of the unborn universe  
the promise of Adam  
And speak of them in silence,  
While his mouth speaks lies.

TINA HILLQUIST

Woodcut  
Alice Davenport



Man is both isolated and united by social and natural forces, and because existence outside the bounds of these forces is impossible, it seems, at times, that man's life becomes no more than a continual struggle against an uncontrollable power which usurps his freedom, directs his fate. Each individual, fighting alone, conducts a personal campaign against private obstacles, but the solitary battles often interweave and connect, irrespective of time and place. Some who are engaged in this battle are doomed from the beginning, while others find success of some measure—some cling to each other, unable or unwilling to struggle alone, while others grasp at aloneness and separation with equal need, but all are unable to escape the forces which haunt them, forever present and unceasing.

Faulkner's *The Wild Palms* is concerned with the story of three people pitted against such forces—two of whom struggle collectively against social forces which strive to separate and destroy their alliance, and a third who, ten years earlier, battles the natural, unslacked power of a monster river in flood. The lives of Charlotte Rittenmeyer, Harry Wilbourne and an unidentified convict are distinct and separate existences, located in distinct and separate time and space, but, like currents in the rampaging, unleashed river, these lives, through their common purposes and individual desires, cross and intermingle, both complementing and contrasting each other in their strange similarity. Faulkner skillfully presents the stories of these three characters, interweaving their plights in such a way that the basic differences between the two individual tales are alternately accentuated and demolished, producing a novel which illustrates paradoxically, the isolation and unity of all mankind; and in doing so, he creates a work which is comprised of two stories which, separated, are independent, and which combined, lend support and strength to each other.

The *Wild Palms* sections of the novel are concerned with the story of the doomed love affair of Charlotte Rittenmeyer and an intern, Harry Wilbourne. It is the tale of two characters battling the unconquerable forces of society, convention and reality itself. The history of their affair revolves around a continual act of flight—first from the intruding wall of Charlotte's marriage and Harry's career, and later from similar confining situations of security and convention which inevitably drive the two lovers first from the civilized world, then from the natural world, until ultimately, in their flight, they are driven from each other. Constantly defeated by materialistic needs, continually haunted by the enclosing arms of a modern world which prevents the lovers from existing in the romantic state for which they doggedly search, Charlotte and Harry are doomed from the beginning, and Faulkner accentuates the painfulness of their failure by revealing, in the opening chapter of the novel, the destruction of these two characters, and by further emphasizing this failure and disintegration through flashbacks which trace their struggle and flight from its inception to its hopeless conclusion.

Charlotte Rittenmeyer is a young woman who possesses a unique hardness and strength—a firm and unyielding source of power and independent vigor which is perhaps the one factor that prevents her affair with Harry from collapsing from the beginning, for, in contrast, Harry is more malleable, less an active agent, more prone to passive intellectual contemplation of action than the vibrant, sensuous Charlotte. From its origin, their affair is based on physical, more than emotional, elements—and it is a sensual and usually violent physical desire which binds Charlotte and Harry together, though Charlotte, and not Harry, is the most visible partner, for her love for Harry is demonstrated best only through a unity which is fierce and intense in its entire composition.

In the beginning of the novel, Charlotte is shown at the end of her flight, waiting for certain death, and she is described as "... the dark-haired woman with queer hard yellow eyes in a face whose skin was drawn thin over prominent cheekbones and a heavy jaw (the doctor called it sullen at first, then he called it afraid), young . . ." sitting in "... that complete immobile abstraction from which even pain and terror are absent, in which living creatures seem to listen to and even watch some one of its own flagging organs . . ." Her neighbor, the doctor, realizes that she has been destroyed in some way by "Something which the entire race of men, males, has done to her or she believes has done to her," although he cannot fathom just to what level of destruction she has fallen. In the flashbacks which occur later, however, Charlotte is described, often more through her actions than through her appearance, as she has been before her destruction.

Meeting her for the first time, Harry characterizes her through a description of her eyes: "He saw that her eyes were not hazel but yellow, like a cat's, staring at him with a speculative sobriety like a man might, intent beyond mere boldness, speculative beyond staring." She is broad, plain, with a wide and sturdy air, yet quick and lithe as a panther, hard, almost virile. She is an artist who creates objects which are "... something you can touch, pick up . . . that you can look at the behind side of, that displaces air and displaces water and when you drop it, it's your foot that breaks and not the shape." When she makes love to Harry, she gives herself violently, not surrendering, but conquering. "She came and put her arms around him, hard, striking her body against him hard, not in caress but exactly as she would grab him by the hair to wake him up from sleep . . . 'I like bitching and making things with my hands.'" She creates art which is "... elegant, bizarre, fantastic, and perverse," and she views everything through a "... ruthless and almost unbearable honesty." Willing to leave all security, all convention, to abandon her home and her children, Charlotte explains herself to Harry with real insight, saying,

... because the second time I ever saw you I learned what I had read in books but I never had actually believed: that love and suffering are the same thing and that the value of love is the sum of what you have to pay for it and any time you get it cheap you have cheated yourself.

She is filled with "... wild, bright passion," and with an animal-like, sensuous, passionate vigor, and she irrationally seeks a world of natural, uninhibited elements, physically battling all who restrain her impulsive, sexual and erratic flight, struggling even with Harry, whom she loves not tenderly, but fiercely, with wild abandon.

Harry, in direct contrast, is sacrificed to the blazing passion and control which Charlotte exerts over him. He is powerless before her, and in the flight to unreality, is destroyed by the force of Charlotte's domination which he willfully accepts while, at the same time, recognizing the futility of her search, the hopelessness and savage danger of their erotic alliance. Wilbourne realizes that "You are born submerged in anonymous lockstep with the teeming anonymous myriads of your time and generation; you get out of step once, falter once, and you are trampled to death." He knows that there is a part of Charlotte which loves nothing, no man, and he knows that it is not so much him that she loves, but love itself. He is but the agent through which her worship of love may be revealed. Charlotte, again ruthlessly honest, says, "Yes. It's love. They say love dies between two people. That's wrong. It doesn't die. It just leaves you, goes away, if you are not good enough, worthy enough . . . you're the one that dies", and in saying thus, reveals the basic reason for their passionate flight, for they must, she feels,



be constantly worthy enough, continually strong enough to keep love. Love then, is a struggle, a battle between forces which strive to prevent love, and individuals who must constantly forestall love's departure through sheer strength and natural worth.

