

TWELVE MARCH 1971

CORA

AGORA

*The Agora
was essentially
the plenary assembly
where
all the laoi gathered,
all the citizens
in the town,
all the warriors
in the camp,
in short
'The whole mass
of those who had
no place
in the Council.'*

G. Glotz

The Greek City

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WALT WHITMAN'S CONEY ISLAND

by Kenneth Rader

Coney Island was a barren beach
when Walt Whitman walked there
naked to his feet
howling Homer to the wind
Walt knew all the quiet places then,
the silent spaces,
where his loud, outlandish heart
could reel the cosmos in.

Nothing happened after that.
He wrote great poems,
he became famous,
his gray beard grew outrageous,
and he continued to laugh through his hat.

Only Coney Island changed.
Populous and gregarious,
it burgeoned as a sort of mammoth
monument to him.

Did Walt like it, the old Yawper?
He never said.
He only remarked in passing
that the ocean had crashed in his head.





WILLIAM BLAKE AND HIS WIFE

sat naked beneath the tree
in their backyard.
In that pure serene
he stained lyrics
with his flagrant thumb
upon her pink facade.
What imagination
had wily William!
He divined that angel
up on the branch,
looking to pounce
if given the chance.
But no second chances today!
So roaring aloud
he raucously vowed
"I'll knock off your crown
if you dare to come down
and wrestle my lady away."
To which the angel replied
with a shrug of his eyes
"Well, then, goodbye
Master William, goodbye."

by Kenneth Rader



MOTHER

by Patti Capone

It is a bright April morning, one of the perfect ones they paint on cards for sentimental occasions. The grass has a metallic glow in the full sunlight. There is a unity of silence broken only by the motor whirring of the ever constant ever present crickets. I am sitting in a car which is parked inside Hillside Cemetery. I am 23 years old and I have a burial to attend. It is my daughter's burial. I cannot seem to move myself out of the car. My body feels heavy and dull. Only my mind is not stagnated, it moves quickly over miles of consciousness. I want to dull my mind to stop the flow of incoherent thoughts that have been flashing off and on. I don't want to think any more of those thoughts that seem to come with being thrown into a cold and strange

situation. I am trying to center my thoughts on one specific thing. I am trying to find one thread to stretch across my mind to blot out the thoughts that keep coming up and up from some previously silent part of the mind. Maybe if I watch the people that are with me it will ease. The people are standing outside waiting for me so that we can begin.

There is a nurse from the home with me. The sun seems to stretch her shadow and stretch it very tall against the ground. Her eyes are glazed with light. She has a flat chest that I want to throw myself against. Imagine the comfort of throwing oneself against her hard firm chest: no pretentious breasts that smother and envelop one in the false security of softness. Whenever I was sick or had nightmares my mother would hold me against the stern surface of her breasts. I felt then very secure because I would let all of my fear and churnings and gurglings recede almost to a silence. I used to listen to the whispering of her blood, her heart, her throat pulse and all the noises inside her chest. There was a certainty about leaning against the cool rigid chest.

The Reverend has just walked up to the nurse to speak to her. I asked him to perform the prayers over the grave. I wanted some representation of God. Yet he is not my God. He is a Lutheran minister. He is the way I want my God to be. My God is like the God of Job. Very jealous and full of wrath. I did not ask a priest to come because I felt that he would moralize with me for bringing illegitimate children into the world. The Reverend is a very human ordinary person. He is married and has children. He told me that he also suffered through the death of an infant. He is my empathizer. It is very important to me that God empathizes with me.

The undertaker is also here. He is removed in a haze. I cannot seem to focus on him. We followed him to the cemetery and pulled up behind him as he took the styrofoam casket from the trunk of the car in front of me as if I knew all this from some time before and would understand the deftness of his actions. He is a mass of straight lines—like a very precise painting without any soul to it.

The last person present is actually not a part of the funeral party. At least I don't think that anyone else is really aware of him but me. He is the grave digger. From the car I can see him walking away from the freshly dug earth. He is a watcher, an observer. He has an indifference to him, not a harmful type but a benign form of indifference. He can view things as they really are and accept them with a sort of dignity. He doesn't seem to become ensnared in the webs of time. He and his shovel cast a distorted shadow over this whole range of land that has become a little world. No one else seems to be pre-occupied with his presence. His person is disturbing me. He stands in the background, sort of in the center of the grounds surrounding the grave. Whichever way one looks one can see him standing as some form of reminder of things that one doesn't like to think about. He has the advantage because this place and the circumstances which created this place is not a strange thing to him. He doesn't think crazy thoughts that are stranger than the situation which stimulated the thoughts. I want to

him what I can do that will help me not to think at all until the ritual is over.

At this point I feel very closed in by the surrounding scenes — things keep flashing off and on in front of my eyes. This plot of land has become a world. I have the habit of creating a world out of the place that I happen to be at or in at the time. This fantasy is always accompanied by the odd sensation that if I move too much to the left or right, too much to the front or the rear, I will fall off sliding into nothing. I can't imagine anything else happening on this Monday, April 24th, except what is happening to me here in this cemetery.

I keep returning to the fact that I have no father image for this child. I keep trying to recall fathers long past, grandfathers, great grandfathers, but nothing fits. I want a visible presence to balance the situation. I keep thinking that my God is my father, but I don't really feel that way. My father could not father my child as his father did me because he felt this so unnatural a situation. He is more concerned with my state of mind. The father's actual father is far away denying the actuality of this part of his life.

I have been watching these people from the car. I still cannot move. They are not aware of that, they think that I am resting. I am trying to grasp the central point of meaning that is to be gained from this whole day. It seems that there should be some form of meditation I could concentrate on. I cannot stand in front of that hole thinking these thoughts. There must be some answer beyond the answer of death. Maybe I will find it in the prayers.

It is eleven o'clock now and we should be starting this ceremony. Everyone is looking at the car. I guess they are thinking that I will become hysterical, that I will be a comfortless Rachel. I know that we should start, but I do not want to pass into that time yet; if I stay in the car it can never happen. I look for some sign from nature: clouds, rain, some thunder. How can one have a sunny day funeral? Sing hallelujah, pick the petals off the flowers and eat them as a communion, dance upon the grave? Anything but this would seem normal, yet it seems to be the very reality of the thing that I want to erase.

