LEABHARLANN CHOLÁISTE NA TRÍONÓIDE, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH | TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY DUBLIN
Ollscoil Átha Cliath | The University of Dublin

Terms and Conditions of Use of Digitised Theses from Trinity College Library Dublin

Copyright statement

All material supplied by Trinity College Library is protected by copyright (under the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 as amended) and other relevant Intellectual Property Rights. By accessing and using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you acknowledge that all Intellectual Property Rights in any Works supplied are the sole and exclusive property of the copyright and/or other IPR holder. Specific copyright holders may not be explicitly identified. Use of materials from other sources within a thesis should not be construed as a claim over them.

A non-exclusive, non-transferable licence is hereby granted to those using or reproducing, in whole or in part, the material for valid purposes, providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. Where specific permission to use material is required, this is identified and such permission must be sought from the copyright holder or agency cited.

Liability statement

By using a Digitised Thesis, I accept that Trinity College Dublin bears no legal responsibility for the accuracy, legality or comprehensiveness of materials contained within the thesis, and that Trinity College Dublin accepts no liability for indirect, consequential, or incidental, damages or losses arising from use of the thesis for whatever reason. Information located in a thesis may be subject to specific use constraints, details of which may not be explicitly described. It is the responsibility of potential and actual users to be aware of such constraints and to abide by them. By making use of material from a digitised thesis, you accept these copyright and disclaimer provisions. Where it is brought to the attention of Trinity College Library that there may be a breach of copyright or other restraint, it is the policy to withdraw or take down access to a thesis while the issue is being resolved.

Access Agreement

By using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you are bound by the following Terms & Conditions. Please read them carefully.

I have read and I understand the following statement: All material supplied via a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of a thesis is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

RANDALL JARRELL, CANONICITY, MULTIPLICITY, TRAVESTY

The Apocalyptic Margins of "the still, human center"

Michael Hinds

Ph. D.

School of English
Trinity College, Dublin

September 2000

TRINITY COLLEGE
1 2 MAR 2001
LIBRARY DUBLIN
Thesis
6245

DECLARATIONS

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any university other than Trinity College Dublin and that, except where otherwise stated, the material contained in this thesis is my own unaided work. I agree that the Library may lend or copy the thesis upon request.

Michael Hinds

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Jarrellians are fairly thin on the ground, and for that their work has been all the more valuable to me in providing a foundation for my thesis.

I wish to acknowledge and thank Ron Callan, Philip Coleman, Moyra Haslett, Patrick Healy, Philip McGowan and Stephen Wilson for having brought variously obscure material concerning Jarrell to my attention. Michael West has done this in addition to being a vital critic and occasional editor. The School of English at Trinity College, Dublin, has provided indispensable support and assistance at times. In particular, I would like to thank Professor Nicholas Grene for his encouragement and guidance throughout my time at Trinity, and also for giving me the chance to live and work in Japan. At the University of Tokyo, Professor Yasuo Endoh provided me with an opportunity to give my research on Jarrell a public airing in The University of Tokyo International Seminar on American Studies. Thanks to him, and to other valued and helpful colleagues in Japan such as George and Claire Hughes, Robin Gerster, Clive Collins and Sandra Lucore. I would also like to thank the Irish Association of American Studies for having given me a forum for discussing Jarrell on two occasions.

My supervisor, Stephen Matterson, has for a long time now been a source of good counsel and intellectual stimulation; this thesis would have remained an unformed mass of rough paper and notebooks in cardboard boxes without his rigorous criticisms, timely innovations and sheer persistence. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work under him. The faults of this thesis are many, and all mine.

My wife, Christine, has tirelessly edited and processed this thesis with indecent regard for her own sanity. I want to express my deepest gratitude to her for motivating me with humour and guile to complete this thesis, particularly when the temptation to quit became strong.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the generosity, forbearance and tolerance of my mother and father, Kathleen and Dick Hinds, in helping me to achieve just about everything I have ever wanted to do. I dedicate this thesis to them.

ABSTRACT

RANDALL JARRELL, CANONICITY, MULTIPLICITY, TRAVESTY:
The Apocalyptic Margins of "the still, human center"
Michael Hinds

The thesis finds that Randall Jarrell's writing fails to meet the expectations of the American canon and travesties the aesthetic conventions of American literary modernism. It is often *kitsch* or melodramatic, it can be unbearably twee, as a novelist he failed to produce narrative, and as a poet he occasionally loses all sense of form or appropriate duration. Crucially and controversially, this analysis is read here as signifying Jarrell's success as a writer, as the flaunting of such conventions was his aim. Contrary to his reputation as a critic who stood for conservatively arch-modernist and high-canonist values, this thesis discovers a calculating maverick who made aesthetic choices rather than errors in judgement, even when it meant producing the kind of vulgar texts that he was supposed to hold in such scorn. Jarrell was committed to travesty and obsessed imaginatively with failure, even if it meant catastrophe for his canonical reception as a *writer* rather than a gifted and eloquent reader of Whitman and Frost.

As to why Jarrell's work effects his erasure from literary history, I argue that it is explicable in terms of the political culture of post-war America as well as the multiple and disparate energies of his writing. Across his discrete range of identities, modes and genres, the continuity of Jarrell's writing is found in his precarious quest to assert the enduring presence of the human. Even in the ethical and existential chaos of a post-war world that he regarded as apocalyptic, Jarrell refused to regard the frailty of human-centred discourse and human values as terminal. Instead, moments of weakness and expressions of frailty and disbelief would become moments of potentializing crisis for Jarrell. Unlike his American contemporaries, with whom he has been unproductively allied, Jarrell's writing is more exploratory than expurgatory. This thesis follows a similar path, not looking to discover an essential Jarrell but rather going into the margins of his work as well as revisiting his more familiar texts. It manifests how deviant aspects of his work provided liberating choices, necessary options to counter the limitations of the role that he perceived literary culture had in mind for him. Furthermore, it performs readings of Jarrell that his discreteness demands; deciding that Jarrell is problematic, it designs and enacts an analysis of Jarrell that will confirm him to be so.

Contents

Summary			i
Abbreviations			iii
Introduction			1
I	Minor Character: The Utility and Canonicity of Randall Jarrell		5
	I	*Group-Values: The Identity of Movements and Canons*	5
	II	*Minor Character: Getting Randall Jarrell Around the Middle Generation*	15
II	What is Jarrellian?		35
	I	*Critic, What Critic?*	35
	II	*Poetic, What Poetic?*	48
	III	*What Development?*	63
	IV	*A(political)?*	68
	V	*"J"*	92
III	Bentham's Benton: Within and Without the Institutions		96
IV	Steam on the Magnifying Glass: Jarrell and the Visual Arts		120
	I	*The Knight, Death and the Devil*	123
	II	*The Bronze David of Donatello*	130
	III	*The Old and the New Masters*	137
V	The Uses of Disenchantment: Writing for Children		148
VI	Jarrellassic Park: Becoming Californian		176
Conclusion			207

Notes 214

Appendix I Dürer 230
Appendix II Donatello 232
Appendix III de La Tour 236
Appendix IV van der Goes 239
Appendix V Kipling/Sendak 241

Bibliography 245

SUMMARY

The introduction, "Ending the Revivals: Setting Randall Jarrell in Motion" indicates the need for a breakthrough in the reception of Randall Jarrell; it does so by indicating the paradigmatic limitations of previous attempts to revive interest in his writing. It sets out a strategy of reading Jarrell's canon as fundamentally atomized, and also suggests that the discreteness of his writing is energizing and premeditated.

The first chapter, "Minor Character", begins by regarding generally how movements became effective authorizers of canonicity in the era of modernism, to the extent that the canon in itself became organized like a literary movement. Consequently, canonical writing is writing that is cognizant of the aesthetics of modernism. Randall Jarrell is introduced as a writer who has been inadequately served by attempts to incorporate him into movement-constructions such as "the middle generation" or "midcentury quartet" of American poetry. The minor role that Jarrell has been accorded by such constructions is shown to be the result of their conceptual limitations, in particular their inability to regard the range and complexity of his writing with any flexibility. As a result, Jarrell fails at least as many criteria for membership of "the middle generation" as he fulfils.

Chapter Two, "What Is Jarrellian? ", begins the work of re-defining the scope and substance of Jarrell's writing, having moved him out of the impasse of the movement-context. New approaches to Jarrell are introduced, and new comparisons are made between his writing and that of Kafka, as well as between Jarrell's intellectual self-positioning and the work of another "weak" humanist obsessed with failure, Walter Benjamin.

Chapter Three, "Bentham's Benton: Within and Without the Institutions", applies the analysis of the preceding chapters to Pictures from an Institution(1954), Jarrell's only full-length work of fiction. The work is immediately recognized as *sui generis*, and therefore is formally indicative of Jarrell's determination to position himself decisively outside of the expectations of his literary peers and the prerequisites of the canon. Furthermore, Pictures is seen as a dissident book, simultaneously radical and reactionary, indicating his ability for moving between identities and attitudes. Jarrell makes the classroom and the university into sites of contestation between humanist values of traditional learning and the banal uniformity of liberal progressivist educationalism in post-war American universities. As such, the book is also a response to the hegemonic values of cold war America's containment culture; Jarrell is seen as voiding himself in order to create a range of characters who can express disenchantment with that culture in a multivocal and complex way. The significance of the book's use of musical tropes and themes is looked at in this connection.

Chapter Four, "Steam on the Magnifying Glass: Jarrell and the Visual Arts", looks at Jarrell's poems on the visual arts as crucial texts in his canon. Relating between two forms of expression was an ideal situation for his mediatory instincts. Jarrell may be seen as having turned to paintings and sculptures because of a lack of imaginative options, but his poems upon them are seen as significant in their problematizing of the canonical values and narratives implicit in the art-works. Furthermore, his personal experience of each work becomes in turn an indicator of history consequent upon each painting or sculpture, and Jarrell's experience of war is particularly significant in forming his responses. Jarrell's writing upon art is shown as becoming increasingly apocalyptic, as he attempts to discover images of the human that will endure beyond the termination of the species.

Chapter Five, "The Uses of Disenchantment: Writing for Children", looks at Jarrell's writing for children, an area of his work that has been explored by only a few critics. Not only are the books found to represent defiance of canonical and contemporary expectations, they also take issue with conventions of children's writing itself, deliberately compromising the conventional magic of fairy tales by describing type characters against their own type. Elsewhere, Jarrell produces what are essentially adult allegories under the guise of a children's fable; his writing for children is in fact made to be read by adults, and only occasionally *to* children. In this minor genre and minor key, however, Jarrell does produce an exceptional narrative of post-traumatic recovery and reconstruction, The Animal Family(1965). The book is Jarrell's necessary response to a dark time, written in the aftermath of President Kennedy's assassination and his most confident statement of the human ability for survival and persistence.