For a while, Harry exists "... in a drowsy and foetuslike state, passive and almost unresentful in the womb of solitude and peace," with Charlotte, but the abortion which he is driven to perform on her destroys their last chance of survival, and slowly he admits, finally accepts their doomed fate. He has understood from the beginning, deep in his mind, that they were doomed, for when Charlotte cries,

Hold me! Hold me hard, Harry! This is what it's for, what it all was for, what we're paying for: so we could be together, sleep together every night: not just to eat and evacuate and sleep warm so we can get up and eat and evacuate in order to sleep warm again! Hold me!

Harry can only think "God . . . God help her. God help her." Harry recognizes that they are doomed, is aware of his weakness, but still he flees with Charlotte from convention and respectability, for he says, "... crows and sparrows get shot out of trees or drowned by flood . . . but not hawks. And maybe I can be the consort of a falcon, even if I am a sparrow." And he knows that he has waited too long, for he says, "... twenty-seven is too long to wait to get out of your system what you should have rid yourself of at fourteen or fifteen or maybe even younger," he is trapped, and unwilling to isolate himself from Charlotte's compulsive force. Living first in Chicago, the modern and thriving city, which ironically becomes "... the dark and bitten jungles of the savages," Charlotte and Harry soon flee from every connection with society, running first to the Wisconsin countryside, later to a half-deserted Utah mining camp, forced finally to the Mississippi Gulf and to death, which is also ironical since Charlotte, in the beginning of the novel, says to Harry,

I love water . . . that's where to die. Not in the hot air, above hot ground . . . The water, the cool, to cool you quick so you can sleep, to wash out of your brain and out of your eyes and out of your blood all you ever saw and thought and felt and wanted and denied.

Finally, jailed, and alone after Charlotte's death, Harry is offered freedom by Rat, Charlotte's husband, "... the man who had been right always and found no peace in it," but he refuses escape through the poison which Rat brings him, for "... when she became not then half of memory became not and if I become not then all of remembering will cease to be—Yes, he thought, between grief and nothing I will take grief."

The Old Man sections of the novel revolve around the story of a convict's battle with an overpowering natural force—that of the great 1927 Mississippi River flood. Unnamed and unidentified except for the fact that he became a prisoner through theft, not for money or power, but because he believed, in a child-like, innocent way what the detective and crime magazines told him, the convict is, nevertheless, perhaps the most genuine character in the novel. Tall, dark, quiet, calm, humorless in his outlook, yet comic in his simplicity, the convict spends days aboard a small skiff, accompanied by a pregnant woman, for whom he delivers a baby, battling steadily the fury of a flood into which he was swept unwillingly, wishing simply to return to the security of his prison, wanting only that he be relieved of the burden which the woman imposes. He flees to security and regimented order, not *from* it, as Charlotte and

Harry do, and his flight carries with it not the doom and inevitable destruction of the two lovers, but a quiet humor and a warm, sometimes endearing pathos.

In many ways, the two stories of battle and flight, though contrasting in place, time and circumstance, resemble, even complement each other. Although one begins with destruction, and the other with a prelude to disorder, there is yet a definite parallel between occurrences, for in the second sections of both stories, the three characters are swept away by uncontrollable forces—Charlotte and Harry leaving behind convention and safety, the convict swept out on the flooded river, and away from the security of his imprisonment. In the third sections, the individual flights of each character are continued, with the lovers leaving Chicago for Wisconsin, and later fleeing to Utah, and with the convict's further battle with the raging flood, and his delivering of the baby, just, in ironic contrast, when Harry is debating about performing Charlotte's abortion. In the fourth sections of the novel, the lovers are forced to abandon Utah, their present haven, and are confronted by the failure of Charlotte's abortion, so that they depart to the Gulf where Charlotte waits to die, while the convict, in vivid contrast, is rescued from the flood and enters, for a brief period, the only haven from the world which is permitted him, in which he lives with a cajun in a completely primitive world, and is allowed perfect freedom, allowed for once to receive rewards for his work, offered peace and isolation. The two stories become similar once more with the fifth and final sections, wherein Charlotte dies and Harry is tried and jailed, completely lost and destroyed, and where the convict surrenders himself, only to find his sentence extended, his freedom deprived him.

Faulkner's descriptions of the river are full of strong and vibrant imagery. It is, at first, "... not innocent, but bland. It looked almost demure. It looked as if you could walk on it." Its movement is profound, full of strength and silent power, and its voice only a "... deep, faint subaqueous rumble." It is "... de Old Man," who, for an isolated period of time, completely dominates the convict's life, just as violently as love and sexual compulsion dominate the lives of Charlotte and Harry. To the convict

It merely seemed . . . that he had accidentally been caught in a situation in which time and environment, not himself, was mesmerized; he was being toyed with by a current of water going nowhere, beneath a day which would wane toward no evening; when it was done with him it would spew him back into the comparatively safe world he had been snatched violently out of . . .

The convict's attitude is fatalistic, simple, yet profound, and his feelings toward his passenger best reflect this simplicity, for he would do anything to "... surrender his charge . . . and turn his back on her forever, on all pregnant and female life forever and return to the monastic existence of shot guns and shackles where he would be secure from it." Unlike Harry's complete domination by sex, the convict flees from sex, wishing only to relinquish the burden it places upon him. Yet he is comic in his attitude, for he says "And this is what I get. This, out of all the female meat that walks, is what I have to be caught in a runaway boat with."

Only once does he find a true haven, one which is completely isolated from the external world, but like Charlotte and Harry, this natural world is transient in its lovely primitiveness. For a while, however, he is in a house

. . . set in that teeming and myriad desolation, enclosed and lost within the furious embrace of flowing mare earth and stallion sun, diving through pure report of kind for kind . . . not to gain future security . . . but just permission to

endure and endure to buy air to feel and sun to drink.

And not even knowing what to look for, and what to do when it is found, the convict successfully slaughters a wild alligator bare-handed, having never done it before. He finds himself thinking first, "All this darn foolishness will stop soon and I can get on back," and then immediately, "Will have to get on back, and he . . . looked about at the rich strange desert which surrounded him, in which he was temporarily lost in peace and hope . . . and he thought . . . Yes, I reckon I had done forgot how good making money was. Being let to make it." And suddenly he longs for independence, as the lovers do, though his is the wish to earn and the wish for freedom to work, while theirs is the wish to escape earning, the desire to find the natural world.

His sacrifice in leaving freedom is pathetic, but as the Old Man recedes rumbling to its levels, flowing quietly once more to the sea, he returns to civilization and imprisonment, and returns with a quiet and ironic humor, when, in surrendering, after long days of unbelievable struggle and pain, he merely says, "All right . . . Yonder's your boat, and here's the woman. But I never did find that bastard on the cotton-house." Leaving the Old Man, the Father of Waters, and his freedom forever, coming back to the reward of a good cigar, and to prison and the quiet telling of his story to fellow, incredulous inmates, his last ironically humorous words, in direct contrast to those of Harry, are "Women!"