The Reverend is taking definite strides to the car. I have to get out but I cannot imagine what it will be like out there. He has a silly smile on his face. I want to laugh at him. I should not have to go through this alone, it is unfair. He does not do anything to help. Now he is reaching into the car. He grabs my hand in a warm and sincere way. God forgiving man again for his insane thoughts.

I get out and lean against the car. The casket has been poised over the hole—the white styrofoam is tinted blue by the sun. Being out of the car is different. My body is beginning to speed up. My mind is slowing down. I have not yet passed from the time before this. Physically I have, yet my thoughts remain stationed on the time in the car, the thoughts I was thinking then. I cannot catch up to the approaching time. When you come to where you really are since time has carried your body through, you find that the mind has to catch up and begin

what has already begun while you lived in the stretched fibers that are only a part of the whole.

Now I am walking over toward the gravesite. I try to bring my thoughts to rest on the prayers that are starting. These are the same prayers that are intoned over everyone else's grave. They don't give any answers, they don't tell you what to do with death, they don't tell you how to resolve the problem. Everything seems to be projected on a cinemascope screen. A butterfly goes by and lands on a tree branch, wings at half-mast position which means he can't decide whether to stay or leave. Maybe I should look at the casket. Maybe it will do something to make me cry so that I can get involved in crying. It is a little smaller than the styrofoam ice-buckets that they sell in the dime stores for \$1.95. I feel lost. I am not married. I am a patient from the William Ward Home. The baby was supposed to be born on April 24th. She was born April 12th and died April 24th. The home is taking care of the burial so it has all been done very cheaply. The ultimate wholeness of the completed circle: birth, existing for two weeks in a deformed body, then death. It is dizzying to go spinning through this circle of life. She is going from the murky waters of one womb to the moisture of another that will take her all apart again so that no one can see the mistake. Contrast of white casket over dark earth-anticipated dreams.

The Reverend is proceeding hesitantly through the prayers. I replant my feet firmly in front of the casket. Directly behind me I can see the gravedigger. I wait for him to move. He is still leaning on his shovel. The twenty-second psalm is being read:

The lord is my shepherd, I shall not want . . . I look at him from the corner of my eye. He is not going to move, he is going to wait and watch the picture and then cover it up as a day's work. He understands the suffering, this is why it is not sacred or unnatural to him. He does this for a living. Maybe this is what scares men about death. It does take on a very real and tangible form. One can see it, smell it, touch it, talk with it or to it; one can lay one's hand on its cold lined determined forehead. Now I turn to look fully at this man who just waits for the ceremony to end, for the words to stop. No one notices my distraction, they are all being eaten by past or future thoughts, maybe they are picturing their funeral and mourning for themselves.

The gravedigger is about forty. Face: average; height: average; weight: average; clothes: gray workshirt and gray worktrousers; feet: medium; hands: massive, frightening in their force as they lay twined around the handle of the shovel, huge thumbs with discolored nails: blue scarred nails, knuckles like mountains, veins winding and intertwining like swollen rivers. His hands are also old, maybe 60 or 70, lined, weather-beaten, rough shoelather skin dappled with brown speckles, determined . . .

Maybe Hemingway could see his gravedigger out of the corner of his eye. Maybe we all have one that just stands there a little out of the circle we spin for ourselves, waiting and watching as the center of the circle wanes. He is ready to close it up, to do the final act, to cover it, to hide the hideous styrofoam casket with deft hands, economic hands, in-

different hands, closing out a thousand lives. Did Hemingway notice his watching as I am watching this man? Maybe the unwavering stare made him uneasy. Why am I seeing him?

Now I can feel my thoughts drifting back to the ceremony. We move so slowly in time.

Though I walk through the valley of death I shall fear no evil

For the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want . . .

The gravedigger is my shepherd holding his shovel like a staff, keeping all the sheep in line. I am frightened to cross over to his side. I want to see this through his eyes. It would probably be easier, or more natural and not so grotesques. He is neutral. Death seems to be such an equalizer.

I notice the casket again. It looks gaunt and tired in the sun. A breeze begins and the casket seems to waver faintly on the brink of the hole. What if it falls into the hole and the hole is bottomless and the casket keeps plunging eternally? I can't keep thinking things like these. There is something I can gain beside this turmoil of thoughts.

Wordsworth says the child is the father to the man. So that is why I feel a little more positive toward the gravedigger. He is not so odd. He is going to bury the child. He will give her the final honor of covering her with earth. He will give her the final shelter that I cannot give her. He will give me shelter from this when he puts the dirt over the casket. He fathers both of us. He is probably a father, I see a flicker of gold on his finger. He fathers all to the earth. One of the whole race of fathers, my father, grandfather, great-grandfather. His hands are the same powerful brown hands of the gods of my youth. Through this child I see his humanness, someone has to do this. There are honors due to the dead. Maybe he is more alive than I am since he can dwell this close and not recoil. This is all part of this ancient man's life, a part of the order of his day, a part of his life. What's happening here is also a part of the whole order.

The ceremony is over and I am dwelling on the sight of the caskets, lines cut against the trees. I am still hearing the words to the twenty-second psalm, knowing what will come next but not moving to it yet. What is the thing, the unnamable snare in the deep cushionness of time's tunnel that can make one instant capture a man? He stretches that one instant out as the sun in the trees stretches their shadows very high and wide across the boulevard, and he lives this thing over and over and never quite leaves his past totally to go to his present because a bigger time has laid it before him, and he has his future and present enveloped in the past. I must come up to this burial yet I am still stretching past thoughts.

I am back in the car watching the Reverend getting directions to leave. Suddenly I see the gravedigger proceed toward the hole with swift, full steps. The stretched fiber of mind snaps and I land abruptly at the point I was going to. She is fathered into the earth, he is father. He throws the last spadeful of dirt into the tiny whole, he acted upon her, bloated her, molded her into the mother brown earth.