The final chapter, "Jarrellassic Park: Becoming Californian", focuses on Jarrell's late poems that are set in California and his partial invention of a happy Los Angeles childhood (when he had in fact been brought up mostly in Nashville, Tennessee). In what have been regarded customarily as Jarrell's most straightforwardly personal poems, this thesis finds opportunism and an admittedly benign duplicity. The chapter looks at the extent of Jarrell's Californian-ness and the implications of his choice to emphasize it. These poems are seen as representing Jarrell's most telling act of impersonation, in that he manages to impersonate both himself and his own father. A hyperreal Hollywood backdrop licenses such mutations of the self, while its illusions are undermined by an uneasy apprehension of the world of work and the wilderness of the desert. Jarrell's other Californian poems are read as obsessed with the violent and dehumanizing conditions of Californian life, indicating the precariousness of the idyll he had created there.

The conclusion explores how Jarrell regarded his own legacy, and then attempts to expand upon that by relating him to contemporary redefinitions of humanism. Jarrell's multiplicity is made comprehensible in those terms, his writing is as problematic as he understood the world to be.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations of books by Randall Jarrell are used (full publishing details can be found in the bibliography):

AF	The Animal Family
BP	The Bat-Poet
CP	The Complete Poems
FbN	Fly by Night
GR	The Gingerbread Rabbit
KA&C	Kipling, Auden & Co.
PA	Poetry and the Age
Pictures	Pictures from an Institution
A Sad Heart	A Sad Heart at the Supermarket
Third Book	The Third Book of Criticism
Letters	Randall Jarrell's Letters: A Biographical and Literary Selection, ed. Mary Jarrell.

Introduction. Ending the Revivals: Setting Randall Jarrell in Motion

The primary impulse for this thesis was a perception that the discourse surrounding Randall Jarrell needed an injection of controversy, and that his work still had not received a critique that read in alternative terms to those of either apologia or dismissal. Rather than attempting to justify Jarrell's writing as being merely worthy of attention or avoidance, this thesis seeks to look at the phenomenon of his reception and to perform readings across the entirety of his output without privileging one manifestation of it over another.

The aim is not simply to survey the shape of Jarrell's writing, but to explore localized areas of it while maintaining that its discrete parts may be related through analysis, to the extent that they may *only* be related through analysis; in other words, to admit and exploit the cumulative complexity of Jarrell's writing, whatever the apparent facility of individual texts. This further entails the reiteration and interrogation of existing writing about Jarrell as well as the appropriation of what has been effectively erased from the Jarrell canon.

Past efforts to revive Jarrell through a specialized interpretation of one generic or thematic aspect of his work have in turn reinforced a modernist orthodoxy of the writer-subject as specialist. Under these terms, the critic's task is to define the nature of the writer-subject's specialism. Yet specialisms contend with one another in Jarrell, and no single form of his writing dominates the others; this is what motivates the discrete design of this thesis, but it is also what has been typically evoked to portray Jarrell as aesthetically irresolute and canonically irresponsible.

Attempts at generating interest in Jarrell can be read paradigmatically; they have centred on publications by either his widow or a critic working with the sanction of his estate – in 1985, Mary von Schrader Jarrell's edition of his letters,[1] in 1991 William H. Pritchard's "official" biography,[2] and in 1999 Mary Jarrell's memoir Remembering Randall[3] (effectively a collation of her previous writings upon her husband) – which have then been given a critical reception that persistently attempts to assess Jarrell's writing in the context of his literary contemporaries and from there assesses the claim to canonicity that his writing can make. The apparently inevitable consequence of this process is the re-assertion of the quality of Jarrell as a critic and of how the rest of his writing is only a qualified success by comparison; an exception is made for his novel, as that appears to manifest him as a critic in a slightly altered persona. Most recently, Travisano's Midcentury Quartet[4] has pretended to re-evaluate Jarrell but in effect has confirmed his position; Brad Leithauser's repackaging of Jarrell's essays has done the same.[5]

Instead of exhuming Jarrell to offer a renewal of the revivification-paradigm, this thesis prefers a strategy of vivisection, to examine Jarrell as the parts of his sum rather than the other way round. Reading Jarrell's canon as atomized and fundamentally disparate, it appears to present a contrived crisis of integrity that was both psychologically and politically motivated. In literary terms, Jarrell is perverse; perceived as an arch-canonist, this thesis demonstrates that such a role was only one of a number of guises he adopted, and that his writing can ultimately be perceived as designedly anti-canonical when the need arose.

The discrete identities and texts Jarrell produced will be read as both comparable and distinct; similarly, if it can be read that Jarrell's division of himself and his writing was subconscious or against his will, it can also be suggested that such division was strategic and deliberated. In this context, Jarrell is here explored as a projective and exhibitionistic writer who assumed many roles by design as much as out of necessity; countering the commonplace notion that Jarrell's writing is flawed because he was flawed as a person or the counter-implication that as a decent man he wrote decent poetry, I instead attempt to disengage myths of personality from his work and to analyze without obligation to attack or defend.

Assuming the political success of his writing even when it appears to represent an aesthetic failure, this approach is duplicitous and necessary; in order to get out of the impasse within which literary history contains Jarrell, its negative judgements upon him have to be indulged and only then got around. So rather than resisting the allegation that Jarrell was a sentimental and irresolute poet, I accept the charge but attempt to provide a cultural context and motive for that poetry, treating it not as aberrant but the writing that Jarrell found most viable in a particular moment.

Attempting to map Jarrell's writing with reference to all its disparate manifestations creates a problem of narration, of how to collate and connect the work without imposing arbitrary coherence upon it. The introductory chapter of this thesis will be an admonitory account of how Jarrell has been narrated, in order to demonstrate how obstructive the use of literary movements can be in any attempt to locate a auto-problematizing figure such as Jarrell.

Having taken Jarrell out of the movement-discourse of the "middle generation poets", the next chapter ("What Is Jarrellian?") begins to explore the disparate strategies of his writing and attempts to introduce new paradigms of comparison and allegory in an attempt to derive a vocabulary adequate to the work. The use of poet-Marxist critics such as Benjamin or post-Freudians such as Deleuze and Guattari in these sections is deliberate and significant; Hannah Arendt's friendship with Benjamin and Jarrell, as well as her written tributes to them, provides a compelling historical context for using one to read the other. Arendt, Benjamin and Jarrell's

mutual interests in Freud, Marx and Kafka in turn enabled the use of Deleuze and Guattari and their concept of minor literature. Going outside of the bounds of Americanist discourse, and its privileging of breakthrough narratives about an integral self, and ignoring modernism's encouragement of movement-based cultural narratives has enabled a reading of Jarrell that could in turn be used to read other problematic American writers; indeed, Deleuze and Guattari have themselves argued that American literature cannot be theorized in general terms, as each individual American writer "creates a cartography . . . . which connects directly with the real social movements that traverse America",[6] and so analysis of them has to be predicated within the unique terms of the writer's subjectivity and the cultural context within which they are moving, however temporarily. They argue for American writers as deracinated, and whose writing is defined by movement *between* positions adopted rather than the representativeness of the positions themselves; so American literature

> has indicated this sense of the rhizomatic, that has known to move between things, to institute a logic of *and*, to overthrow ontology and to dismiss the foundations, to nullify beginnings and endings. It has known how to be pragmatic. The middle is not at all average – far from it – but the area where things take on speed.[7]

This thesis continually finds Jarrell (whose favoured term of poetic logic was "and yet") out in the dynamic middle of things, whether imagining himself as a middle European or a middle-American, a middle-aged woman with a mid-life crisis, a critical mediator between art and society, the fictive and the real, or in his imaginative connection to "line-walkers" such as Dürer's knight, Donatello's David or Adrienne Rich's roofwalker. Significantly, when Jarrell suffered his cataclysmic breakdown in the year before his death, his mania became apparent as he elatedly put himself between an escalating range of projects:

> Nor was it Randall's usual way to jump from the anthology to *The Animal Family* to a Turgenev essay to translating *The Inspector General*, with *Faust* not finished and the *Three Sisters* introduction not yet begun. While Jarrell liked the security of having several projects in progress, his normal way was to concentrate on one at a time, working tenaciously until that caught hold of him and he could not stop until he had finished it. His new way was to surround himself with half-fashioned cathedrals and plan even more. (*Letters* 497)

The thesis may be construed as having a bipartite structure, beginning with a diagnostic analysis of the canonical-unmaking of Jarrell, then performing a series of analyses that emphasizes his multiplicity and marginality, making it a sustaining quality of his writing instead of a fatal flaw.

Rather than attempting to impose limiting likenesses on the discrete parts of his writing, I will argue for their comparativeness only on the profound level of being reversions of the complex text that Jarrell presents. Nevertheless, continuous lines of analysis run through the thesis; the chapters on Jarrell's novel, poems on fine art, children's writing and poems set in California develop the ideas set out in the opening half of the thesis about Jarrell's situating of himself within culture and how he has been situated by subsequent criticisms. Simultaneously, the mutations of his writing personalities will be historicized and politicized, and his aesthetic choices will be read as culturally decisive rather than aleatory; so apparent aberrations of literary and professional "good taste" such as The Gingerbread Rabbit can be interpreted as dissident gestures within the the context of the Cold War's institutionalization of modernist canons, and Jarrell's apparent lack of political engagement after the war can be seen as radical muteness.

The first part of my thesis indicates that Jarrell requires deterritorialization, will attempt to reason the need and then indicate how it may be done; the second part continues the primary work of deterritorializing his canon while finding constellations of texts within it that provide an understanding of just how radically his work rejects concentration. Jarrell's movement between those constellations is what is critical; his disparate writings were not phases or stages on a linear rite of passage, but parts of a unstable complex of gestures, texts and attitudes that Jarrell opted into when the need arose. It is the compelling argument between his sense of strategy and his profoundly unpredictable complexity that makes Jarrell extraordinary, yet exemplary of nothing outside of himself. Between venerable humanism and adolescent pessimism, post-Marxist Jeremiah and late-capitalist consumer, reviewer as terror and critic as fan, Kennedy and Kipling, Big Daddy Lipscomb and Donatello's David, Jarrell is moving from one exhibition of himself to another; this thesis attempts to comprehend and remark that mobility.

Chapter One. Minor Character: The Utility and Canonicity of Randall Jarrell

I. Group-Values: The Identity of Movements and Canons

To begin by stating the obvious, canonicity is implicit in every reading or interpretative act, and literary history is still habitually narrated in terms of movements. It follows that an analysis of how movements and the canon relate should be of vital significance in our understanding of how literary discourse is constructed. The canon is read traditionally as the locus of conservative authority, an evaluative structure; in movements the question of value is purportedly subordinate to more immediate and dynamic objectives of political and cultural activism.

However, this need not imply that the canon and movements are evaluatively or ideologically incompatible. A contention of this thesis is not only that the canon may be read as a form of supreme-literary movement, but that movements themselves enact internal canons which ultimately are reflected massively in the "super-canon". Movements are given an evaluative place in canonicity, but once established they are often the effective agents of authority for the evaluation of individual writers and works. In this way, the "minor" canon of the movement becomes a means of comprehending the "major" body of literary tradition.

Writers may be attributed value in either the terms of a movement or those of the canon, sometimes for conflicting reasons. To be alert to how such conflict occurs and what its consequences are, a reader must identify the canonic pressures influencing reception and read strategically in acknowledgement of those pressures. In turn it must be recognized that movements can bestow canonicity with a rapidity that is conventionally regarded as impossible for the orthodox canon.