The image of the palm trees, wild in the thrashing wind, is begun in the first chapter of the novel, and strengthened in the last, through a repetition which increases their effectiveness. The utter desolation, the total destruction of the lives of Harry and Charlotte, the despair of their hopeless situation is emphasized by their environment, by the wind in the palms.

It was overcast; the invisible wind blew strong and steady among the invisible palms, from the invisible sea—a harsh steady sound full of the murmur of surf on the outside barrier islands, the spits and scars of sand bastioned with tossing and shabby pines.

Faulkner describes over and over again ". . . the dark wind filled with the wild dry sound of the palms." The palms clash against ". . . the constant weight of the black pitiless wind," which is hard, steady, ". . . risible, . . . almost a chuckling," or ". . . waiting and unhurried," sensing, accentuating the coming of death and final failure. Even after Charlotte's death, and after the trial, Harry sees the palm, "But the palm was there. It was just outside his window, bigger, more shabby . . . it clashed again in that brief sudden inexplicable flurry," just as his life and that of Charlotte riotously joined and clashed in driven frenzy by some unknown, black and invisible force of wind, just as the black and rumbling force of the river drove the convict out into the world, before pushing him, once more, back to the monastic, isolated life which he had left behind.

I think it not fair to a candycane for  
a soldier to have stripes; I would  
like to see a soldier stand as  
straight in the clanny hand of  
its assailant.

GLORIA WILCHER



Pencil drawing  
Janice Dawson

### departure

i am leaving as they cut old limbs  
from tall trees  
i sit and think  
it's hot—the winds are here  
there are the happy yells of  
children somewhere  
not yet grown and happy  
the saw again—another falls—  
i hear the progress on the highways—  
forward—ever forward  
footsteps down cement walkways—  
change rattling in pockets—  
the saw creaks—they fall—  
the wind blows gently—  
wet from recent rains—  
my pen moves fast—unsure  
they stroll across the lawn—  
not caring—they do their work—  
that's all—just work—  
he mounts the ladder to attack  
another bit of life—  
he saws—another branch  
leaves it's great protectress—  
he saws again—they fall—  
i am leaving

ELIZABETH DEVEREUX



Block print  
Beje Fickling

# THE CAPE JASMINES ARE STRONG THIS SUMMER

By Frances Cluck

Granny was skinny and arthritic. Her hands were spotted, and I always liked for her to let me take hold of the skin and pull it up. I would grasp a wrinkle, and with just a slight tug I could pull the skin at least half an inch from the bony back of her hand. And her veins fascinated me too. They were bluish-purple and crawled like snakes from her fingers to her elbow. I could press my finger on one of those veins, and it felt so funny, like the blood was made of foam rubber. Granny couldn't use her hands too well, and she was forever complaining about her arthritis. I got so tired of hearing about it. She was just trying to get attention, I thought. But there was a real good thing about those hands. When Mama plaited my hair, she would pull so hard that I thought my eyes were going to look Japanese. And Mama was never careful about those little short hairs on the back of my neck. She seemed to yank them with a vengeance, and I would sit every morning on a low wicker stool howling as she fixed my pigtails. But Granny was gentle. I guess it was because her fingers hurt when she used them, and she didn't have much strength in them, she said. She plaited my hair loosely (it always looked worse than when Mama did it), but she was pretty good about my scolders (that's what she called those little hairs). That was when I liked Granny best—when Mama would be in bed for a few days and Granny would have to take care of me.

But then Mama would get out of bed and be so nice to me. It was funny, because then she would go back to bed and wake up a few days later sick. Then she would get up for about a week and be real mean. When Mama would get up during those middle times and dress, she talked to me and almost even played with me some. I always wanted an adult to play with me, but nobody ever would very much, except Mama once in a while. Mama and I would be talking or something, and Granny would come in and start fussing with Mama. Or me. Then it was so great. Mama and I would be railing at Granny, and Granny would fuss back at us. Only Granny always acted sort of tearful, like her feelings were hurt. When she would get all tearful like that, I would get so mad because she made me feel sorry for her, and I can't stand to feel sorry for somebody. Then Mama and I would be standing there yelling at Granny, and Granny would turn around and sort of stumble down the hall to her bedroom. She would leave the door open, and Mama and I could hear her in there saying, "Oh, God," kind of in a shaky voice. That would make us madder. Mama would tell me things like "martyr" and other things I didn't understand, and I would always agree with her. I was so excited that she was saying grown-up things to me. But then she would get all stupid and sleepy again and go back into her bedroom. I would follow her in there and beg her not to go back to bed. I would sit on a little splotchy-green cushioned chair—I loved that chair—and watch her go back to sleep. Then I would leave quietly—I didn't want to disturb Granny and make her ask me where I was going and start saying "Oh, God" again. I never went anywhere but on the side porch anyway. I had a cardboard box out there full of Polly's sand. I would stir it with a stick, and the concrete porch was real cold on my bottom where I sat in blue jeans.

I was about ten years old then. We all lived with my aunt. She was tall and sort of fat (but her legs and arms were real nice. It was just her breasts and stomach that were big). She had long black hair that she put up in a knot on the back of her head. I thought it looked severe, only I didn't know the word "severe" then. It was a funny thing about Mama and Granny and Aunt Helen. Most of the day I would be at school. When I'd come home in the afternoon, Mama and I would usually have a fuss, especially if she had been up for a few days. Then I would go out and play. I

would come in just before dark because it was cold. This was winter, and it got dark early. Anyway, I would come in about 5:30 for supper. Aunt Helen would come home from work about that time, and the minute she would walk in the front door, Mama would burst out of the hall and Granny would come out of the kitchen. It was horrible, like they had been just waiting for her. It always gave me a bad feeling every night. Aunt Helen would be standing just inside the front door, usually wearing a black coat, with her pocketbook on one arm and a grocery bag in the other arm. She would stand there kind of expectantly, and Mama would start, usually beginning with, "Just to show you what I have to put up with . . ." and launch into a whole bunch of accusations against Granny. Granny would try feebly to interrupt. Aunt Helen would say, "I'm tired, I've been working all day. I don't want to hear it." Then Aunt Helen would go back to her room to change clothes and start supper. Sometimes she would side with Granny, and Mama would stomp into her room cursing. I couldn't see why they would always have a fuss every day at 5:30. I hated it. I would usually pick up a book and read. I even read during supper, because they argued then too.