O To Be A Boy In A Belfry

A celebration

by Ray Bradbury

O to be a boy in a belfry
Tilting summer noon in tumults,
On your back, the sun squeezed lemon in your eyes,
The blue heaven all bright fries,
Your feet raw naked to the light,
Strewn warm in bed of straw high up in tower
And this your hour to summon all to prayer.
An incense burns the wind,
The altars wait to tremble,
The ancient dust to tingle
As you kick heel and toe,
Strive up, fists under rump
To patter-slap, to shape, to drive the bell
And starts its voice athunder
In your bones and swarming through the air
To shake blue snows of summer sky
Invisible and drifting on the glare.
The bell swings traveling; you kick it on;
Returned, you thrust it, hungry-mouthed and lolling
Forth again, now lashing iron tongue
To lick its clangorous rims,
To bang, to detonate in glorious *pronunciamentos*:
"I'm here! Tis me!
Tis me who hooves the cannon bell!
To wake the summer dead out of their drowse.
Tis me! A mouse
Of boy gone high in belfry dins!

Who with pure iron sound would douse your sins!
All, startled, listen, rouse,
And come, drift-dusted down the roads!
I summon you with freshly washed pink toes
And bell-creased crimsoned heel,
Upon my back I bicycle the wind
To rotor-thump the bombshell clangs!
Its great mouth hungers me;
I feed it feet.

Sprawled laughing, bell-sound in my lungs,
Prone underneath,
The sun all gone to shards, asplinter in my lids,
My mouth blood-rust from giving shout
To answer iron shout of bell:
Here's heaven! heaven! heaven!
Bang. Not hell. Not hell. Bang! Not hell!

Until the church below is full of summer breath
And priest then wanders forth to make discussion,
His nave much shaken to sense with wild concussion.
Now one must cease.
But sometimes in the uptilt, ever-frenzied dance, forgets;
So priest must send on mission yet another boy
To stop the bell
To still the belfry and the iron-spilled joy.
Now lie there yet awhile, fine lad, upon your back,
As bell tilts down to quiet, soft asimmer.
Long before loves and beds are known you have known this:
Bells are a loud communion,
Belfry-banging bells are bliss.
Glistened with holy sweat you lift your head
And send a bright salt golden rain down free from brow
With one shake, smiling.
It blesses the distant ground.
You touch the bell:
It trembles still with sound.
You touch the sky with glance:
It shivers bright with quakes you've given
It will, long gone days beyond, remember.
You laugh one last triumphant burst.
Great seas of prayer wait murmuring below
Carefully, holding to your soul
And sweet -bruised tender wits,
You descend the belfry stair,
Inexplicably wild with thirst.
R.R.



HOPE AND IMMORTALITY

Leslie Dewart

The Christian hope requires a suitable interpretation of the fact of human mortality. The earliest such interpretations hinged on the concept of the resurrection of the flesh. But before long the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh was elaborated, under the influence of hellenism, with the aid of philosophical doctrines of the immortality of the soul. Although from a certain viewpoint this development was most fruitful, a number of Christian thinkers in recent times, ranging from Karl Barth to Oscar Cullman, have pointed out that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is ultimately subject to very serious objections of a theological and religious nature. The object of this paper is to suggest that this doctrine is also subject to equally serious objections of a philosophical nature, and that, if so, it would be well to consider the desirability, and the feasibility, of grounding the Christian interpretation of human mortality, insofar as this is required by the Christian hope, upon alternative philosophical foundations of a less objectionable sort.

My hypothesis is that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul results from the conjunction of a common empirical datum, namely, the presence of consciousness to itself, with a particular epistemological orientation, namely, the typically Greek idea of knowledge. Insofar as this epistemological orientation is inadequate, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is also inadequate. Insofar as this epistemological orientation might be transcended, mortality, apprehended in the presence of consciousness to itself, might be more suitably reinterpreted. But to understand how this may be done it is necessary in the first place to examine how mortality appears to human self-consciousness before the Greek epistemological perspective is brought to bear upon it.

The presence of the conscious self to itself is an empirical datum which all consciousness possesses, even if not all consciousness conceptus-

lives itself in these very terms. But this primary datum has, since primitive time, made death a very puzzling occurrence. For that presence of consciousness to itself means that no conscious being can experience non-experience. No conscious being can suppose itself to be, without thereby supposing itself to be conscious and able to experience. Hence, human consciousness cannot imagine itself to be non-existent. Man cannot understand death, because death is by definition beyond all possible experience: if death is the cessation of experience there cannot be an experience of death, and in particular none of the state of being dead. It is not so much that death is frightening or dreadful, but that it is mysterious.

For we know that death will come. So, we ask: what will being dead be like? But this very question supposes that he will experience death and being dead, whereas death and being dead apparently mean that there is an end to man's consciousness and experience. Thus, accepting as a fixed datum the mortality of man, the most common reaction of primitive culture is to believe that death is unnatural to man. Death is, to be sure, a universal event; but it is always an extraordinary one. It happens only because of a cause extrinsic to human nature, whether it be the action of evil powers, or a divine punishment on account of a primeval fall from grace, or the like. But to this belief primitive cultures add a further conviction: that the mechanism or physiology of death, as it were, is the separation from the body of an element other than the body, whether the breath, or the "spirit" or the life-fire, or other source of heat, motion and activity. This element must be supposed to be present in life in order to account for the all-too-evident differences between the body and the corpse. To a primitive mind—and, to tell the truth, to the not-so-primitive mind as well—it is an almost tangible fact that at death "something" leaves the body, for the corpse appears to lack "something" that the living person once "had."

Hence, primitive cultures almost invariably believe, I do not say in the immortality of the soul, and least of all the immortality of the self, but certainly in the survival of the soul. That is, the soul survives death in exactly the same way as the body does, namely, by "remaining" behind as the residue of death. But the surviving spirit or soul is no more the human self than is the dead body. Indeed, the surviving spirit is less than human, and its existence is frequently thought by primitive peoples to be "lower" than that of living beings and corpses (for corpses, of course, inhabit the same world as do living beings). The soul may undergo its own eventual death or disappearance, in the same ways does the corpse, or else it may come back to life in a new body in order to make up a new man. In some cultures it is even thought that it may continue to exist forever in its own world. But in any event the surviving soul, if not a sort of living, disembodied corpse, at least a sort of pseudo-self—precisely because it survives the separation of body and soul, that is, the death of the human self. It must be emphasized that in this belief that which survives is not the self, but the spiritual residue of

death. It is not without significance that primitive cultures, which are not always afraid of dying, are almost universally afraid of the dead.