Movements are often identified as the evolution of a style by a collective of writers and/or artists, but only their theorization by critics (or writers-as-critics) will invest them with canonical and institutional stature. Generally speaking, such theorization requires the prior apparition of some aesthetic or stylistic consensus among the diverse parts of the movement; the theorized stylistic consensus acquires ideological clout, and a form of rhetorical standard is set. In An Appetite for Poetry, Frank Kermode states that "vernacular canons displaced rhetoric when it had been for centuries the normal instrument for criticism".[1] Within movements, however, rhetoric is still an "instrument for criticism" and evaluation, but is unacknowledged as such. Those who search for a stylistic consensus upon which to form a movement are no less dependent on a form of rhetorical orthodoxy than were those poets of the middle ages who defined themselves by their adherence to particular rules of poetic decorum. Of course, many "movements" are constructed around concepts beyond the

purely literary or aesthetic, as is evidenced by the terms employed to delineate and describe them. They are as often geographical, historical, or ideological – The Fugitives, The Black Mountain Poets, The New York School – as they are stylistic, technical or theoretical: Imagist, Minimalist, *Pointilliste.* In "purely" aesthetic or technical terms, movements are analogous to schools; in cultural terms, movements emphasize their activism and connectedness politically rather than academically.

Imagism, futurism, surrealism, symbolism, dadaism, formalism, situationism: all are movements in the sense of being presented as communities of artists and ideologues with a shared manifesto or anti-manifesto, no matter how temporary the sharing may have been. Furthermore, all were identified as being *avant-garde.* However, if the movements listed were all efforts at breaking free from the perceived entrapment of the traditions they had inherited, they were simultaneously establishing new sets of conditions that consigned them to tradition. For such movements, Renato Poggioli has argued that ideological tracts or manifestos were necessary as "an argument of self-assertion or self-defense used by a society against society in the larger sense".[2] Ironically, the role of manifestos in the creation of movements is as much a conservative process of demanding legitimacy as it is a radical one of promoting action and activism. Just as every avant-garde requires an orthodoxy to destroy, it also invites a new avant-garde to repeat the process. Poggioli makes a distinction between the smaller movements such as imagism and the larger phenomenon of modernism, often itself characterized as a movement. However, the subservience of those smaller movements to modernism need not be assumed; rather their internal structures prescribe their writing into the larger movement and the canon.

Modernism presents a dilemma of definition, according to history, space and culture; even its most dedicated and practiced analysts may only arrive at a definition of it so generalized as to resist application to any specific author. No single writer or text may exemplify "all" of modernism; the smaller groups within it provide structures for evaluation that are not evident in the larger phenomenon, which in a pedantic sense is not a movement at all. In modernism, therefore, there are writers who belong only to the minor movements or groups, and then there are those monolithic characters who stand outside of the groups but are not entirely free from their influence. Paradoxically, the verdict of the smaller groups on writers not designed for full membership is repeated canonically; The Penguin Book of Imagist Poetry's inclusion of "I hear an army" by James Joyce (contentious enough in itself) makes a fair point that Joyce was a pretty insignificant imagist: fair enough.[3] However, his peripheralization within imagism only further directs the reader to regard his writing as *sui generis* and available for analysis on its own terms. The

"great" modernists escaped their movements, the "little" exemplified theirs; the "great" create their own genres, the "little" perpetuate existing ones.

The vast space created by modernism, which continually is translated into the terms of size and stature, suggests that modernism is practically as large as the canon itself. Furthermore, it is with modernism that movements were first created (replacing schools) both retrospectively, such as in the artificial grouping of the Metaphysical Poets, and contemporarily in immediately political creations such as Vorticism. The largesse of modernism as a concept is its utility, but also the source of its authority; the ironies of postmodernity have institutionalized modernist discourse as an area of reference for all critique, while the canon has to stake its claims to authority in terms of the propagandizing and movement-style polemics of Harold Bloom. Rather than a contemporary guardian of the canon, Bloom is its vanguardian. This in turn suggests the irony that the canon as we know it is a symptom of modernism, rather than the other way around.

Robert von Hallberg has defined the utility of the term "canon", saying that: "The word helps to vest authority in literary opinion, which is often loose and unauthoritative".[4] Of course, this is precisely the corrective impulse within so much of modernism.

Movements are created by the initiatives of writers and critics, not by accident; and they require institutionalization to survive. In History and Value, Kermode describes how movements require a consensus to achieve the status of periods, "and the consensus of a relatively small number of people".[5] Under these terms, time and the critical community will bring institutionalization to the movement by converting it into a piece of history. The movement's acceptance is signalled by its absorption as a period into the organic and natural pattern of literary history. However, the one thing that anyone can recognize about movements is that they are not "natural" phenomena. Furthermore, as the distinction between writer and critic and academic is less defined than it was a hundred years ago, critical proponents of movements are also the arbiters and expeditors of the canon. To say this is a conflict of interest is missing the point; it is rather how the canon works, just as movements do by enacting their own canonicity.

Movements provide a historicizing fantasy for the critic within which the diffuse and dissonant elements of a moment of history may be made to cohere sublimely; that drive for coherence inevitably involves the privileging of some objects and the censoring of others. Stressing the collectivity of writers under the auspices of a movement-identity is in fact the Fordist project of the critic's imagination. Ultimately, the project may take the form not of justifying the movement as a literary or socio-historical phenomenon but of finding the sublimely model writer-object who

best exemplifies the critic's movement-concept. This enables critics promoting movements to lead a double life as celebrants of the individual talent, with implications that will be explored throughout this thesis.

The parallels are obvious between the critic's role as canon-maker and movement-maker. What has allegedly distinguished the tasks is the magnitude of what is being formed, the difference between a turret and a castle. However, the relativism of post-modernity has collapsed such distinctions of literary architecture and engineering; the image of Babel is often invoked as an emblem of a post-modern space where "you can say, not nothing, but anything",[6] but it is important to stress that post-modern Babel is where the tower has utterly collapsed and become excremental, so that the structure of the tower is vestigial at most.

Likewise, the canon may be relativized so that anything ought to be possible, in particular the perpetual re-writing of the canon itself. If there is no remaining monologic master-narrative justifying canonicity, then movements offer themselves to critics who still wish to project a mastering gaze. The more diverse the terrain of contemporary discourse and literature, the more it opens itself to a mapping that has more to with Napoleon than Frederic Jameson.

Movements are excused as necessary instruments in the analysis and teaching of literature; yet their effect on the political economy of literature is often unaddressed. Inevitably, suspicions may arise over the designs and motives of some critics or writers in their movement-forming; yet there is a big difference between a movement being employed as a pragmatic means of communicating to an audience and a movement being conceived or appropriated cynically to promote its creator or proponent. It might be paranoid to stress the Machiavellian shades of movement-making, but there are necessary concerns about the power that can be discovered through movement-forming and following.

In the 1960s, Al Alvarez quickly established a considerable reputation for himself as the proponent of what he called "extremist poetry" in his anthology The New Poetry and his work as Poetry Editor for The Observer.[7] His arguments were tabloidistically advertised with his powerfully confessional writings on suicide and divorce, published in the early seventies; they provided a resource of emotional authority that helped justify the literary project. Alvarez's promotion of his personal canon of past mavericks and contemporary poets was initially accepted as being an exemplary piece of canonical activism, setting a new poetic standard through his "personal anthology" against the "gentility" of modern poetry in English. The anthology has survived as a fetishistic object of publishing nostalgia, even if its unifying concept of "extremist" poetry has not. (The volume was also paid the ultimate compliment of having an imitation anthology for the 1990s published by

Bloodaxe under the same title.) The writers selected by Alvarez, who included John Berryman, Robert Lowell, Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and Philip Larkin, all quickly outgrew the agenda of Alvarez's extremist project, but it served very well in giving Alvarez a canonical place as the man who produced The New Poetry. The grouping of the writers was at best expedient, and the artificiality of Alvarez's construct was apparent to anyone. Nevertheless, it packaged both established and relatively unexposed poets in a designedly sensationalist manner, complete (somewhat anachronistically) with a Jackson Pollock on the cover of one edition, and effectively made itself the poetry coffee-table book of the age. In one sense, The New Poetry phenomenon is a perfect example of an avant-garde project offered as an antidote to the gentility of the canon only to be absorbed by it; however, it was a no-risk bet by Alvarez. He didn't exactly "discover" any of the writers, and the "newness" of Robert Lowell was of the twenty-years-and-over variety. Nevertheless, Alvarez's *chutzpah* in creating a movement-style environment for publishing what was in the process of being institutionalized indicates the appetite of all facets of literary culture for literary phenomena in the shape or guise of movements. The obsolescence of "extremist poetry" was guaranteed, but it provided the hook that Alvarez needed to ensure a canonic place for himself.

The movements that appear to have the best credentials for canonic survival tend to be those that instigate or appear to instigate a genre, as opposed to those that define themselves via *zeitgeist*. This implies that the canonical validity of a movement may depend upon its perseverence with genres; perhaps imagism may be cited as a prime example of this phenomenon, with its introduction of haikuesque dimensions into poetry in English. L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry could also be cited as a recent example of an anti-canonical practice that is exerting itself in an effort to withstand absorption into the canon, innovating generic strategies continually to elude institutionalization by "official verse culture".

However, such movements are comparatively rare, and most movements (and practically all unsatisfactory movements) are the result of a critic imposing a movement-hypothesis on writers, ignoring whatever resistance to such collectivization might be in their work. A curious manifestation of this phenomenon was Blake Morrison's revival of "The Movement", a British "group" perceived to have been active in the 1950s. In his book The Movement,[8] Morrison attempted to establish the commonality of the poets who had been "grouped". While it has emerged that the actual poets were sceptical about their collectivity, the name and the idea was adopted with enthusiasm by the contemporary cultural press. Whereas the writers did not absolutely disagree that there were certain similarities of opinion and situation between them, they wished to assert that greater significance lay in looking

for the aspiring selves behind the collective assumption. Morrison takes the opposite view, emphasizing the empirical wholeness of the movement, which he defined as "a group" or a" new generation"; this bases their collectivity on either a coincidence of birth or social sphere. An earlier account of "The Movement" appeared in the revised edition of G.S. Fraser's The Modern Writer and His World(1964),[9] a handbook of modern literature designed initially for "the intelligent non-specialist reader" of 1951. Fraser regarded the members of the group as "bound" by "their educational background" and "the audience they addressed"; like Morrison, Fraser makes a vaguely valid historical case but doesn't attempt to substantiate "The Movement" aesthetically. In his review of Morrison's book, Ian Hamilton identified it as being remarkable as an example of journalistic expediency rather than as a contribution to literature; he describes the movement's early propagators (in particular, The Spectator's Anthony Hartley) as employing "the tone, pushing and unblushing, of the hard sell".[10] Furthermore, Hamilton indicates that the best writers originally incorporated by critics into "The Movement" (Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis in particular) had transcended its limits even prior to their incorporation within it, but their temporary inclusion meant that they would only receive the attention they deserved once their transcendance was perceptible to all:

> at one level, it could be said that Philip Larkin's poems provide an exact model for what The Movement was supposed to be seeking. But having noticed his lucidity, his debunkery, his technical accomplishment and other such "trivial" attributes, one would still be left with the different and deeper task of describing the quality of his peculiar genius, the task of talking about poems, rather than postures.[11]

This corresponds with what has already been seen; that movements effectively do the canon's work by limiting analytical approaches to a reader. In the case of some writers, there is a suggestion that it may take luck rather than genius to escape the containment of a movement paradigm. In this sense, movements may be characterized (like the canon) as a censoring bureaucracy, an institution that rations and contains.