I just couldn't understand all their fusses. Granny didn't do bad things. She did sort of silly and stupid things, like buying something from the vegetable man who came around in the summer. She was real forgetful and always tired. That was another funny thing. Both of them did housework, but Mama would get tired just as fast as Granny, and she was younger. I never understood that. I used to try to get Mama to teach me things like how to sew or how to play the piano (she could do both of those things real well), but she would always say, "Not now, I'm tired." Or, "I've been washing for you all day, I'm tired." Actually, she would wash out my things in the morning in about ten minutes. That was all. She ironed a little, and then she would sit in the living room all day, shelling peas and watching television. The living room was always dark because of the television, and it was cold, too. I always wanted to turn up the furnace so the house would get warm. Mama and Granny were cold, too, but we never turned it up much because Aunt Helen didn't like for us to. She would say, "Who's been messing with the thermostat? It's not cold enough to turn up the heat, and it runs up the bill." She was always real worried about bills, but I couldn't understand why anybody would have a furnace if they didn't turn it up enough to keep the house warm.

Sometimes after school I would come in the front door into the dark living room. Mama would be sitting by the desk shelling peas or something, and Granny would be huddled in the rocking chair, like she was cold and like nobody loved her. They would be watching television. Granny always would want me to go straight back out in the cold and get her some ice cream. Sometimes I did, but usually I would say it was too cold. Then I would go sit by the ventilator in the kitchen. I would sit on the floor beside the ice box and read funny books or the jokes in the *READER'S DIGEST* or Nancy Drew mysteries. I would feel a little bad for not getting Granny any ice cream, but then I would usually get interested in the book and forget about it.

I had a dream about Granny one time that really scared me. I mean, I even woke up scared. My heart was beating real fast, and I was even scared to move or look around. In my dream, Granny had just gone out of the kitchen and was walking down the hall to her bedroom. She had on a black sweater and a loose black dress. For some reason I left the kitchen too and followed her down the hall. All of a sudden she sort of leaned forward like Superman and started going up into the air. She didn't have wings or anything, but she was flying up towards the ceiling with her arms down

straight at her sides. I ran toward her and grabbed her ankles. I was pulling real hard, trying to keep her from flying away, and I was yelling, "Don't die, Granny! Don't die!" I was sitting on the floor, pulling and crying. Then I woke up. The next morning I really thought about the dream. I must have been about twelve years old then.

One day during Christmas vacation an awful thing happened. That night I was supposed to ride in a Christmas parade with the Girl Scouts. I was going to wear my uniform, and I had even persuaded Mama to just let me wear a sweater over my Scout dress. It was real cold, but I didn't care. Coats looked too sissy, like you couldn't get your mother to let you wear a sweater. I was real excited about it. I was in Granny's room thinking about the parade and Christmas and everything, and Mama was near the front of the house somewhere. Granny and Uncle Lee were in the living room watching television. Granny and Uncle Lee used to get in the worst fights of all, which was pretty bad. (I had figured out by this time what made Uncle Lee and Mama act so funny—I mean, when Mama would sleep for days, and when Uncle Lee was always acting mean. The reason was that they drank wine.) On this day Mama was in one of her good moods when she would talk to me (I guess that's why she was going to let me wear a sweater), and Uncle Lee was real mad. He and Granny started arguing in the living room about which TV program they were going to watch. He was really mad about it. I could tell by the way he was yelling at Granny. I was sort of scared, so I sneaked up the hall to see what they were doing. Mama was watching, too. We didn't say anything to him, because we knew he would get madder. He was awful mean. He and Granny were standing up in the living room, and it looked bad, the way he was yelling and getting all red. His eyes always got big and blood-shot when he was mad, and he was yelling so loud that his mouth was watering. I hoped somebody would do something to stop it, but I was scared to say anything. Then he did a funny thing. He stopped yelling, stood back, and told Granny to take off her glasses. It was a funny thing to do, and I got more scared. Granny wasn't going to take them off, so he walked near her and took them off her himself. They were old glasses. I always wanted to call them spectacles, because they were square glass and didn't have any rims. They looked sort of fragile. Uncle Lee laid them under a table lamp and turned around. Then he started yelling again, and Granny was backing away from him. I was so scared and sorry for her. Then it was really terrible. He started hitting Granny on the head and all over. She was so old and she was crying. I thought he was going to break her bones. Gosh, it was so horrible. Then Mama told me to come with her. I was surprised, because she didn't make me put on a coat. We went outside and closed the door. I felt terrible. Uncle Lee was beating Granny up. We stood there a minute, and then we went to get somebody. We went to a neighbor's house, and Mama just wouldn't go fast enough. The Kellys weren't home, so we had to go somewhere else. I was shaking all over and running, yelling at Mama to hurry up. We went to the Littles' and I pounded on the door. Mrs. Little came to the door and I was telling her to please come because Uncle Lee was beating Granny up. Mama got there and asked her to come too. She walked across the street with us, and we went in the front door to the living room. I was really scared to go back in, but I wanted somebody to help Granny.

I always forgot what happened after we went in. The next thing I can remember about it was everybody—Mama, Aunt Helen, and me—sitting in Granny's room. It was cold, and I was sitting on the floor by the ventilator. Granny was in bed, and she was moaning. She had bruises all over her face. The best I could figure out, Uncle Lee was in jail. I was glad, but Granny wasn't. She kept saying things about her poor son in jail. I was feeling sorry for her, and she was feeling sorry for *him!* Mama and Aunt Helen let me be in

the parade anyway. I rode in the pickup truck and got real cold. I wished I had worn a coat. When I got home, it was real late, about ten o'clock at night. I went inside, and then all of a sudden I felt bad. I remembered what had happened, and I felt terrible because I had gone out to be in the parade and have fun while Granny was lying in bed, crying and hurting. I went into her room and sat down by the ventilator. My feet were so cold. I wanted to make Granny feel better, but I didn't know what to do, so I just sat there and got warm. Then I guess I went to bed. I can't exactly remember.

I remember some other things about Granny, though. Some lady sent her copies of a little magazine called "Sunshine." It was a small yellow book, and it had lots of things in it—quotations from the Bible, poems, and stories. The stories were too good, though. I mean, they were short, and they always ended with a person being happy. I'm not sure how Granny liked them. I liked them for a while, and then I got tired of reading them. But I liked the way the book looked. I mean, it really made me think of sunshine because it was yellow, and it made me think of Granny being warm and happy. I wanted her to be warm most of all, because she always looked all bony and cold. Another thing I remember is really funny, it makes me laugh to think of it. One day in the summer Granny and I were standing in the side door arguing over something. I can't remember what that was either. Anyway, we were yelling at each other, and all of a sudden Polly, the parrot, started yelling too. Only Polly was yelling something that sounded like, "Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!" And we did. We both shut up and started laughing. I guess what we were arguing about wasn't too important. It was like Polly was tired of hearing about it.