The mystery of death is apt to become frightening only when human reflection reaches the sophistication of Greek philosophy, when the possibility of having to face a level of experience beyond death is contemplated for the first time: death is frightening only when we imagine that we will become conscious of being dead. For the conclusion of the Greek philosophers after Socrates, if I may speak generically, was the opposite of that of most primitive cultures: the death of man cannot be the death of the self. At first sight the human self appears identical with the subject of death, but reflections show otherwise. The *I* which I see and feel, and the *You* I behold, are not the real *I* and the real *You*. The real human self must be rather the invisible ghost or intangible soul which is the principle of life of the mortal body which is distinct from it. It is true that we do not experience this soul or ghost in the same way in which we experience the body. Nevertheless, we know it by its effects, namely, consciousness. The ghost or soul, therefore, which is distinct from the body, is the carrier of selfhood and (at least potentially) of consciousness. It is the body, not the soul, that is alien to myself. Therefore, man is mortal, but only in the sense that he goes through that event called death. But death is merely the separation of the corruptible body from the true self, that is, the soul. Therefore, a man's selfhood is not mortal, since it pertains to that part of him which is not subject to the bodily process of death.

Thus, the expression "the immortality of the soul" is equivocal. In primitive cultures the belief frequently described by anthropologists and historians of religion in these terms is really a belief in "the survival of the soul," whereas the doctrine transmitted to Christianity from the Greeks under the same title is actually best called "the immortality of the self." The suggestion I will now attempt to substantiate is that the doctrine of the survival of the soul was transmuted into the doctrine of the immortality of the self through the instrumentality of a simple device: the Greek identification of the soul, which is capable of existing in separation from the body, with the principle of selfhood and consciousness. But this identification in turn was the outcome of the Greek interpretation of the presence of consciousness to itself in the light of a certain epistemological orientation. I refer to the twofold assumption that knowledge is the overcoming of the entitative isolation of consciousness from being and, conversely, that being is that whose isolation from consciousness can be overcome.

I have called this a twofold assumption because it involves two views intimately fused into one closed philosophical circle. The first is that reality is constituted as reality by its own intrinsic structures, that is, by its own self-identity, by its necessary intelligibility precisely as contained, as isolated and unrelated to every other reality: every being is what it is, and what-it-is-not has nothing to do with what-it-is. This is why consciousness may be taken to be the result of an operative "second act" of a substance whose first act is the act of being. And

is the indispensable condition of identifying the soul and the conscious self. The second view is that knowledge, which is the result of the operation of the power of a substance, is the intentional or subjective acquisition of the perfection which constitutes the known in its reality—though in the known this perfection obtains, of course, entitatively, or by way of being. And this is the indispensable condition of the separability of the conscious self from its own body. These two views coalesce in the idea that the analysis of immediate experience reveals a subject and an object, that is, it reveals a being whose act is the operation of knowing, and another being whose act is the act of being and which is, therefore, knowable precisely as being. In brief, being is knowable precisely as being, for it is constituted as being by its very knowability—that is, by its aptitude for becoming the object of the cognitive operations of a knowing being.

The latter is, of course, the fundamental proposition of all Greek and Christian metaphysics. Its earliest documented formulation is the text of Parmenides' Fragment 3. "that which is and that which is thought are the same." At first sight this principle does not appear to imply the immortality of the soul. Nevertheless it does. Consciousness is the outcome of an act of a knower, an operation performed by a subsistent, substantial reality. This reality, however, cannot be the body, because bodies cannot transcend the condition of bodies, whereas this is precisely what the human soul, as principle of consciousness, does. For insofar as the soul is conscious it knows bodies as such. Indeed, it knows even its own body as distinct from itself: If I can think of *my* body, then I am not my body, precisely because my body is *mine*. Hence, the substantial reality which underlies conscious activity is other than the substantial reality which is the body. Moreover, this substantial reality, the soul which is the principle of selfhood and consciousness, is not subject to death. When man knows himself he apprehends his own body as he does every other body, namely, as an object which is distinct from the subjective act by which that object is known. But this act is an operation: it must be the act of a substantial reality. This substantial reality cannot be the body. It follows that the substantial reality which has the power to know bodies as such (and, therefore, the power to know its body as its body)—which, to repeat, is possible only if it can know its own act of knowing bodies, or its body, as an act which is distinct from the body which is its object of knowledge—cannot subsist by the subsistence of its body, or indeed by the subsistence of any body. It is, therefore, self-subsistent. If so, it does not cease to exist when the body ceases to exist. On the contrary, the body exists only because it is animated by the soul, because it is comprehended by the soul and, in brief, because it is the body of the soul. Death is, therefore, strictly (and not merely descriptively) definable as the separation of body and soul. This separation results in the extinction of the body but, evidently, not in that of the human, self-subsistent soul.

I have emphasized the epistemological bases of the Christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul in order to point to the Achilles heel of the

traditional interpretation of the Christian hope. For this epistemology is difficult to maintain today. The gradual but genuinely revolutionary discovery of the otherwise disparate philosophical movements of the last one hundred years has been the realization that the irreducible quality of subject and object within the field of experience is itself an empirical datum. This, of course, had never been denied by classical, mediaeval or modern philosophy. But it had never been taken account of by them. Yet, this is what undercuts the traditional concept of knowledge at its very roots. For it means that human knowledge cannot be an event that happens *after* the dichotomy of object and subject is itself *known*. Hence, the dichotomy of object and subject is not the pre-condition of knowledge. It is its outcome. Knowledge is not the overcoming of the opposition or mutual isolation of object and subject but, on the contrary, the introduction of opposition, and even isolation, within the world of undifferentiated being. It follows that consciousness is not an operation of some sort of non-corporeal, but nevertheless substantial, reality, namely, the soul. And it also follows that the self is not some sort of peculiar objective being or substance which underlies the experience of every other objective being, including the experience of its own body. The selfhood of man cannot be adequately understood as *underlying* consciousness, but as *constituting* consciousness.

Hence, conscious personality is not analyzable into an accidental operation and its underlying substantial subject. *A fortiori*, consciousness is not an operation of a self-subsisting substantial reality, nor can it subsist independently of the subsistence of man as a whole. In short, death cannot be the separation of the body and its self-subsisting source of subsistence. Death is the destruction of man as a whole. It is definable as the closure of the possibilities open to human nature as such. Death ends the existence of the human self. This is the first of the two key premises on which the reinterpretation of Christian hope today must depend.