Alternatively, Hamilton employs the terminology of commerce when he describes Morrison's "hard sell"; "The Movement" is not only a collective of writers and texts, but a set of socio-historical coincidences, motives and acquaintances. This could be called "package criticism"; a late-capitalist cultural product guaranteed to bring closure; the attraction for Fraser of "The Movement" can be seen in his bid to appeal to "the intelligent non-specialist reader". There is a prevalent sense here of literary

sophistication by design through the easily-assimilated form of a movement, although Fraser makes an unlikely Hugh Hefner. "The Movement"'s ready-made canon, argument and judgements represent a peculiarly desensitized and inert criticism.

It is particularly significant that both "extremist poetry" and "The Movement" are constructs by academics turned literary journalists (coincidentally both Alvarez and Morrison worked for The Observer) of the post-1950s period; there is a palpable sense that movement-formation has become both habitual and casually pragmatic, as has the process of canonicity. What is canonical has altered as culture has become more mediated and vernacular, and readers and critics are more habituated than ever as to how the canon works. This demystification of the canon has its effect on novelists and poets as well; creative writing courses such as the University of East Anglia's effectively teach "writing for the canon" instead of waiting for it.

This must have consequences for the writer as a political subject; if a writer has to be claimed in the name of something, it must also mean that strategies of assumption into forms of generic identity or canonicity are prescriptive; more than ever, this might not take the shape of a traditional movement-identity but instead an ethnic, national or cultural collective identity. Resistance to these collectivities is only achieved by dissembling and adopting a radical deracination.

If both canonicity and writing for it are increasingly self-conscious and self-analytical processes, writers tend to cultivate designedly their own canonical memory in order to produce. Whether individually or within movements, writers erect their subjective histories to define their relationship to the canon; in effect choosing a past to authorize the contemporary writing.

This is a commonplace area of analysis; in Graham Hough's classic essay on "The Modernist Lyric" he regards the eclecticism of twentieth century poetry as making a series of consumerist choices from history and tradition; the modern poet is "left to make his own myth, or to select one by an arbitrary existentialist choice, from the vast uncodified museum, the limitless junk-shop of the past".[12] A post-modern version of this would be to replace an existentialist choice with one made in the context of a knowledge of canonical mechanics. Likewise, Bloom's "natural" and deterministic view of the writer's relationship to the canon – "each poet searches where he already is"[13] – needs to be re-written with an awareness that no writer's map of the self is ever stable enough to secure self-identification. The poet's fate is not discovery, but the search-process. The poet's personal canon is not necessarily pre-ordained, but will flit indeterminately in and out of memory. Anxiety lies not in the knowledge of your influence, but the sense that you may be only pretending to know.

While there is a necessary interest in looking at how writers identify or choose their significant past, either affirming or disavowing their relationships with other

writers, the demands of a movement-discourse tend to restrict the subjectivities of individuals within it. When movements are announced in the name of novelty, they do so in order to obscure the diversity of literary memory available to those individuals, mainly because it is the movement's political and historical reaction to tradition or past movements that is at the centre of discourse. Movements have limited room for plural memories. Therefore, a distinction can be made between the past writers create for themselves and the past that a movement can erect and utilize for its own propagation.

Turning to issues of reader-response, the relationship between canonicity and movements becomes clearer, if not less problematic; if we adopt Hans Robert Jauss's statement that the "historicity of literature rests not on an organization of 'literary facts' that is established *post festum*, but rather on the preceding experience of the literary work by its readers",[14] the readiness of readers to accept movements and to admit texts to canonicity ever more immediately could be interpreted as clear evidence of the colonization of the reader's interpretative faculties by the categorizing and hierarchical structures identical with movements and canons. In this sense, any debate over the canon or any attack upon the viability of a movement-construct comes to represent an exercise in rehearsing and re-affirming canonical values. Because of its pre-eminence in the classroom and its presumptive accessibility to students, the anthology emerged in the twentieth century as a vital instrument of power in terms of movement-making and canonicity. While a veneer of vernacular democracy and educational facility conceals their power, anthologies are the most immediate means of investing authority in a literary project. This may be particularly true when the anthology is a contentious one; the furore over The Field Day Anthology of Irish Literature's credibility – particularly in its exclusion of women's writing – served only to centre it and Field Day's overall project in the canon of Irish Studies.[15]

Alan G. Golding's "A History of American Poetry Anthologies" points out how "anthologies have defined poetry desirable to be anthologized"[16]; and that is invariably lyric poetry. The anthologizers' rationalization for the predominance of the short lyric in anthologies is that it represents poetry in its most assimilable form; duration equals accessibility equals value. It must follow that readers are "prepared" to read only short lyric poetry, and the shorter the better. If a poet still wishes to write a poem of "long" duration, they have to either produce a deem-novel (Vikram Seth's The Golden Gate[17]), a series of what is still effectively poems in short lyric shape (Paul Muldoon's Madoc[18]), or be prepared to see a fragment of their poem anthologized as a vestige of the "dead" long poem (the fate in anthologies of James Merrill's The Changing Light at Sandover[19]). Therefore, even when an anthology

pretends to offer cultural, generic and stylistic diversity, there is at work not only a canon of opinion but proportion.

In the context of the classroom, movements, anthologies and the canon coincide; and while Golding can say that "it is unlikely that any single anthology will ever again dominate a period's reading",[20] it is equally impossible to return to a golden age where movements and anthologies did not exist. Golding imagines instead an idyllically dialectical future in which anthologies will square off in the classroom: "Each kind of anthology gains its identity in contrast to the other".[21] Golding declines to investigate the broader significance of this remark; that the pugilists come from the same gym, and that the rules of engagement are limited. Frequently serving each other, anthologies and movements are read as authoritative because of the inert assumption that there is no alternative to them.

It is interesting that there have been no confident attempts to create an authoritative anthology of modernist poetry, despite the fact that many poets termed modernist were anthologizers themselves and are much-anthologized. There may have been anthologies of smaller movements "within" modernism, such as Imagism, but there has been no attempt to countenance the entire phenomenon through an anthology. There is the long-established critical handbook, Modernism, edited by Bradbury and Macfarlane, who acknowledged the impossibility of giving anything more than "a personal or at least partial version of an overwhelmingly complex phenomenon, an individual selection from the infinity of detail, which may in time compost down with other views into that sifted and resolved thing, a critical concept"[22]; the difficulty identified in theorizing about modernism must be further experienced in attempting to essentialize it through a selection of texts. Modernism appears to defy the anthologizer's exclusive process; whatever is selected, there is the ironic plurality of modernism to get around. This directs us to understand that modernism is not a "movement" at all, in the limited sense that literary history regards the term; it also helps to produce a perception of how modernism has effectively replaced the canon as it is understood. Arguments about canonicity tend in practice to be arguments about modernism.

However, modernism also represents the inception of small movements as evaluative structures in the dissemination of literature, and how movements became the currencies of cultural exchange as a consequence. As movements evolved their own evaluative structures, the canon lost its authority; modernism was the system to which movements referred. From a traditionally canonical point of view, a self-defining and self-evaluating movement is a form of enclave with no relevance to the canon other than as a piece of tradition that has fractured and fallen beyond

restoration. However, the fragment simulates the whole to the extent that the whole has no resistance to it. Movements are the means by which continuity is narrated.

Postmodernism offers (however surprisingly) a restoration of the concept of use, at least for the subject reader, in that movements may be seen as contingent upon the modernist system that empowers them. Strategies of deliberate indefiniteness can be used to perceive movements as executors of canonical power rather than benignly democratic instruments of education; and less restrictive but more self-conscious and self-critical readings of subject writers may evolve a new vernacular in which nothing is taken for granted, and least of all the "objectivity" of canons and movements. In turn, instead of adopting the "making-new" positivism of modernist movement-discourse, a different "making-new" based on the recycling of the waste products of that discourse can be enacted.

A classic case for canonicity over movements was given by Nabokov in his polemical commentary to Eugene Onegin:

> As happens in zoological nomenclature when a string of obsolete, synonymous, or misapplied names keeps following the correct designation of a creature throughout the years, and not only cannot be shaken off, or ignored, or obliterated within brackets, but actually grows with time, so in literary history the vague terms "classicism", "sentimentalism", "romanticism", "realism", and the like struggle on and on, from textbook to textbook. There are teachers and students with square minds who are by nature meant to undergo the fascination of categories. For them "schools" and "movements" are everything: by painting a group symbol on the brow of mediocrity, they condone their own incomprehension of true genius.
>
> I cannot think of any masterpiece the appreciation of which would be enhanced in any degree or manner by the knowledge that it belonged to this or that school; and conversely, I could name any number of third-rate works that are kept artificially alive for centuries through their being assigned by the schoolman to this or that moment in the past.
>
> These concepts are harmful chiefly because they distract the student from direct contact with, and direct delight of, the quiddity of individual artistic achievement (which, after all, alone matters and alone survives); but, moreover, each of them is subject to such a variety of interpretations as to become meaningless in its own field, that of the classification of knowledge. Since, however, these terms exist and keep banging against every cobble over which their tagged victims keep trying to escape the gross identification, we are forced to reckon with them.[23]

Whatever of Nabokov's contempt, the final phrase is the key one; even the arch-canonist has to admit that movements are as inevitable as canonicity itself.

This thesis attempts to "recycle" Randall Jarrell, a literary subject who has been canonically peripheralized (if not quite designated as "third rate") through being received as a minor character in a movement construction, alternatively called the "Middle Generation" or "Midcentury Quartet" (Travisano's recent appellation) of twentieth century American poets; by doing so, I hope to expose the consequences of movement-power mechanics on both the writer-subject and the reader. The aim is not necessarily to "restore" Randall Jarrell to the canon, as that would inevitably involve incorporating the movement-discourse that is always predominant. Inverting conventional practice, the movement-thesis will be put to the periphery while analysis previously exclusive to the subject will be performed; with the unwriting of one type of thesis, an alternative writing will emerge:

> There is no spirit of an age but incommensurable coexisting spirits; looking back, some may give us greater pause because they serve our purposes, because they tell something of where we are heading, more perhaps than where we have been . . . Artists are not before their time, precursors, but their time is inadequately described by the soap opera of the causal narrative closure of both formalist and traditional literary criticism.[24]

This thesis attempts to keep an eye on "where we are heading", as Charles Bernstein proposes, but the analysis is founded on the restrictive practice of past literary discourses; in doing so, it may describe a "soap opera" of its own, but as Bernstein should know, good soaps have no closure.