Those are about the only little things I can remember about Granny. The next thing was big. Granny had a stroke one night. I was asleep, so I didn't find out about it until the next day. It was like this. Aunt Helen had gone out with some friends to a party that night. She didn't go out often, but Granny didn't like for her to go out at all. Granny was acting real funny lately, too. She would start arguments about silly things, like getting people mixed up. She never could remember the names of her friends, who were all dead. She would swear they were one thing, and Mama and Aunt Helen would try to tell her they were another. Then Granny would get mad because they didn't believe her and almost cry. This one night Aunt Helen came in real late. Granny had actually stayed up and waited for her to come in, like Aunt Helen was a little girl or something. When Aunt Helen came, Granny got real mad at her for staying out so late. They got into an argument, and Granny said she was going to leave. I don't know where she was going, but Mama said she went out the side door and walked out into the street. Then she had a stroke. I didn't know what a stroke was, but Granny had to stay in bed and have the doctor and everything.

She got well from that stroke, and things were like they used to be again, only she was even worse at remembering things. She even called me by Mama's name. I would always remind her that I was Frances. She called Mama by my sister's name. I don't know how she got so mixed up. I thought it was silly, but Mama and Aunt Helen felt sorry for her and kept saying something like, "She's in her second childhood." I believed them, but I still thought it was funny, since she was almost eighty years old. One night I spent the night with my best friend Carolyn. We always had a good time when I stayed there, because she had lots of stuff for baloney sandwiches and lots of funny books. Anyway, we stayed up late, singing and reading funny books. The next day when I went home, Granny was sick again. I walked in, all happy, and Mama told me to be quiet because Granny had had another stroke. Aunt Helen had even stayed home from work, which she *never* did unless she had an appointment with the dentist. The doctor came a lot then, and Granny was sick for three days. Aunt Helen stayed home the

whole time. It was summer, and it was real hot. They put the fan in Granny's room to keep her cool. She just lay still in bed all the time. She never moved, and she couldn't talk. She couldn't even get up to go to the bathroom. I thought that was terrible. I guessed Granny didn't like it either, and I know Aunt Helen didn't particularly like to fix the bed all the time. But Aunt Helen didn't get mad with Granny for messing up the bed. She was sort of like a nurse.

The doctor hung a bottle upside down from a hatrack. It had a tube from the mouth of the bottle, and on the end of the tube was a needle that he stuck in Granny's arm and taped there with a band-aid. I thought how it must hurt, to have a needle in your arm all the time, but I decided that maybe Granny didn't feel it. I was sure she could understand what we said, though. I tried to talk to her and say things that would make her feel better. I really wished she would wake up and talk back to me, but she never did. I couldn't convince Mama and Aunt Helen that she could hear us. They would come in, and while they were doing things for her, they would talk out loud about her dying. I tried to make them shut up, because I knew that would scare Granny and make her feel bad, but they never paid any attention to me. I finally just stopped trying to tell them, but I always felt bad when they talked about dying in front of Granny. I didn't really think she was going to die, and I thought they were hateful to talk about it. I even began to be afraid that she really would die if they kept on saying she would. It was horrible, the most awful feeling the whole three days.

They had called up Uncle Lee. After he had gotten out of jail, he had gone to Virginia Beach, where he was a house painter. He came home on the second day and stayed all night. They were sort of waiting for her to die, I think. On the afternoon of the third day, we were all in Granny's room. Uncle Lee said he had to go back to the beach, and he and Aunt Helen and Mama were talking about it. Then he went over to the bed and kissed Granny on the forehead. They all turned around, and he was leaving the room. I didn't watch them because I didn't like him anyway and was glad he was leaving. I was watching Granny instead. It had gotten to be a habit. I had watched her the whole time. As Uncle Lee was going out the door of the bedroom, something happened that scared me. They were all talking with their backs to Granny. She must have known—I *knew* she could hear us—she must have known he was leaving, because she reached toward him with her right arm. She didn't move her head or open her eyes or say anything. She just reached her arm across her body toward him. That was the only time she had moved since she had the second stroke and the last time she ever moved. Gosh, it was so sad. I told them. "She moved," I said. I didn't say it very loud, because you aren't supposed to talk loud in a sick person's room. They didn't hear me, so I said it again. They still didn't listen to me, so I just sat there and looked at Granny. It was so sad, because she loved Uncle Lee better than anybody, even if he was mean. Now he was leaving, and she wanted to tell him something. But nobody knew except me, and Uncle Lee left. I told Mama and Aunt Helen about it later, but either they didn't believe me or they didn't think it was important. I thought it was, though. I still do, and I get sad again when I think about it. She really loved him. I hate him. He didn't seem to love her at all.

That night I knew finally that Granny was going to die. Mama and Aunt Helen knew, too. We were all sitting in Granny's room, but Uncle Lee wasn't there. I didn't even let myself think about him. We sat there a long time, and they were even already saying how could they get to Williston for the funeral. Granny was going to be buried in the family plot in Williston. I thought that was funny, since we didn't live in Williston. But they had all lived there a long time ago, so I guess they liked it better there, even to be buried there. I didn't like sitting around in Granny's room. It was real late—I guess about two o'clock in the morning. I got up and went to the front of the house. The ham was sitting on the stove in the kitchen. I put one of those shower cap things on it and put in in the icebox. I went in the

dining room and turned on the light. Somebody hadn't put the vacuum cleaner back in the closet, so I did that. Then I went back to Granny's room. I didn't say anything about putting up the ham and vacuum cleaner, although it was the first time I had ever done anything like that. Then Mama told me to go to bed. I said I wasn't sleepy, but she said go anyway. I looked at Granny's feet, because I had heard that when you are dying, your feet turn purple. I wasn't sure what a death rattle was, but I figured I could recognize one. I didn't hear anything, so I went into Mama's room and got in the bed. I thought I wasn't going to be able to go to sleep, because I wasn't sleepy. I went to sleep right away, though.