The second I mentioned at the outset: consciousness cannot experience non-experience. It would be as stultifying to suppose that the finality of death contradicts the reality of human consciousness and the irresistible self-creativity of human nature as to suppose that the real aspirations of human consciousness can be realized without reckoning with the utter, stark reality of death. Thus, the situation from which we can today proceed to reinterpret the Christian hope is this: we know that man dies, but we do not yet know what death is. But at least we know what death is not. This may appear a meager achievement to show for twenty-five centuries of speculation on the problem. It may well be, however, that upon closer examination this is an important gain for the history of human consciousness as the primeval, equally negative discovery of the dawning human consciousness, that man is *not* alone. Religious speculation has long proceeded on the exclusive basis of awareness of transcendental infinity. Perhaps it should now also take equally weighty account of immanent finitude. I hope I shall have the opportunity to return to this theme in my subsequent work.



NARCISSUS IMPERATOR

by Charles Edward Eaton

Beware of the hinged man looking down into water;
He is not publicly entitled to two selves.
All of this preening and self-love is no laughing matter.

One may be slightly more blurred than the other, but the double
bust
Makes its own implacable and imperious angle—
There is the reclining world looking up into the one we trust.

Better by half that we should deal with just torso.
The lower part can wait somewhere its own duet
And listen if dualities embrace, exchange a thrust below.

The Emperor with the great head and throbbing veins is yet
no fool:
If you must be sawed in half, do it yourself;
Pretend the other part, well-weighted, is floating in the pool.

There is something imposing, even debonair and suave,
Is the way a man looks boldly down upon himself and does
not flinch.
Should the empire fall—this is all that he would save.

Something frightening too, something like a doomed foretaste
Of ruck and rubble that crash around the two-faced soul,
The city that would not yield without question, savaged and laid
to waste.

THE MULE

by Charles Edward Eaton

Do not attempt to deceive me about the mule—
With all other animals you can sometimes have your way,
But I am stuck with the mule, and, on his account,

I will not let you play the fool.

Such statements should have behind them some banked fire—
Unless I am opulent in feeling, I cannot espouse the animal cause—
As if, in some obscure way, he guaranteed desire.

He is there to draw the richest carcass when it cries
For white horses and handsome, old baroque carriages —
He will walk in your cortege, waiting on the soul, his thick
tail switching flies.

But do not mistake his bedrock nature and design.
This is the subliminal place where those who own the world
Retire and contemplate how best to reassess, assign.

It begins with the mule. There is no other knowledge of resource—
You will deceive yourself completely if you start in at the other
end

And write up your accounts in terms of carriages and horses

Then, and only then, the dandy comes riding home—
We will not need to ask ourselves, as we admire our native
How many mules it may have cost to raise this princely sum.



SHAKESPEARE'S APPEAL TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN: A REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF PARALLEL THEMES

Benjamin H. Bowling

The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.
(HAMLET, III, ii, 633-34)

I

Really does one see the names Abraham Lincoln and William Shakespeare together but in brief mention of the former's preference for the literature of the latter. Their historical positions and individual merit are so definitive that any connection at this point would seem an inconsequential addition to an already voluminous knowledge. But more than one man reading another's plays, the dedicated student will find in Lincoln's encounter with Shakespeare the convergence of two fierce engines of human search, each in pursuit of a common end. The result is more a meeting than a collision of minds, and from this emerges a pronounced recognition of the wisdom at the core of human experience and suffering. This apparently gave Shakespeare a greater margin of favor in Lincoln's mind than other poets he had read; indeed we have only to observe in the accounts of Lincoln's conversations with friends and associates numerous references to passages from Shakespeare's plays. But greater than recognition is response, and it is in this area that the President displays a particular affinity of spirit with the Poet. It is one matter for a man to watch a play such as *HENRY IV* and recognize in its plot of civil war and betrayal and theme of honor and the responsibilities of rule similar themes outside the playhouse, but it is another thing entirely to stand at the head of a nation torn in fratricidal war, to be a man accused of tyranny and mass murder, and witness the same play on two stages. Sharing like roles in unlike situations invites identification. Working from the margin of preference afforded Shakespeare and the parallels of theme in his plays to those events surrounding Lincoln, this report seeks to establish the nature and scope of Lincoln's response to Shakespeare through considerations of the substance of the Poet's universal appeal, the forces that moved the President's interest to the theater, and a review of thematic parallels.

II

Initially, a very serious (and basic) question arises: Why Shakespeare? Of all the writers familiar to Lincoln, why did he especially like this one? And how could a seventeenth century playwright have any discernible effect upon an American president two hundred years later? The answer lies in the Poet's universal appeal and well deserves special consideration to appreciate fully the appeal his work had to Lincoln.

Few artists have wielded their medium with the power that Shakespeare did the theater. Like any other medium of art, it is perishable, or more correctly, has the capacity to be so. Yet, what is it that makes an art form wither and becomes sterile in one man's hands and endure at the touch of another? What is it about permanence in the arts that has eluded would-be greats through the centuries? Certainly it is not the medium alone, for none can guarantee success. The only other alternative is the artist himself. If Shakespeare could serve as the ideal enduring artist, what outstanding quality would separate his work from

that of so many others? The answer is so simple and obvious that its importance is often minimized and taken for granted: Shakespeare is completely and solely human. Indeed, this is too simple an answer for responsible study without qualification.

Previous to his time mankind had taken great pains to improve its collective image and assure itself of greater rewards than the miserable wages of this world. A perpetual topic of debate was the distinction between "man as he should be as opposed man as he is, between the theoretically good appearance and the actually evil reality."¹ Needless to say, the results were often less than satisfying. Nor is it necessary to elaborate the fact that while attempting to work man into the divine scheme of things much of his humanity was lost. But, then, that was the idea exactly, as if saying as much would bring about the actuality. Illustrative of these efforts is the remark by Leon Battista Alberti, an architect of the fifteenth century:

To you is given a body more graceful than other animals, to you power of apt and various movements, to you most sharp and delicate senses, to you wit, reason, memory like an immortal God.²

Some men, however, found fault in this optimistic tone, and in this dubious celestial pursuit altogether, among them the French humanist, Michel de Montaigne. Writing in the sixteenth century, he felt that "in trying to make themselves angels, men transform themselves into beasts."³ Montaigne saw no real distinction between men and the other animals, which snatched man out of any crucial place in the natural hierarchy. "Shakespeare" grew out of this conflict.