II. Minor Character: Getting Randall Jarrell Around the Middle Generation

In an interview for the Spring 1985 issue of The Paris Review, William Meredith declared his membership of the class of American poets that is most often described as the "middle generation". He listed those whom he saw as the constituent members of that generation:

> I feel myself of that generation because I had the good luck to know those poets. As far as our experience being similar, I think the responses of people like Richard Wilbur or Elizabeth Bishop are different from the responses of

> Berryman and Lowell, and Randall Jarrell's was different still. So that while I'm sure that we had basic encounters with history that nobody else had, we took them differently. I believe Lowell is right in associating himself so closely with Berryman. Berryman associated himself closely with Lowell, and both of them with Jarrell, although if you look at Jarrell's work, you wouldn't know that there was any relation. It's one of my theories that Jarrell is probably the most useful of the three.[25]

A combination of good luck, loose acquaintance, and a somewhat hazy sense of existential and historical identification; these don't provide a basis for a substantive reading and assessment of these writers. Yet the casual (not to mention risky) historicism of views such as Meredith's has pervaded the critical discourse surrounding these poets to the extent that it tends to be dominated by questions of their corporate identity, rather than their distinct and inconvenient individualities within their generational context.

The acceptance into canonicity of "the middle generation" has led to the establishment of a hierarchical triangle incorporating Lowell, Berryman and Jarrell. This is best evidenced by Bruce Bawer's subtitle to his book The Middle Generation; it lists "Robert Lowell, Randall Jarrell, John Berryman", instating and estimating them as the key protagonists in the narrating of the movement.[26] As with Meredith, many critics feel it imperative that the relationship be resolved between these poets; and consequently that an accepted evaluative paradigm be established for them. The most recent effort to do so by Travisano has added Elizabeth Bishop to the trio of male poets, reflecting her surging popularity over the last ten years. Introducing his book as a vital riposte to Bawer's concept of the poets as a "generation" and an exploration of their pioneering postmodernity, Travisano is as reluctant as Bawer to investigate any of the poets without reference to their contemporaries. Titling his book Midcentury Quartet: Bishop, Lowell, Jarrell, Berryman, and the Making of a Postmodern Aesthetic(1999), Travisano appropriates an organisational trope from music to imply coherence and simultaneity between the poets. His major resource for evidencing their shared "aesthetic" is his discovery of previously unpublished correspondence between them and the "postwar dialogue"[27] that it contained. Like previous critics, however, Travisano's urge to find unity between the poets only highlights the artificiality of his group-concept, and the catalogue of "obvious differences" that he is consciously obliterating:

> Jarrell, Bishop, Berryman, and Lowell were drawn so magnetically and lastingly to one anothers' work (despite obvious differences in temperament,

> artistic manner, gender, sexual orientation, and so forth) because each consciously or unconsciously recognized in the others a shared determination to bypass or unmake modernism's impersonal aesthetic and to create amongst themselves a new aesthetic that would empower them to address the problem of selfhood in the postmodern world.[28]

Furthermore, insisting on their resistance to narrative as being the signature of their postmodern communality, Travisano is nevertheless persisting self-deceivingly with a particularly modernist tropics of his own; arguably, the words "postmodern" and "aesthetic" ought to cancel each other out.

Unlike Meredith with his preference for Jarrell, most critics such as Bawer and Travisano have concluded that Lowell and Berryman (and now Bishop) are the enduring and prominent figures, and have determined Jarrell to be a worthy but less gifted subordinate. What unifies all such evaluations of these poets, ignoring their particular biases, is that they presume some form of coherent aesthetic among the "middle generation"; a standard of poetic possibility that some poets exceed and some fall below within the movement. However, until Travisano critics had never tested this presumptive consensus, and the only substantial connection they could attest to between the poets was that of common experience, and that commonality was at best precarious; as for Travisano, he is caught between his insistence on the "private, informal, unofficial. . . . never fully recognized"[29] nature of the poets' relationships to one another and his urge to make it more determined than accidental, more activist than relaxed. His sense of postmodernism is anchored by his modernist urge for synthesis; his avowed strategy of exploring the multivalence offered by postmodern discourse is the pursuance of a quest-narrative path towards the authoritative discovery of the poets' fundamental unity. Travisano describes postmodernism "as a long, broad river with as many broad tributaries as the Amazon . . . . This critical narrative follows just one of that river's important tributaries back to its headwaters".[30] Journeying towards his heart of darkness, Travisano finds a corporate identity for Jarrell and his contemporaries not through their aesthetics but by the commonplace strategy of insisting upon their common experiences. This means that to a large degree he is recycling the analysis of the poets as "confessional" (an analysis used by Bawer that he finds derisory), but re-naming them as post-traumatic narrators of grief:

> Their identity as a coherent group within a loss-haunted – though by no means "lost" – generation is in part defined by the remarkable consistency with which, in their work, recovery or cure appears as a tentatively conceived and

> yearned-for possibility, if never as triumphantly achieved (or transcendently achievable) reality. Thus negotiating the terms of "change," these poets, at their best, avoid rhetorical inflation while lending dramatic currency to core experiences others might choose to repress. Renouncing easy or purely rhetorical "cures" in favour of an intently exploratory aesthetic, these poets opened up a concrete and intuitive inquiry into that complex array of forces most resistant to "change." Their inquiry starts with the premise that those resistant forces – be they familial, cultural, or political, geographical, biological, or psychological – that make real change so difficult are not just exterior to but insidiously within the self.[31]

If the real substance of the midcentury quartet's project was attempting to express the self adequately in a context of repression and "the plowing under of traumatic experience"[32], it could be asked legitimately whether that in itself can constitute an "aesthetic"; furthermore, it is difficult to claim such a project as exclusively that of those poets when "the problem of selfhood" has been a crucial part of so much poetic practice throughout literature. It is also doubtful whether any interrogation of selfhood can be best achieved or narrated as a co-operative effort; indeed, Travisano's analysis of Jarrell only convinces when he gives up propagandizing for "the school of anguish"[33], and he acknowledges Jarrell as a problematic and an enigmatic literary phenomenon:

> Behind Jarrell the critic stands an elusive yet powerful poet who is himself dark, witty, crafty and at times uncannily bleak, a poet one might term "The Other Jarrell".[34]

Along with Travisano, Meredith admits that the links between the "middle generation" may be more subconscious than immediately apparent, but then counters that by suggesting that their basic encounters with history necessarily prove the "existence" of a generational – implicitly a movement – consciousness. However, Meredith indicates the idiotic evasion of difference within the generation-movement by saying that "...if you look at Jarrell's work, you wouldn't know there was any relation". Despite this, he insists on coming to an evaluative conclusion that Jarrell is probably the most useful poet of the three, and then explicates his concept of poetic utility by estimating that one in three of the poems in Jarrell's The Complete Poems could be understood by anybody. This is hardly a convincing – or even convinced – endorsement of Jarrell, nor is it exactly a thorough critique of Lowell and Berryman. Meredith's verdict is unconventional, in that he promotes Jarrell over

his co-generationists, but it must be regarded as at best only working to expose the fallibility of making evaluative comparisons between them rather than constructively helping us to read Jarrell. In effect, Meredith affirms one of the reading prejudices that Jarrell attacked most vehemently, the equation of value with clarity:

> When you begin to read a poem you are entering a foreign country whose laws and language are a kind of translation of your own; but to accept it because its stews taste exactly like your old mother's hash or to reject it because the owl-headed goddess of wisdom in its temple is fatter than the Statue of Liberty, is an equal mark of that want of imagination, that inaccessibility to experience, of which each of us who dies a natural death will die. (*PA* 23)

Jarrell argues in plain language that poetry isn't plain language; the desire of critics to see Jarrell and his contemporaries as a generation-movement involves its own simplifications, reading poems in a spirit of plain history, choosing not to problematize the relationship between the poets but to read it as stable and then to evaluate on that basis. In this process, not only are poems peripheralized in discourse but a wilful indifference to autobiographical detail can be indulged; Jarrell can be listed with his contemporaries as a drinker and womanizer even though he rarely drank (apart from having an archly *kitsch* taste for Liebfraumilch) and was no philanderer. The instigation of the reading of the middle generation as a movement came from the poet who most critics promoted as its leader, Robert Lowell. In History, Lowell would write of "the swift passing of my older/generation – the deaths, suicide, madness/of Roethke, Berryman, Jarrell"[35], and in Day By Day he provided the basis for a generic reading of himself and his contemporaries in the normalizing terms of a movement:

> Yet really we had the same life,
> the generic one
> our generation offered
> (*Les Maudits* – the compliment
> each American generation
> pays itself in passing)[36]

As the elegist of his generation – he did not adopt the term middle – Lowell damned his friends and peers to a generic unity that none of them desired or deserved. During their careers – at least up until Jarrell's death – there was little evidence that the "middle generation" saw the relationship between themselves as having centrality in

any understanding of their own work. This is not to say that they were not commonly desirous of fame or insensitive to the exigencies of the world. Memoirs such as Eileen Simpson's Poets In Their Youth provide abundant examples of their acute consciousness of the contemporary situation and their peculiar vulnerability and sensitivity as poets within it.[37] Berryman's elegy for Jarrell acknowledged that bond:

> In the chambers of the end we'll meet again
> I will say Randall, he'll say Pussycat
> and all will be as before
> wheras we sought, among the beloved faces,
> eminence and were dissatisfied with that
> and needed more.[38]

Of course, sensitivity, anxiety and ambition are clichéd qualities that we expect and usually find in poets; as a criterion for regarding poets collectively and then evaluating them in relationship, Yeats and Byron could justifiably replace Berryman and Lowell in a reading of Jarrell. There is nothing particularly astonishing in poets being poets; they inhabit forms of poignancy in whatever age they live. It follows that the distinction of poets and poetry is better achieved by analysing the poetry, rather than reading them primarily in terms of what the poet is deemed to represent within the context of his contemporary poets. Ironically, within the limited hierarchy of a movement, that type of analysis is performed; but it is reserved for the poet who best defines the movement and is read as its leader. Typical analysis of Lowell indicates this; he is exemplary of the "middle generation", but he also is seen as transcending it. The minor character, Jarrell, is doubly-damned: firstly, for not being enough like Lowell and implicitly not as good as him; secondly, being subordinate to Lowell, he may only be read in terms of the superior poet's work, which defines the generation-movement within which Jarrell has been afforded space. Just as Marjorie Perloff has pointed out how minor authors perpetuate unselfconsciously the canonical value of given genres,[39] the minor authors in a movement perpetuate movements because only they are disallowed from transgressing or transcending the internal canon of the movement. Lowell's "generic life" applies to Jarrell more than himself.