Mama came in and woke me up. I had slept about half an hour. "Your Granny's dead," she said. I didn't feel anything, except I thought it was funny that she had died while I was asleep. Mama wanted me to go look at her. She said she looked more peaceful and happy than she had ever looked. I was too scared, though, when she said that. I was scared to see Granny dead. She didn't make me go, and I was so relieved. Then Mama gave me a dress to put on, even though it was only about three-thirty in the morning. I put the dress on and went out on the side porch. I didn't want to see Aunt Helen, because I guessed she would be crying. I couldn't stand to see her cry, more than anybody else. I sat on the side porch for a long time, even until the sky started getting grey. Inside, Mama and Aunt Helen were getting dressed and making telephone calls. Then, when the sun was coming up, I heard a car or something drive up. I didn't look, but I heard people talking in the living room. Mama and Aunt Helen came out on the side porch where I was. They stood there, and Mama told me not to look. Aunt Helen looked, though. I asked what they were doing. Mama said they were carrying Granny out. I didn't even have to look. I knew what it would be like, with two men carrying a stretcher with Granny on it and a black sheet over her whole body.

We got in a grey car—it was an Oldsmobile or a Buick, I remember—and rode to Williston real early in the morning. I sat in the front seat with the man driving and looked out the window. I looked at the dashboard, too. It had lots of silver knobs on it. When we got to Williston in about two hours, the man took us to Cousin Martha's house. She met us and told us where our bedrooms were. Mama and I went upstairs, and I put on pajamas. We got in bed, and I started crying. I didn't know why I was crying, but I cried anyway. I felt sad for Granny, I guess. Then Mama told me it was all right, and I went to sleep. We went to the funeral the next day. We sat in a little room on the side where nobody could see us but we could see them. I saw our minister from home and Virginia, a friend of Aunt Helen's. I couldn't see Granny in the coffin, but I didn't look very hard. Mama had told me that they had put too much rouge on her and that her mouth looked puffed up.

I remember the Williston minister. He was young, and he had on his cassock and things. He knelt in front of Granny's coffin, and I thought he really looked sorry that she was dead. He even looked sort of holy. Then we went in cars to the graveyard. It was hot on my back, and that's all I remember.

We went back to Cousin Martha's house. We stayed there for a few days, and all these people were always coming and writing their names in a book. They made me nervous because they would say how big I had gotten. I thought they were silly, because I looked just the same. Cousin Bob gave me a book about a horse, and they made me read out loud. I liked to read out loud, especially when everybody would listen and say how smart I was to figure out those big words (they really weren't big at all). I got a letter from Carolyn. She told me Elvis Presley had been in a wreck, and I was so upset. Then we went home. Mama let me go to the swimming pool pretty soon. I hadn't been in almost two weeks. Everybody said where had I been. I told them my grandmother had died, and they were real sorry about it. Then we played games in the water.

William Butler Yeats: "Her Vision in the Wood"

Donna Hinnant

## I

For any person unfamiliar with the task of writing poetry it is very presumptuous to attempt any kind of an analysis other than a purely subjective one. Perhaps this type of analysis gains in strength and loses a large amount of its subjectivity through a greater familiarity with the poet. Someone ignorant of the ways of poetry (that is, of technicalities a poet may have employed to make his poetry express what he intends for it to express) should not be eliminated from the ranks who are to enjoy poetry. Does a poet want his work to be read and enjoyed only by the scholars? That is a ridiculous question, but the impression one gets from the way a poem is commonly analyzed by scholars is that it is for them to be enjoyed only—whether they enjoy the perfection of the construction, or a miracle of a good poem expressed in faulty poetic constructions. Not that scholars analyze poetry only, they just appear to. The greatest emphasis in the study of poetry is placed upon technicalities of a poem rather than the real meat of the matter . . . The motion of the composition. The scope of the task accomplished varies with the obviousness of the devices used. The less the devices are noticed, the greater their use in the poem. It is like speech, a voice and language are merely a vehicle upon which thoughts are allowed to travel. A voice or language which draws attention to itself ceases to function as a vehicle for thoughts. A beautiful combination of words cannot make a poem unless the words disappear in the thought of the poem. Yeats once said to Lady Wellesley; "The correction of prose, because it has no fixed laws, is endless, a poem comes right with a click like a closing box." At the click the words vanish, the devices have served their purpose and assist the poet in expressing his meaning but they have no further function. They may however, reappear again under scrutinizing eyes to evoke praises from critics on the cleverness of the poet. The devices perform a magical function if, through a manipulation of them, one human being can actually communicate a mood, a thought, a feeling, an idea to another human being. In being obvious, or too often sought for, they can hinder communication, or destroy the precious communication at first accomplished.

But now to return to the subject of familiarity with a particular poet in understanding and appreciating his poetry, it is necessary to mention the relevance of devices to a subjective analysis of poetry. At the first readings of a few of a poet's poems a reader may grasp a fragment of the meaning and know from past experience the quality of poetry he is reading, but as in any growing relationship, the longer a reader spends alone with the poet the more meaning he is able to glean from the words on the page. Devices never actually analyzed, become second nature to the reader. They are seen, and accounted for, in the long list of hints given in a poem which finally assimilated reveal the message of the poem as a whole. In the initial introductions to the poems of the particular poet, the reader must necessarily use his own interpretations of the words used, but in later readings the reader has gained (through associations with different ideas a poet has expressed with certain words) a sense of the meaning of the words more akin to that of the poet. The reader has become, in some way, one with the poet. The reader has become less subjective and more sympathetic with the poet through the path of subjectivity rather than the more cumbersome path of objectivity which scholars appear to be prone to. These statements are not meant to be a condemnation of the methods of scholars; it is probable that scholarly methods are only overtly objective while actually being very subjective in essence.

Dry timber under that rich foliage,  
At wine-dark midnight in the sacred wood,  
Too old for a man's love I stood in rage  
Imagining men. Imagining that I could  
A greater with a lesser pang assuage  
Or but to find if withered vein ran blood,  
I tore my body that its wine might cover  
Whatever could recall the lip of lover.

And after that I held my fingers up,  
Stared at the wine-dark nail, or dark that ran  
Down every withered finger from the top;  
But the dark changed to red, and torches shone,  
And deafening music shook the leaves; a troop  
Shouldered a litter with a wounded man,  
Or smote upon the string and to the sound  
Sang of the beast that gave the fatal wound.

All stately women moving to a song  
With loosened hair or foreheads grief-distraught,  
It seemed a Quattrocento painter's throng,  
A thoughtless image of Mantegna's thought—  
Why should they think that are for ever young?  
Till suddenly in grief's contagion caught,  
I stared upon his blood bedabbled breast  
And sang my malediction with the rest.

That thing all blood and mire, that beast-torn wreck,  
Half turned and fixed a glazing eye on mine,  
And, though love's bitter-sweet had all come back,  
Those bodies from a picture or a coin  
Nor saw my body fall nor heard it shriek,  
Nor knew, drunken with singing as with wine,  
That they had brought no fabulous symbol there  
But my heart's victim and its torturer.