Few words would better capsule the tone of Shakespeare's work than conflict. In his younger years he had assumed optimistically that men were basically truthful, but in time he was able to see deeper into human life, finding opposing forces of betrayal and selfishness. His work reflects the maturing of his attitudes, passing from the hopeful, constructive English histories, to the confident comedies, to the brooding tragedies. His

main line of development was toward dual worlds of matter and spirit, in which the important actions were taken in the world of the mind; and in which the dramatic conflict was basically between external and internal realities. That this conflict should so frequently take the guise of a battle between appearance and truth, between shadow and substance, shows that Shakespeare had already accorded the victory to inner reality.⁴

If the gospel according to Shakespeare had to be compressed into a single sentence, it would read like this: the only knowledge a man can trust is that which rises out of his own subjective human experience, and the only truth extant is founded in his own ethical conviction. It is a doctrine of complete humanity, trusting or allowing nothing outside that humanity.

His moral awareness is expressed less through articulated ideas than through intuitions, or instincts based on experience, or speculation, or assumptions, or actions taken by unique and complete individuals in particular circumstances because their characters make other actions improbable.⁵

This use by Shakespeare of unique but conceivable characters, so placed in the drama that they are both judge and judged, preserves his idea that the "dignity and complexity of human life as it is actually lived must not be explained away by infantile simplicity and storybook motivations."⁶ Thus the characters are potentially real and, given the proper situations, manifest their human frailty. It is this assemblage of kings and usurpers, noble men and madmen, that speaks to Abraham Lincoln of the nature of man.

III

"Some thing I do wrong to go to the opera and the theatre, but it rests me."⁷ The presidency has been called an office that kills, and none

make this better than those who are caught in it. Abraham Lincoln was no exception. Remarking on the staggering responsibilities and pressures of office another president said:

When I ran for the Presidency of the United States, I knew this country faced serious challenges, but I could not realize — nor could any man realize who does not bear the burdens of this office — how heavy and constant would be those burdens.⁸

John F. Kennedy's words a century after the Lincoln Administration could easily have been Lincoln's own describing the tremendous burdens of civil war, regardless of the expansion of the office since then.

Leonard Grover, the owner of one of Washington's few theaters at the time, noted on the evening of Lincoln's re-nomination in 1864 that the President had come to the theater alone. (Who, asks poet-biographer Carl Sandburg, would think of looking for him in a theater box on this particular night?) He doesn't record the name of the play, as we soon see that it doesn't matter:

The solitary presence of Mr. Lincoln on that occasion, when the one thought of the entire nation was upon him, when the White House was invaded and surrounded by an army of partisans, office-holders, and office-seekers, argues that he sought the theatre as a sanctum of repose, his tired soul and body seeking a little rest, a little relaxation.⁹

Like Shakespeare, Lincoln was faced with the conflict over the nature of man, but this time the debate took on urgent tones as the country lay torn and bleeding over the bitter matter of personal slavery. Lincoln was stymied for a long time as he himself lay divided over diplomacy. On the one hand was his official duty to preserve the Union in the most effective way possible; on the other hand was his personal wish that all men be free. Lincoln outlined his duty in a letter to a New York newspaperman, Horace Greely, in August of 1862.¹⁰

Some would contend here that the act of emancipation was a purely political tool, employed more for the evil that it cast upon the South than the enlightened justice it gave the North, and brought out only when England and France might have come to the aid of the Confederacy. Indeed it would make for somewhat less than admirable motives on Lincoln's part. But the conflict remains, and one could argue that the presence of such an inner dispute is a good sign. Official responsibilities often demand a priority over personal desires, and getting the two to work in unison is not an easy task, often requiring one to sail for a time against the popular tide. Even now the position Lincoln took can be debated, but indications are strongly in favor of the idea that by the time he acted, ethical conviction and not political advantage was the motivating force. Such were the pressures that he faced, and came to the theater to escape.

While the theater plainly gave Lincoln a needed rest, he was particularly vulnerable, as president, to identification with the works of Shakespeare. He had been first introduced to Shakespeare, along with Byron, Burns, and other poets, in the early 1830's by a literary-minded neighbor, Jack Kelso. Of all his reading, he preferred Shakespearean drama, being absorbed in its "masterful human insight and economy of words, its allegory, rhythm and plots,"¹¹ and we know that he read it often. Yet the historians and biographers are silent about the way in which Lincoln responded to Shakespeare in his youth. At this early stage the reaction might have been no more than a matter of recognition; the response seems to be reserved for the years of the presidency, when his early, purely literary, interest elapsed into an intense affinity of spirit as he experienced a role similar to those of Shakespeare's kings.

IV

On November 14, 1863, (just a few days before delivering the Gettys-

burg Address) President Lincoln went to Ford's Theatre in Washington to see *HENRY IV*. He liked the performance of James Hackett in the part of Falstaff so much that he returned to see it again the following evening. Hackett afterward sent the President a copy of his book, *NOTES AND COMMENTS ON SHAKESPEARE*, to which Lincoln replied (in part):

Some of Shakespeare's plays I have never read, while others I have gone over perhaps as frequently as any unprofessional reader. Among the latter are *LEAR*, *RICHARD THIRD*, *HENRY EIGHTH*, *HAMLET*, and especially *MACBETH*. I think nothing equals *MACBETH*. It is wonderful. Unlike you gentlemen of the profession, I think the soliloquy in *HAMLET* commencing "O my offense is rank," surpasses that commencing "To be or not to be." But pardon this small attempt at criticism.¹²

Here Lincoln provides a direct admission of the appeal of Shakespeare. He lists here five plays he has obviously read well, gives his favorite and reveals a striking preference for certain lines in *HAMLET*. This last item is most important in that it shows Lincoln to be not as much the "unprofessional reader" as was his wont. On an occasion of Lincoln's reciting this speech, poet Carl Sandburg adds in preface:

Then the one man in the world in that hour charged by his enemies with having bloodier hands, more foul with mass murder, than any other man that ever lived, recited from *HAMLET* his favorite passage. Ambition, power, justice, bribery, repentance, the most darkly woven themes of personal human life, ran through it. He took up the words, throwing himself into the spirit of it.¹³

(Then he recited the pensive soliloquy of the King over his guilt.)