It is significant that while Lowell, Berryman and Jarrell may have perceived themselves as being in competition for recognition, they did not necessarily regard themselves as having the *poetic* relationship that critics such as Travisano have subsequently endeavoured to establish as a basis for their classification. In these poets' critical writings on one another, they display mutual regard and ambition, but never acknowledge or reveal any shared artistic identity. In Lowell's review of

Jarrell's The Seven-League Crutches (1951), he gave his idea of his contemporary's rightful place:

> Jarrell has gone far enough to be compared with his peers, the best lyric poets of the past: he has the same finesse and originality that they have, and his faults, a certain idiosyncratic wilfulness and eclectic timidity, are only faults in this context.[40]

Despite their friendship, Lowell and Jarrell maintained a degree of objectivity and reserve towards each other's work; this is significant of two distinct poetic selves who had developed independently of one another a strong sense of the aesthetically desirable. This enabled them to identify faults without feeling responsible to contingencies of personal loyalty or representing the *zeitgeist*. That is not to say that they never enthusiastically endorsed one another's work. Jarrell's response to Lowell's Lord Weary's Castle (1946) was generous and excited:

> When I reviewed Mr. Lowell's first book I finished by saying, "Some of the best poems of the next years ought to be written by him". The appearance of *Lord Weary's Castle* makes me feel like a man who predicts rain and gets a flood which drowns everyone in the country. One or two of these poems, I think, will be read as long as men remember English. (*PA* 197)

Jarrell was Lowell's first champion and first committed critic; this is partly attributable to their personal proximity, but even more so to Jarrell's innovatory perception and confident independence as a reader. Jarrell empathized with Lowell in his critical writings to the *same* extent that he did with Whitman, Kipling, Frost and Christina Stead. His high regard for his contemporary's work finds expression in terms of the canon (and its project of posterity) rather than the limited terms of the age, movement or generation. Indeed, the final phrase – "as long as men remember English" – indicates that Jarrell's interests lay in what would endure until the apocalptic end of language.

Jarrell reviewed Berryman's work on only a few occasions; his reticence signified his conspicuously-qualified admiration. In his review of New Directions: 1941 for The Partisan Review (July-August 1942), Jarrell lamented the lack of direction and concentration that he saw in Berryman's early poems with a single sentence:

> John Berryman's "Five Political Poems" have lots of Yeats, lots of general politics, a *1939* reissue of 1938, and a parody of "Lord Randall" that – but

> nothing can make me believe that Berryman wrote this himself, and is not just shielding someone. (*KA&C* 86)

The criticism is readable as a classic piece of Jarrellian cruelty, but the remark that Berryman is "shielding" John Berryman identifies the simultaneously enabling and disabling crisis of identity that would persist throughout Berryman's writing. Nevertheless, Jarrell's published comments on Berryman tend towards the negative; in a letter to Allen Tate in 1940, Jarrell discussed the inclusion of himself, Berryman and George Marion O'Donnell in the New Directions collection Five Young American Poets:

> I thought Berryman much better than O'Donnell so far as the negative virtues are concerned, as for positive ones, there the difference is smaller. I think Berryman has a pretty inferior feel for language for one thing; and to talk about your old favourite, the poetic subject, he's obviously not really found his. (*Letters* 30)

Admittedly, Jarrell made these remarks in 1940, and he did not live to witness the magnificent unravelling of the entire Dream Songs in which Berryman certainly "found" "his poetic subject", and realized his "voices". However, Jarrell's identification of identity as the problematic – but potentializing – core of Berryman's writing is astute; and in his 1948 review of The Dispossessed Jarrell alluded to how effective Berryman's dissembling could be, saying : "among all those statues talking like a book, there were, sometimes, lines of an obscure magic". (*KA&C* 153)

Despite Jarrell's indication that there was imminent genius in Berryman's poetry, he never wrote about him or reviewed him again. Berryman was similarly reluctant to comment in print on Jarrell's work, producing just one review of Poetry and the Age and never writing about Jarrell's poems until after his death. In his contribution to the memorial volume Randall Jarrell: 1914-1965, Berryman chose to commemorate an ingeniously complex human phenomenon – "this amazing man" – rather than a writer: "It's a good thing that he had a very successful career, as he did, because he was a hard loser. He wasn't a man who liked to lose at all".[41]

The rueful tone of Berryman's remarks signifies the disconnection between the two men; and for Berryman – as for many others – the only memorable incarnation of Jarrell as a writer was as a killer-critic, "immensely cruel, and the extraordinary thing about it is that he didn't know he was cruel".[42]

Jarrell, Berryman and Lowell read each other's work with the personally-conditioned critical objectivity they had learned at college; the same "objectivity"

that they customarily applied to all poetry they encountered. However, their reception of individual writers tended to be grounded in terms of their personal concept of the canon; this was New Criticism given an individualistic dimension of prioritzing and choice. The work of their contemporaries was subject to the same personal aesthetic strictures that they applied to Yeats, Eliot or Whitman. That Jarrell's personal canon (Kipling, Rilke, Chekhov, Corbière, Auden) differed radically from Lowell's (Eliot, Villon, Milton, Racine), and that Berryman's (Yeats, Stephen Crane, Shakespeare, Blues) was more different again, demands that we admit the variety of their preferences and utilize it in apprehending their writing.

The absence of a unitary aesthetic consensus that their preferences suggest also indicates the critical idiocy of attempting to impose on these writers the form of aesthetic consensus necessary to authorizing the generation-movement, and in turn elevating one over the other within its limited evaluative conditions.

"Shared" experiences of America, the war and its consequences may provide some basis for productively inter-reading the "middle generation", but they don't make a movement. In American Poetry and Culture 1945-1980, Robert von Hallberg alludes to Goethe's definition of *zeitgeist* in order to state the impossibility of identifying the consensus necessary to movement-making:

> No-one would argue that recent American writers have "commonly" felt a "happy conjecture of outer and inner circumstances"; post-Romantic poets, anyway, would admit to no such conjecture.[43]

The formation of the "middle generation" into a movement has seen an *unhappy* "conjecture" imposed upon its "members", proving that the critical urging of commonality is still prevalent; there is always "someone" ready to argue for it, no matter what poets themselves may say. The privileging of existential or "experiential" conjectures subordinates the poetics of the individual writers, making irrelevant the irregularities of their poetic histories. In Jarrell's case, his poetry "resembled Berryman's on only three or four occasions; and it was early in their careers, when both bore heavily the influence of Auden. As for Lowell and Jarrell, resemblance between them is rare enough to be considered accidental. Whatever coincidences there were came from the sharing of early influences such as Tate (soon to be renounced, particularly in Jarrell's case) or certain formal qualities which were relinquished as each poet pursued his own mannerisms.

Nevertheless, many critics of Jarrell's poetry – including his widow, Mary Jarrell – have regarded as imperative the process of assimilating him into a movement based on a supposedly generational consensus of interest. In her selection of Jarrell's

letters, her stipulated aim is to place him "in the 'American Bloomsbury Circle' of the fifties" (*Letters* xv). Those determined to promote Jarrell and enhance his canonical status tend to do so by referring him to poets whose writings are at best coincidentally relevant to his own work; as if something of Lowell's heroic celebrity might rub off, or some of Berryman's pathos.

The desire to place Jarrell canonically has engendered a crisis of categorization; the list of guises claimed for Jarrell by various critics proposes some bizarre contradictions: to Harry Levin, Jarrell was the "archetypal modernist"[44]; he features with surrealists in a Penguin anthology[45]; he is a representative "war poet" Sergeant Randall Jarrell; he is a post-Fugitive "reactionary", bound to the South as a true Ransomite; a confessional poet; one of a number of post-war literary "tourists". Add to that critic, reviewer, poet-critic, post-modernist, romantic *manqué*, fabulist, "poet of the common man", "democrat" and persistently a member of those tragic *maudits*, the "middle generation", a term vague enough to evade the contradictions and a form of convenience for critics who want to position him and simultaneously peripheralize him. In some cases, as in this excerpt from Mariani's biography of Berryman, the critical trope of "listing" Jarrell licenses his fetishization into an obscure object of desire, simultaneously signifying the erotic, the Gothic, the sadistic, the neurotic:

> Jarrell: tall, willowy, thin, dark-haired, dark-eyed, half a year older than Berryman, a man of stunning contrasts, a sentimental southerner, a hipster whose language was ten years out of date, a puritan who drove fast cars, a killer who could weep apologetically after his words had innocently sliced the heart from his victim.[46]

Jarrell is made into a combination of Hester Prynne, Joan Crawford and Blanche du Bois; his casting as the *femme fatale* of American poetry is doubly significant; it allows the insinuation that Jarrell's conflicted sexuality was the source of what made him problematic and also identifies him as a deviant in comparison to the more macho heroics or anti-heroics of Lowell and Berryman. Furthermore, the itemizing of Jarrellian camp serves as a device for some critics of implying a J. Edgar Hooveresque hypocrisy on the part of Jarrell the "establishmentarian".[47] The next chapter will explore further the political significance of Jarrell's identity-paradoxes within the containment culture of the Cold War. From a limited perspective, the myriad of definitions and descriptions clearly indicates that each individual term is inadequate as an authoritative statement of Jarrell's achievement and what it signifies; yet it also suggests that Jarrell flauntingly and deliberately defied such normative terminologies.

Part of Jarrell's motivation for such resistance was the fact that such conflicts of name-tagging were irrelevant, as they were overruled by the hostility of American culture to the fastidiousness of the academy, just as it was indifferent to poetry: "The public has an unusual relationship to the poet: it doesn't even know that he is there" (*KA&C* 305).

In the same way as Jarrell, Berryman related public indifference to poetry with the desires of critics for increasingly modish but limited group-designations for poets' place in tradition:

> Can we regard Roethke and Lowell as members of one poetic generation? Considering the figure of Karl Shapiro whose age divides theirs and who, as we will see in a moment, certainly ought to be regarded as a member of generations, it would seem that they can. But I wonder whether the question has meaning in a society where the attention paid to poetry is so very slight. A "generation" in this sense, apart from the private sense of co-working that an artist may have, is a public conception – one that still exists in England and France. But probably the American conception of a poet is of a man dead, or in his eighties (Frost, Sandburg) or a European...No sense of a generation of poets will flow from this conception; one thinks instead of isolated pockets of spiritual activity.[48]

Berryman's "conclusion" indicates that he understood with Jarrell not only the inadequacy of movements as a conceptualizing agency in the reception of poetry, but also the idiotic power of movements to contribute to the indifference with which poetry was regarded, giving poets evaluated roles instead of complex histories and identities: "let us avoid cant about poetic generations and war poets and other things we care nothing about".[49] Yet a shared sense of frustration and anxiety between the poets did not result in an identical poetic project. Berryman's poetry was a method of survival, a radical strategy of containment, whereas Jarrell worried explicitly at the question of both poetry's and his own public insignificance up until his death, wilfully exposing "the obscurity of the poet" in equal measure to lamenting it.