## II

I would like to express my feeling about this poem, and when I think of ways of going about my task I can think of no better way than a simple statement of the poem. It holds the feeling entirely and to attempt a description in my vulgar prose seems a violation of the poem. Ignoring this difficulty, however, through the necessity of telling my feelings about it to another person I am encountering an equally imposing problem. What do I approach first? The myth behind it? No, not yet. The devices? No, they would be meaningless by themselves. Besides, neither of these are my feelings. Lines which especially appeal to me? No, they are out of place in an introductory page of a paper such as this. Actually, my feelings are all tied up in all of these things. The poem has no beginning, no defined order, and no end; it is an instantaneous action which is as complete at its origin as it is at its end. Yeats has done in this poem something similar to what all of us attempt to do when we try to tell a dream. It takes us ten minutes to tell about a ten second dream; it took him four verses to tell an instant's action. His four verses are not like our ten minute elaborations, however. Something about his words in their particular combination makes them move with slow, deliberate paces toward a single unified impression. And at this point I am faced with the question of what that unified impression is . . . I can explain what I think it is by going through the poem chronologically pointing out every hint of an order leading to a culmination of the thoughts; or I can take a stab in the dark and say what my emotional reaction to the poem is, and presume to find the meaning there (on the theory that Yeats has attempted to kindle an emotion in me which would be the basis of my interpretation of the poem.) Perhaps that the best way to begin is to attempt my emotional reaction, then go through the poem line by line. To attempt an interpretation without the line by line analysis is to ignore the objectivity acquired in a growing familiarity with Yeats.

In reading "Her Vision in the Wood" I feel that I have had a terrifying dream which was a sudden shock that will not pass away. I cannot immediately, or perhaps ever, com-



pletely understand its significance, but I am plagued with a lingering mood as a result of reading it. I feel that it is very, very, sad, but I do not think the sadness is hopeless. I think it ends happily. Or rather, it seems as if the oppressive sadness of an old woman who is fighting against her death or the death of her fertility. For a moment her futile attempt to win back her youth appears pathetic before the immortal women who will be forever young; but then her triumph comes when it is seen that these women cannot know love. Their immortality is their tragedy, and her mortality is her triumph. She can grieve for her loss, but they can know neither her loss nor their own. The line "And, though love's bitter-sweet had all come back, . . ." implies that she has obtained satisfaction and therefore joy, however, in her joy lies the stimulus for her grief. She falls to the ground with a shriek unnoticed by the immortals. She is lucky to be able to know the tragedy of life.

Apparently, "Her Vision in the Wood" is based on the legend of Attis, a shepherd boy who was killed by a boar in the sacred wood. The legend as we know it today is of Roman origin although it is much like an ancient Asiatic legend, and most likely has its roots in the earlier legend. Attis was the god of vegetation and the ceremony commemorating him was the great spring festival. In this festival a tree (the sacred tree) was dressed like a corpse and covered with violets. Violets were supposed to have sprung from the blood of Attis. The effigy of a young man, Attis, was laid on the tree. If the legend of the Greek god of vegetation, Adonis, which is very similar to that of Attis, is included here, we can note the fact that the ceremony was celebrated mostly by women. Also, one of the legends of these two men mentions the belief in the spilling of blood over useless organs as a way of restoring fertility. The many references in "Her Vision in the Wood" to the color of wine echo the violets in the Attis legend; the beast-torn wreck, which I immediately pictured as a youth, obviously refers to one or both of the young gods of vegetation who were killed by boars; the "Dry timber under that rich foliage" apparently refers to the conquest of time, or even more remotely, to the change of seasons important in the legends; the spilling of blood over withered skin is obviously a reference to the revival of fertility; the "fabulous symbol" is the effigy of Attis; and the "deafening music" is the blowing of trumpets on the second day of the spring festival. Yeats is not, however, telling the story of a Roman or Greek legend in "Her Vision in the Wood." He is using the legend to tell his own feeling.

The use of mythology in poetry is effective for its very immortality. Whether a poet simply touches upon an ancient myth or bases an entire poem upon it, he has employed a device which is among the most powerful he can use. A word, a name, from a myth, among his own, conjures hundreds of words of a legend in a reader's mind leading him to a surer understanding of the poet's meaning. By using mythology a poet avoids the risk of having his work die with the death of the clichés of his age. Also, the use of mythology in certain poems indicates the immortality of the subject of the poem. Often the subjects that great poets write about have their parallel in ancient legends.

The reason I chose this poem was because of its unusual quality of unity. It is difficult to explain this quality; and I am not even positive if this quality of the poem is as strong to other people as it is to me. When I compared the poem to a dream earlier in this paper, perhaps I hit upon the best way to explain the sensation of "Her Vision in the Wood." Yeats sets the scene by basing the poem on the legend of Attis, and then super-imposes a woman of his own making on the background of the legend. Although the four verses seem to contain steps of action which move towards a climax, the action serves mainly as description of the setting for the one outstanding action. It is as if the woman in the poem were dreaming her entire plight up to the point where she shrieks and falls to the ground. That single action is real. It could be connected with her dream world, or it could be in her world of reality. Yeats lets her describe four movements, or four actions she makes. (One in each verse—tear-

ing her flesh, starting at her blood covered hand, starting at "his blood-bedabbled breast," and falling to the ground.) In the two overt movements, her tearing of her own flesh, and her fall, Yeats makes a distinction in the mood her words evoke for each of these movements. Both of them are violent, but the tearing of the flesh has a matter-of-fact quality which does not make it seem so violent. When she shrieks and falls, however, the effect is violent and stunning; we feel her pain of heart and her triumph over the immortals in a way that we cannot even begin to feel the pain of her rather mechanical tearing of her flesh. Until she falls, her existence is in an unreal world of dreams and apparitions, and her fall makes her suddenly real. In that way, there is only one actual movement in the poem. I almost think that, now, after studying this poem, if I saw a woman shriek and fall on the street, I would be sure that she had had a vision like this one. It has taken Yeats four verses to present an instantaneous action of the mind, and I think the poem is a good one because it succeeds in communicating the meaning in a way which eliminates the words and verses when their function has been accomplished.

The first line, "Dry timber under that rich foliage," has a good, rich, mysterious sound which somehow warns of the dreamy mood which is to be deepened in the second line, "At wine-dark midnight in the sacred wood." With these two brief lines we are already carried into the world of unreality. The myth has been referred to with the "sacred wood" and the scene for the vision set. Next, we are introduced to "Her" who is "Too old for a man's love . . ." In the first verse we do not exactly notice, but sort of feel the awkwardness of the lines. The word order is often confusing, but, strangely enough, that does not seem to disturb the order of the thoughts. They flow with a powerful regularity which makes it seem as if the confused word order adds to, rather than detracts from, the meaning. I will quote the last sentence of the first verse to show what I mean by the confused word order.