O, my offense is rank, it smells to heaven;

It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,

A brother's murder . . . ¹⁴ *HAMLET*, III, (iii, 36-72)

From scattered references and third person accounts, we learn from biographer Sandburg of eleven of Shakespeare's plays with which Lincoln was at least acquainted. Among these are the above-mentioned five, and also *HENRY IV*, *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*, *THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR* (all three of which Lincoln saw on the stage, *KING JOHN*, *HENRY VI*, and *RICHARD II*). We cannot know why Lincoln chose to read these particular plays, and indeed it isn't very important: the outstanding fact is that he read them. To claim that he did so for the parallels some of them present is more than we can prove. In this untreated area of Lincoln studies we can only hope to amplify the point, being able neither to confirm or deny much of anything. With this much clear, we can objectively approach an examination of themes.

MACBETH

This play, Lincoln's favorite, is the shortest and simplest of Shakespeare's great tragedies. In it he advances the idea that "there is no escape from conscience,"¹⁵ and creates such a struggle in the mind of the hero/villain that he "suffers more from his own vice than from external retribution."¹⁶ Macbeth is a noble character moved by his own ambition, and destroyed by his own pride. His murder of the King, the very soul of the state, represents the destruction of the political structure. Macduff, reporting the foul deed, cries out in anguish:

Confusion now hath made her masterpiece!

Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope

The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence

The life of the building.¹⁷

This confusion is purged only with the fulfillment of the witches' prophecies and the slaying of Macbeth.

Lincoln knew only too well that there was "no escape from conscience," and the constant burden of the war, the casualty figures that crossed

his desk, and pleas from countless wives and mothers of soldiers never let him forget it. Through the dark days of the war, he often read or recited favorite passages from plays that he especially liked. On one occasion, during the first battle of the Wilderness, he was stunned at reports of twenty thousand killed; a friend stopping by the White House one evening found the President reading Shakespeare. "Let me read to you from *MACBETH* . . . it comes to me tonight like a consolation."¹⁸ Then he read Macbeth's speech on the utter meaninglessness of human life:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time . . . (*MACBETH*, V, v, 19-28)

On another occasion, he had gone to the theater with his youngest son to see a production of *MACBETH*. Following the brutal slaughter of his family, Macduff and Malcolm muse over the fate that has befallen Scotland:

MALCOLM: Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there
Weep our sad bosoms empty.
MACDUFF: Let us rather
Hold fast the mortal sword, and like good men
Bestride our down-fall'n birthdom. Each new morn
New windows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face . . .²⁰

It was reported that on hearing these lines

Mr. Lincoln leaned back in his chair out of the shadows, "and for a long time wore a sad, sober face, as if suddenly his thoughts had wandered from the playroom far away to where his great armies were contesting."²¹

Indeed his reply of conscience to the respect and responsibilities of the leader and the led, one to the other, is clear in the closing paragraph of his Second Inaugural Address:

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan — to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.²²

In this manner, Abraham Lincoln hoped to bring about a return to the order and internal security in American life.

KING LEAR

LEAR is a play concerned with authority and allegiance, with "love as a social obligation."²³ Shakespeare weaves together a theme of personal love and a greater one of social order, disrupts the two in a fury of rash and unreasoning self-will and heartlessness, culminates the disorder in fratricidal war, and restores order in the end with patience, love, and reason. As in his other great tragedies, Shakespeare builds

on the proposition that the workings of evil as well as good within the minds of his heroes must leave them better men at the end than at the beginning. Virtue is acquired through experience. And it is inevitably acquired by all except the careless ignorant or the wilfully selfish.²⁴

LEAR'S themes of authority and allegiance are alternately lost and rediscovered. The King profanes the mutual respect between rules and subjects when he disowns his youngest daughter for her modest reply as to how much she loves him. She says:

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty
According to my bond, no more nor less.²⁵

His reckless vanity blinds him to truth, and Shakespeare uses great slight imagery in communicating this point. The blinded Gloucester remarks in effect that when he had eyes he did not see, and now sees belatedly. The rule emerges that "a man may see all, if he but look properly."²⁶ As Lear's vanity is replaced with wisdom, he acquires a

greater insight of truth and remarks on the dispensing of justice:

Thou rascal hound, hold thy bloody hand!
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;
Thou hotly lust'st to use her in the kind
For which thou whip'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.²⁷

In the years before the presidency, Lincoln used to read from *LEAR* to his friends and struggled as a lawyer, and later in the great debates with Stephen Douglas, to make people "look properly;" in the war years he must have often thought of this as Americans fought a war because of blindness. He must have often thought, too, in the manner of King Lear about the way justice could be dispensed after the war was over. Would men be moved by that perfect impartiality so necessary to correct decisions? He spoke often of his wish "to let 'em (the South) off easy," but with his death, men's blindness persisted and a vengeance was sown, the fruits of which we are still reaping today.

RICHARD II

In this clearly constructed political study, Shakespeare advances his concept of the ideal state as a perfect balance of respect and responsibility between the subject and the ruler. In typical Shakespearean style, this idea is intimated rather than preached, and is effected through the conflict of two separate outlooks, each with distinct strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand is King Richard II, a man at once sensitive and inconsiderate, imaginative and headstrong, and firmly couched in the belief that his will as king is the only right. Richard is a bad king, but he is the rightful king.

His weakness as a man, therefore, springs at least in part from a narrow interpretation of the divine right of kings — that his right to do as he pleases cannot be questioned. Since this flaw in his character is fatal both to himself and England, it is evident that Shakespeare does not accept such a conception of divine right.²⁸

On the other hand is Henry Bolingbroke, an efficient ruler with a keen sense of timing and right action, but he is the usurper.