However, it is misrepresenting Jarrell to say that he did not have an interest in historicizing poets and poetry; he is after all, the author of Poetry and the Age and in 1949, he endorsed the historical concept of John Ciardi's American Poets at Mid-Century:

> It ought to be a nice book; with good luck it might sell fairly well, since there isn't anything that much resembles it. Also it's the first use of the term *Mid-*

> *Century*; who knows, maybe Eliot and Auden and everybody will now be considered Early Twentieth Century Poetry, and Amy Lowell will stop being a daring contemporary poet.[50]

However, rather than willingly accepting some notional form of movement-type categorization, Jarrell was interested in announcing his own presence in contemporaneity; the term "Mid-Century" was momentarily useful, immediate and enabling because it was too vague to imply a movement-type constraint. Jarrell indicates a common tension in the American literary predicament; the urge to be recognized in the present is met with a simultaneous desire to avoid the restrictions of a factionalized literary tradition and the compromises it imposes upon an "individual talent". Before the advent of modernism, American literature was imagined as a carnivalesque procession of individual talents, not as an ordained and institutionally-organized tradition. Modernism was the first movement instigated by Americans to succeed in the international "free market" of culture; but in order to "succeed", those Americans involved in its inception had to engage with the monolithic originator and investor of movements that is European tradition. It could be conjectured that movements only become authoritative in cultures that have an intense and complacent sense of what constitutes the aesthetically orthodox. Until World War II enforced a major re-assessment of cultural authority, movements were not native to America but were symptoms of Europhilia. Eliot and Pound's modernism represented an academically successful attempt to introduce orthodoxy into the unruly American literary consciousness:

> A care for American letters does not consist in breeding a contentment with what has been produced, but in setting a standard for ambition.[51]

Modernism had American writers struggling with their influences on the surface of their literature as well as in its depths. Rather than necessarily being a "struggle" in the patriarchal terms of Harold Bloom, however, influence could be a relativistic and arbitrary process, dependent on a dandyist act of choice as well as psychological determinism; there is opportunism and consumerism in Jarrell's personal canon as well as Oedipal awe. Potential areas of literary development were to be found as well as fated from the infinite "*musée imaginaire*" of the past. As was noted earlier, Jarrell worked from an idiosyncratic, unstable and continually altering anthology of influences: Wordsworth, Malraux, Auden, Kipling, Blixen, Hardy, Rilke, the Grimms, Frost, Whitman, Corbière, Stead, Proust. What provides a context for this fragment of an indeterminate and vast list is of course Jarrell's greedy sensibility but

also an indication of the vastness of what was available and what was becoming available in the new economy of influence. This process of choice is analogous to the process of writing itself, and stresses the need for Jarrell to be read as a conventionalist, traditionalist or movement-member only in terms of his radical individuality and choice-making.

The attraction of "generations" as a term for Americanists is that it presents a fantasy of talking about poets collectively without explicitly naming them as a movement, while also offering an important paradigm of continuity for a self-perceiving nation of immigrants. However, the very vagueness of "generation" guarantees that the critic enjoys latitude to encrypt writers into movement-consciousness, however irreconcilable their writing may be. In the case of Jarrell and his contemporaries, the term "middle generation" has acquired currency because its inadequacy licenses the critic. The manoeuvrability of the term is well-indicated by Berryman in his 1948 survey of the state of poetry, "Waiting for the End, Boys"; in it he writes of a "middle generation" that is not his own:

> As for the middle generation, it has gone to pieces. Tate has published one booklet in a decade, Crane died, McLeish evaporated. . . .The other most active members of the generation have been Winters and Blackmur as critics. The young poets lately, in short have not had fathers but grandfathers. Not much generative time is needed, however, for Auden himself is a grandfather.[52]

The "middle generation" are those between modernism and the present; in 1948 between Eliot and Berryman, in the 1990s (under these terms) it should be between Eliot and the prominent living or just-dead poets: Ashbery, Clampitt, Hecht, Rich. If modernism persists as the basis for evaluative discourse, then the "middle generation" represents the limbo between modernism and the emergence of a newly decisive movement or moment, or indeed the "second coming" of modernism itself. "Middle generation" designates a vacuum of definition, forbidding continuous temporality and as a consequence creating problems of who belongs to what "generation" within the ever-expanding distance between modernism and the contemporary moment. Furthermore, as modernism cannot itself be "resolved" or definitively closed as a phenomenon, it cannot be resolved to the contemporary moment. This explains the difficulty experienced by critics when attempting to relate informatively the work of Jarrell to that of other writers.

"Generational" movement-analysis has been unable to discern aesthetic or cultural consensus between Jarrell and his contemporaries other than a limited series of

circumstantial connections; by regarding Jarrell as the minor character of the movement, however, the absence of continuity or conjecture is described as Jarrell's "failure" rather than the product of an inadequate critical paradigm: "Lowell was fitted by background and by talent to be greatest poet of his generation. Jarrell's gifts were more critical than creative".[53] Jeffrey Meyer's statement is representative of the canonical indifference to Jarrell's poetry manifest in most criticism of the"middle generation". Meyers has inherited a precedent bias against Jarrell's poetry in favour of his criticism, re-writing without effect Helen Vendler's aphoristic dictum that he "can be said to have put his genius into his criticism, and his talent into his poetry".[54] If anything, Meyers develops Vendler to the point where it is barely conceded that Jarrell was a poet at all. As for Travisano, while attempting to give the poetry its due (and his book does contain some unprecedentedly thorough and nuanced readings of Jarrell without reference to Lowell, Bishop, or Berryman), he finds Jarrell most useful for the purposes of his projected "quartet" as its critic-in-residence.

Even those critics who plead for Jarrell's poetry at the expense of his contemporaries have done so in evaluative terms that reveal a defensive anxiety about the substance of their subject. In his biography of Jarrell, William H. Pritchard feels compelled to justify placing him over Lowell and Berryman:

> My own sense is that, compared to those contemporaries, Jarrell worked out of a much richer sense of nostalgia than either of them possessed. Yet nostalgia is not sentimentality.[55]

This is not a particularly robust assertion, and instead of challenging or deconstructing the paradigm of the "middle generation", Pritchard opts to be contentious within it. The lack of confidence in such criticism of Jarrell is symptomatic of the indecision as to the overall worth of the Jarrell canon, and furthermore the relative worth of its plural facets. Travisano warns against the impulse to advance one poet over the other:

> The danger of using one poet as a club to beat that poet's close colleague is that, by exaggerating genuine or imagined differences into full-fledged antagonisms, the critic trivializes literary relations that have great and ongoing cultural importance.[56]

This may well be true, but it is equally important to attempt to discover new levels of comparativeness, to look for relations beyond the obvious, running the risk of trivialization (maybe even seeing it as necessary). In Jarrell's case, he has been both

club and clubbed; what he needs is to be taken out of the ongoing canonical brawl between his immediate contemporaries (as has been seen, one of the primary functions of a literary movement is to license such brawls). To do this, genuine and imagined differences need to be pursued as far as possible; futhermore, the full range of writing by Jarrell demands to be opened up for analysis, to have its diversity flaunted as a reaction against the narrow selection of poems and critical pieces that have been appropriate for relating Jarrell to Lowell, Berryman, or Bishop.

To an extent, the scope of his work has deterred critics from finding an evaluative sequence for it; however, it also has to be indicated that the posthumous dissemination of Jarrell's work has been even more of a factor in contributing to critical inertia. Jarrell's The Complete Poems displays a crisis of editorial confidence, preoccupied with presenting a stable poetic personality rather than exploring the poet's capacity for undermining such stability and the malformation and multivalence of that "personality". The obscuring of Jarrell's transformations by the compromising blandishments of The Complete Poems has exacerbated further the problems of critics looking to authorize their opinions of his work, already fettered as they are by having to overcome the cultural cringe – in "middle generation" terms – of proposing Jarrell's "inadequate" poetry. In addition, when the opportunity arose for an editorial re-assessment, Pritchard's Randall Jarrell: Selected Poems exacerbated the flaws of The Complete Poems by de-historicizing the poetry and inscribing it as auxiliary to his simultaneously published biography of Jarrell. Few critics have addressed the stasis created by the harmonious editing of Jarrell, but some, such as Robert Humphrey, have at least indicated that the poet has been traduced by even his most committed "apostles":

> The significance of Randall Jarrell's poetry, particularly the poems first published between 1944 and 1951, has not been recognized widely. No chronicler of recent American poetry has written the proper chapter with which to give literary history a basis for being "ruthless" (or not) towards Jarrell's poetry. The fact is that no other American poet published so many excellent poems during the period of the late 1940s. Few have published so many since.[57]

It can be legitimately suspected that the ruthlessness of critics – which can also be construed as carefulness – towards Jarrell is provoked by expediency, in that any writer who resists conventional or normative approaches is not an attractive or convenient subject for analysis. Jarrell is more conveniently regarded as what Eliot termed a secondary figure who has a role in a literary movement that far transcends

his own merit and importance. Readers are faced with a choice that ought not to be a choice at all: do they accept the critical lethargy of regarding Jarrell as a minor character of a significant bloc within the canon – the "middle generation" – or can they attempt to provide a more nomadic reading of his work in whatever contexts that are informative; in order to re-read Jarrell, it is necessary to re-write him. Furthermore, instead of problematizing his work within its currently given contexts, it is necessary to regard him as foundationally problematic.

A look at the recent marketing of Jarrell adds a dimension of urgency to this discourse; after briefly going out of print in the early 1990s, Jarrell's The Complete Poems and Poetry and the Age were re-issued as part of the anniversary celebrations of Faber & Faber and The Noonday Press. For the Noonday Edition of The Complete Poems, a new cover photograph of Jarrell posing as a wartime air mechanic replaced the familiar image of a heavily-bearded Jarrell taken during his last years. The change of photograph did not indicate a change of editorial approach, however; rather it encapsulated the nostalgic impulse of Noonday as they preserved the 1969 edition without alteration, looking to consign Jarrell to publishing heritage rather than any continuing literary or textual discourse. Similarly, as part of their anniversary celebrations Faber re-printed Poetry and the Age in an *echte* replication of their first English edition of 1955. As far as his publishers are concerned, therefore, Randall Jarrell is not only dead but petrified; canonically settled, more to be commemorated or re-hashed (as with Leithauser) than read.

Of course, this is more than what Jarrell expected, or at least what he claimed to expect: "When I was asked to talk about the Obscurity of the Modern Poet I was delighted, for I have suffered from this obscurity all my life"(*PA* 15). The neglect of a modern poet – for example, Randall Jarrell – became a great obsession of his prose; unlike his contemporaries, Jarrell consistently addressed the presumptive implacability and indifference of society to people such as himself with exhibitionistic energy, employing a rhetoric attuned to the level of a "public" discourse (a rhetoric that was nevertheless addressing a presumedly non-existent audience), rather than implicitly addressing the moral sub-consciousness of "America" or locating a societal critique in terms primarily of the self (tropes of the "middle generation"). Refusing to accept that the modern American poet had only the narrowest of audiences, Jarrell persisted in attempting to make himself a poet of American culture, pursuing the broadest significance of that term; instead of the internalizing energies of Lowell and Berryman which constitute a traditional American poetics, reliant on the self and a complaisant reception by a reader "prepared" for that self, Jarrell's poems adopt forms of address that imply an audience – anticipating communication – yet often end with a breakdown in communication.