. . . Imagining that I could  
A greater with a lesser pang assuage  
Or but to find if withered vein ran blood,  
I tore my body that its wine might cover  
Whatever could recall the lip of lover.

The "Or but to find . . ." is representative of an irregularity common in "Her Vision in the Wood." But I must emphasize that this is a poetic device admirably employed by Yeats, perhaps to enhance the dream-like mood of the poem. I doubt that it is disturbing to most readers; I doubt that it is even noticed in most first readings.

Some other devices which are also not immediately apparent are the rhyme scheme and the repetition of certain sounds. (The repetition of *wine* is effectively conspicuous; it adds a religious, intoxicated tone to the entire poem.) A more subtle repetition is the use of many short o and s sounds. The o sound is initiated in *wood* then continues throughout the poem in *stood, could, shook, should*, and in many other words. This repeated sound probably has a soothing effect. Then when Yeats sneaks in the words *stared, stood, shook, stately, sang, sound, breast, rest, beast, fabulous, symbol, suddenly shriek*, etc., in places where he might have very plausibly used words without the s, it is certainly easy to conclude that he included them deliberately. I am not sure why he wanted this particular sound emphasized. It does unify the mood of the poem, and I find that the s words serve to multiply my detachment from reality. *Stared* is the best illustration of the effectiveness of these words. Along with the regularity of the beat of the lines, the consistent rhyme scheme (abababcc), and the references to immortals, the repetition of the short o and s sounds detract from any diversity of the subject; all of these devices mingled in the poem condense it from four verses to a shriek and a fall.

The second verse, which begins with the conversational tones of "And after that . . .", describes the wine-dark forest being lighted with the torches of a funeral procession. A line describing the sound, which starts out well is somewhat neutralized by the two last words. That is, "And deafening music

shook the leaves; . . ." would be a loud line if only "a troop" were not tacked on to the end of it. Maybe Yeats wanted to silence the noise of the music in order to save all the excitement for the end; if so, he succeeded. I guess the procession is loud, but I can't hear it. Also, in the second verse we meet the wounded man, the effigy of Attis, who is being carried by the "stately women" described in the third verse.

The women are the most unreal elements in the entire poem; they are ". . . a Quattrocento painter's throng,"; they are images on a canvas from the mind of Mantegna; they are no more withered now than they were when they were born in paint in the fourteenth century. They are immortals grieving forever but without feeling any pain at the eternal funeral of the immortal young God, Attis. As if hypnotized by the procession, the older woman joins them in their songs against "the beast that gave the fatal wound." (the boar?) At this point she has become pathetic. Her grief is strongly contrasted with that of the other women. She laments for herself, for the youth, and for all of mortal mankind who must live to grow old and sterile. She cannot, unfortunately, grieve indifferently like the women from the painting, and her instant of hypnotic grief, her instant of immortality, flees when "That thing all blood and mire, that beast-torn wreck" looks at her. I am not trying to get earthy about this, but I feel the strength of the last verse when I remember the first time I read it. When he turned and looked at her, I knew at once that she realized her mortality and her wholeness as a woman. The next line, "And, though love's bitter-sweet had all come back," fitted in just right. The restraint dissolves and she shrieks and falls into the climax away from the undesirable world of the immortals!

Those bodies from a picture or a coin  
Nor saw my body fall nor heard it shriek,  
Nor knew, drunken with singing as with wine,  
That they had brought no fabulous symbol there  
But my heart's victim and its torturer.

The same wonderful confused word order that I pointed out in the first verse appears again here in the last few lines. But it works, it is not confusing, and it sounds so good! With the climax the mood changes and the complexity of interpretation increases. "Nor saw my body fall . . ." echoes the "bodies from a picture or a coin" in the line above it. While the bodies remain the images of an artist's mind, they have enough relation to her to be referred to with the same word. The women in the procession have almost become connected vaguely with the world of life in the last few lines of the poem. They are still "from a picture or a coin," their relationship with the older woman seems to have been adjusted, perhaps as a result of her own change. Actually, it is impossible for me to draw any concrete conclusions from the ending of the poem. The interpretations in my mind are so many, and for the most part are based upon minute implications in the structure of the poem.

I do not understand the meaning of the last two lines.

Nor knew, drunken with singing as with wine,  
That they had brought no fabulous symbol there  
But my heart's victim and its torturer.

The effigy, more definitely than the women, has become a part of the world of the living. I do not mean to say that I think that the effigy has turned out to be one of her long lost lovers, and not Attis at all. I wish that my feeling about it were that easy to explain. Rather, assuming that the entire poem is a vision, a dream, with surrealistic qualities that would not actually allow for one single, fully concrete, explanation, I can feasibly say that her "heart's victim and its torturer" is a messenger of some kind from the world of the deities who painfully enters her world for a moment to confine her to a world where she is allowed to grow old loving, hating, being unhappy, being happy, etc., instead of living on forever feeling nothing, like the women in the painting.

### III

I have dealt briefly and superficially with "Her Vision in the Wood" attempting mainly to explain how it makes me feel and to discover how Yeats accomplished this feeling in me. I have discussed elements of the poem at random as they needed to be discussed in order to explain my feeling about the poem. Many elements remain nebulous in my mind; I cannot pin them down concretely and be satisfied that I know what they mean, despite their evasiveness of my grasp. I do feel that I have caught their odor and know in essence the part they play in the poem. For instance, the distinction between the immortals (the women and the effigy of Attis) and the old woman, which is at first strongly established, becomes much finer by the last few lines. Also, I am still confused about the beast; I have completely avoided discussing him since any ideas I have about him are founded on what I think that Yeats might have wanted his beast to be. I certainly do not think that the beast is simply the legendary boar which killed Attis. He seems to have a symbolic meaning; for instance, I somehow think the beast is Time which makes all things old, but I am not sure that it is that.

Besides discussing my feeling about the interpretation of the poem, I also spoke of the feeling of movement that the poem gave me. It happens in an instant, in a dream-like state where reality and supernatural are mingled. A woman shrieks and falls . . . in that instant she has had communion with the gods. She has resigned herself to the life of mortals where all things grow old and change as the seasons change. I think that that is the very surface interpretation obvious to readers at first; only in the later readings do the complications arise. Questions of logic come in which cannot be explained in strong connection with the overall interpretation; most of these complications I have passed over in hopes that I have gotten the right mood of the poem. Later, when I am much more familiar with Yeats perhaps I will be able to see a concrete meaning to them.

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