Primarily under fire in this play is the question of the conduct of the ruler and the real degree of his absolutism. Richard puts total confidence in his right as "God's anointed" until he finds himself abandoned and alone. Lincoln was sometimes heard to recite Richard's desperate speech:

For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings . . .
I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus,
How can you say to me, I am a king?²⁹ RICHARD II, III, ii, 155-177)

(This echoes Montaigne's wry remark, "Sit we upon the highest throne in the world, yet sit we only upon our own tail."³⁰)

Few public officials have exhibited as great a degree of personal humility as did Abraham Lincoln. But such humility doesn't necessarily constitute weakness. Only the foolishly ignorant would argue that Lincoln wasn't any extremely powerful president, and under situations different from those prevailing during his administration, his detractors' charges of tyranny would have had a greater audience. In Lincoln's time, a strong commitment to the general will and good of the people found a strong response. He wrote in the 1830's:

The people know their rights and they are never slow to assert them, when they are invaded. Let them call for an investigation, and I shall stand ready to respond to the call.

I believe it is universally understood and acknowledged, that all men will act correctly, unless they have a motive to do otherwise.³¹

HENRY IV, Part One

HENRY IV is of special interest here, even if of small significance, owing mention in that Lincoln saw it only five days before delivering his Gettysburg Address. In many ways this play is a continuation of the principles outlined in *RICHARD II*, with some shifts of emphasis to the questions of rebellion, the responsibilities of rule and the nature of honor. Bolingbroke—Henry IV—is now threatened by the principles of rebellion that brought him to power. The theme of valor is embodied in Hotspur and Prince Hal, as they each converge in spirit from different poles (ambition, idealism in Hotspur, an all-comprehending sense of responsibility in Prince Hal) to one noble attitude of honor on the field at Shrewsbury. Falstaff surveys such a prospect of letting one's blood with the disdain of the comfortable materialist: "The better part of valor is discretion, in the which better part I have saved my life."²²

Lincoln was at least still in the process of revising his remarks for the dedication when he saw this play at Ford's Theatre; the noble theme of Hotspur and Hal is echoed when the President says, "We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live." And he might seem to remember Falstaff questioning the worth of dying: "... that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain."²³

It would be highly presumptuous and bold to say that Shakespeare had much to do with the writing of the Gettysburg Address, but on the matter of honor and dedication there is an unquestionable similarity of theme.

HAMLET

"Who's there?"—and thus begins a great play of conscience, a search for that which lurks in the dark. *HAMLET's* prime struggle is between appearance and reality. The question extends far beyond the individual exponent, man, and dwells on the entire order of things. The play is impregnated with painful intuitions that indeed seem to transform Hamlet from an individual to the universal symbol of mankind seeking truth. Among these are:

the death of something noble, the powerlessness of the good or the rational, the decay of that which was beautiful, the betrayal of trust, the savage insurgence of the base.²⁴

We have already seen Lincoln's expressed delight in Claudius' soliloquy and noted Sandburg's comment that Lincoln bore similar criticism from his enemies; it is not difficult to project the notion that the President shared these same intuitions gnawing away at the fiber of America, and expanded as they snapped at him too. Looking daily at a war that was to consume six hundreds thousand lives, could he not marvel with Hamlet about man?

What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty, in form and moving! How express and admirable in action! How like an angel in apprehension! How like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me.²⁵

Lincoln's thoughts were plagued by many of the same forces found in *HAMLET*: the death of the constitutional union, the failure of compromise and settlement, the decay of human brotherhood, the betrayal of secession, and the brutal horror of war that threatened to bleed America white. The country was drawn part like fighters retiring into their corners awaiting the bell.

Hamlet is a hunter of consciences, a walking Nemesis. His remarks to the King become more and more flagrant and flaunting, until the disguise seems

hardly worth the candle as the two are drawn closer together is the intimacy of their knowledge.³⁶

"The terrible intimacy of their knowledge"—that is the essence of appeal of Shakespeare to Lincoln. The affinity of spirit in Lincoln a bitter but accepting response to the truth he has already come to in the loneliness of power.

Hamlet is Shakespeare, Lincoln the King.

Resolves one: "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King."

Answers the other: "O, my offense is rank."

FOOTNOTES

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- 8 Marcus Cunliffe, *The American Heritage History of the Presidency* (New York, 1968), p. 361.
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- 12 Basler, pp. 718-719.
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- 14 *Hamlet*, III, iii, 36-72.
- 15 Stauffer, p. 210.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 210.
- 17 *Macbeth*, II, iii, 71-74.
- 18 Sandburg, p. 47.
- 19 *Macbeth*, V, v, 19-28.
- 20 *Macbeth*, IV, iii, 1-6.
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- 27 *Lear*, VI, vi, 61-68.
- 28 Stauffer, pp. 88-89.
- 29 *Richard II*, III, ii, 155-177.
- 30 Clark, p. 163.
- 31 Kempf, p. 179.
- 32 *1 Henry IV*, V, iv, 116-121.
- 33 Basler, p. 734.
- 34 Stauffer, p. 125.
- 35 *Hamlet*, II, ii, 315-321.
- 36 Stauffer, pp. 127-128.

notes on

CONTRIBUTORS

- Ray Bradbury, known universally for his socially-oriented science-fiction, has honored *Agora* with his newest poem. Though something of a departure from the format we have come to expect from Mr. Bradbury, the high quality of this work is certainly not unexpected.
- Benjamin Bowling is an Abbey sophomore being printed for the first time in *Agora*. His essay displays high scholarship while simultaneously avoiding pedantry and affectation.
- Patti Capone is being printed again in this issue to the delight of *Agora* followers. Her prose is characterized by the same vivid images and integrated emotions that mark her poetry.
- Leslie Dewart's essay on immortality continues the series of brilliant contributions which Mr. Dewart has made to the cause of de-hellenization. His books include *The Future of Belief*, *The Foundations of Belief* and his latest, *Reality, Language and Belief*.
- Charles Edward Eaton has generously contributed two poems, noteworthy for their elegance of phrasing. Runner-up for the National Book Award in 1957, Mr. Eaton's latest volume of poetry is *On The Edge of the Knife*.
- Kenneth Rader, a new contributor from New Jersey, has graced this issue of *Agora* with two poems of pristine clarity and charm.
- Tom Stanley is making the latest of many contributions to *Agora* with a poem manifesting his usual precise craft and technique.

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