Obsolescence was both the theme and the encrypted effect of his poetry. As Wendy Lesser and James Longenbach have indicated, Jarrell had a problem with endings and conclusions in his poetry.[58] I would suggest that this is a vital part of his poetics; Jarrell is "absent" from his poems in terms of telling the reader something about himself, and therefore does not offer the patterns of personal-narrative, often ending in an epiphanic "moment", that his contemporaries did. The lack of presence in Jarrell's poetry meant that his texts would not gain emphasis at the expense of the movement he was perceived as belonging to.

In Becoming Canonical in American Poetry, Timothy Morris identified the relationship between the acquisition of canonicity and the "poetics of presence":

> The very concept of an American poetic tradition took shape around a nucleus of critical values that drew texts and critiques to itself, values of originality, organicism, and monologic language, which I group here as the poetics of presence. "Presence" in the sense which I use it here means the belief that the work of art conveys the living presence of the artist, and the implied value that a work is better as the artist is more present in it.
>
> The poetics of presence, by valuing those texts that most directly and immediately present the writer as a living voice, came to be a guarantee of the nationalism of canonical texts: an American writer sufficiently present in a work would automatically deliver the greatest amount of Americanism in that work.[59]

For critics such as Vendler, Jarrell's "presence" in his criticism necessarily "absents" his poetry from canonical discourse; furthermore, in Morris's terms, it can be said that Jarrell was therefore most "American" in the monologic language of his prose. As will be discussed in the chapters to come, the willed instability and dialogic structure of Jarrell's poetics guaranteed his consignment to his generation-movement but at the same time indicate a strategic resistance to the hegemony of the "poetics of presence" that has yet to be satisfactorily explored. It is pointless to argue that Jarrell is a "great poet", or to apologize for him not being one. To write about the failure of your own project, as Jarrell did, is a canonical disaster; for a poet, it is always better to assume that you are being read rather than to wonder in verse if anyone is "out there". Bewailing your lack of an audience, writing in the "wrong" genres (as in his children's books), challenging and relinquishing influential mentors such as Allen Tate, "hiding" academically in a small Women's College in North Carolina, Jarrell could be seen as persistently campaigning for canonical suicide; his engagement

with weakness and being in a minority of one provides much more potential for analysis than whether or not his actual death was self-inflicted or not.

Immediately after Jarrell's death, one would have bet large on the epitaphs, obituaries and testimonial articles developing into an energetic and lasting discourse around him. As it is, over thirty years on, very few critics have got much farther than the testimonial style, with its concomitant anxieties of categorization and canonical placement, or the most fundamental of readers' guides, offering introduction after introduction to the work without pretending to a profound enagagement with it.

Morris's work shows the competing but complementary processes that make an American poet canonical, analyzing Whitman, Dickinson, Moore and Bishop in turn. It is more problematic but equally vital to assess how a poet loses canonicity, even when it may have seemed guaranteed in some measure. Whatever Jarrell's protestations during his lifetime, his reputation – at least within the literary and academic communities – was huge; however, his current community of advocates is small enough to leave room for critical approaches that would be considered as cranky in relation to other writers. As we will see in the chapter on Jarrell's writing for children, Griswold founds his reading of Jarrell in their therapeutic quality : Jarrell "made me well".[60] Similarly, Laura Jensen has also stressed the "healing" didacticism of Jarrell: "Jarrell's work may have helped some women see themselves and accept themselves through his writing and acceptance, allowed them to enter the world of the 60s and 70s determined and taught".[61] Alternatively, there are occasionally impassioned pleas for Jarrell as a special case for canonical re-hab.[62] The tropes of inadequacy and grievance dominate this type of writing about – or "righting" of – Jarrell; they re-inforce the poetics of presence, but Jarrell is present as a teacher, therapist or "hero", never as a poet or author. The notion of Jarrell's utility has had a pernicious effect on the reception of his writing.

Nevertheless, the prevalent connection of Jarrell with either his own inadequacies as a writer or the inadequacies of those who commit themselves to his writing can be taken as a phenomenon with utility and potential rather than underlining the phrase "Randall Jarrell, Failure". In her book Men in Dark Times, Hannah Arendt incorporated essays on twentieth century writers and intellectuals who not only exposed the horrors of the period but also provided strategies for dealing with its horrors. The final essay is on Jarrell, but in two of the earlier chapters, on Karen Blixen and Walter Benjamin, Arendt's analysis could also be read in terms of the American. In the essay on Benjamin, Arendt refers to his critique of Kafka:

> What Benjamin said of Kafka with such aptness applies to himself as well: "The circumstances of his failure are multifarious. One is tempted to say:

once he was certain of eventual failure, everything worked out for him *en route* as in a dream"[63]

To adapt Arendt, what could be said of Benjamin and Kafka could also be said of Randall Jarrell; what is most "present " in his writing is a radical pessimism that makes him particularly improbable as a member of any positivistically empiricist grouping such as a movement. In order to "get over" the middle generation, it is also necessary to get around "the poetics of presence", and to perhaps appropriate the "failure" and minority of Jarrell as licence to put him into different and problematic contexts for reading. Later sections will make frequent use of Benjamin and more sparing use of Deleuze and Guattari's Kafka -Towards A Minor Literature in an attempt to produce a nomadically "weak" reading of Jarrell's nomadic writing across genres, identities and literary proprieties.[64]

Jarrell's unwillingness and inability to accept that he was writing for a "lucky few" and not a "mass" readership of Tennysonian proportions, has engendered uncertainties about the definitve tenor of his writing. It has been criticized and praised for being too simple or too obtuse, too sentimental or too literary. In a review of the Selected Poems, Donald Davie criticized him for all of those reasons: Jarrell was "impenetrable, except by reference to his explanatory note", "incurable", "wrong-headed", believed (wrongly) that the poem "is just a sample of animated conversation"; and in one final exasperated burst, Davie attempts condescension: "Perhaps he is just trying to be the poet of the common man".[65]

Davie's irritation is intriguing because it is so unguarded; for all the confusion, clutter and formlessness in Jarrell's poetry that he saw, he couldn't quite isolate its source. He attempts to locate them within Jarrell's avowed "democracy", but also insists upon a dimension of personal cowardice and moral evasion; rather than that Jarrell might be adopting a designedly unorthodox and determinedly anti-heroic (not in itself "undemocratic") position in the poems, as I believe he had. In any case, critical and evaluative generalizations do not apply to Jarrell with any effect; it may be better to see that as his agenda rather than his catastrophe. On a fundamental level, it is best to perceive of Jarrell's career as a search for forms or modes most appropriate to his anxieties so that they might be met then traversed; to adopt Deleuze and Guattari, "to translate everything into assemblages and then to dismantle the assemblages".[66] For Jarrell, academic and literary culture in the 1950s had become a simulation of the prevalent bureaucracies and organizations of American society: "who'd have thought that the era of the poet in the Grey Flannel Suit was coming?" (*Letters* 413). The supreme bureaucracy in what Perloff has called "the holding operation of the fifties and sixties"[67] was the canon, and my contention is that Jarrell

deliberately shrank from its demands and contingencies as he persevered with his writing. Furthermore, within the department of the canon that has been assigned to him, Jarrell represents a Bartlebyesque figure, resisting the blandishments of generational orthodoxy while maintaining the appearance of conformity; in terms of belonging to the "middle generation", he is biographically assimilable, textually incomprehensible.

Ultimately, it is appropriate that it should be Lowell who came up with an assessment of Jarrell which tried hardest of all to make the grey-flannels fit: "Jarrell's a great man of letters, a very informed man, and the best critic of my generation, the best professional poet".[68] This curriculum vitae was one that Jarrell sought to undermine, out of necessity and desire. In this context, the title of Langdon Hammer's 1990 article "Who Was Randall Jarrell?"[69] could be adopted as an adequate response to Lowell's banal estimates; vitally, however, Hammer's question ought not to be met with simply a new attempt at a definitive answer. Instead we should ask: "Why don't we know and did Jarrell want us to?" In order to read Jarrell, we may have to deny all knowledge of him.

Chapter Two. What Is Jarrellian?

This chapter works at disestablishing some of the more commonplace assumptions about Jarrell's writing. The first section re-assesses the privileging of Jarrell's criticism over the rest of his work, and takes issue with the presumed coherence of that critical writing and its significance. The second section performs the same task on Jarrell's poetics, regarding specifically what has been regarded as typically good and deficient (as well as extraordinary) in the poetry, and contextualizes Jarrell's poetic process. Section three develops some of these ideas in addressing the effects of the arrangement and presentation of Jarrell's poetry, and further analyzes the full implications of the observation that his poetic canon exhibits no development, at least in conventional terms. Jarrell's politics (and the perceived lack of them) form the fourth section, and in it I explore a political dimension to his writing that has not been previously admitted. The final section recontextualizes Jarrell within the writing of Kafka and theory of Arendt, Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari, accepting the enigmatic status and quality of much of Jarrell's writing and suggesting a method for receiving and promoting it as such.

I. Critic, what Critic?

If Randall Jarrell's reputation could be said to be secure in relation to any particular aspect of his work, then one would have to identify his critical essays and reviews as having attained a consistency of regard that his other output has not. In the memoirs and letters of Eileen Simpson, Robert Lowell, John Berryman and Elizabeth Bishop, the prevalent impression of Jarrell is that of an engaging but capricious and intimidating figure whose preoccupations were revealed more palpably in his prose than his poems.

This is unsurprising; no comparable post-war poet wrote quite as much criticism, or has had so much collected and re-printed; Jarrell the critic has always been in demand, whether as advocate or adversary. Furthermore, it is unsurprising that critics seeking to recover a place for Jarrell's poetry in the modern canon have claimed that he has become a victim of the peculiarities that characterized his own critical approach. William H. Pritchard has written that "Jarrell may need to be rescued from his own analytical schemes"[1], and the implication is that you get the criticism you deserve. However, it would be foolish to accept this too wholeheartedly or uncritically as the sole reason for the lack of interest in Jarrell's poetry, particularly as the consistency and effectiveness of Jarrell's "analytical schemes" have never been

tested. No-one has managed to extract a coherent aesthetic from Jarrell's criticism, just as no-one has been able to identify a recognizable poetic "development" – in conventionally linear terms at least – in his poetry. The readings that Jarrell has received, whether positive or negative, have proved dissatisfactory for their reliance on the anecdotal and the imposition of a spurious corporate identity on post-war American poets. Analysis of Jarrell has lacked any sense of ideological debate or direction, and that inevitably arose from an avoidance of familiar ideologies by Jarrell that in itself became a political gesture.

Despite his obstinate resistance to theory, no other poet-critic has had quite so much of his critical output returned in quotation marks to assess his own poetic output, with the giant exceptions of Pound and Eliot.[2] However, any criticism of Jarrell's poetry that incorporates his critical output as commentary also tends to incorporate its forms. The majority of Jarrell's criticism consists of short reviews and polemical essays, and subsequent analysis of Jarrell has rarely extended beyond the limits of "review-like" gainsaying and partial evaluations of "merit" and "reputation". His prose is used to *justify* his poetry, rather than to inform it; there is also a moralistic and inquisitionist imperative that he be held accountable for that prose. Furthermore, the scarce criticism published on Jarrell in the 1990s was predominantly periodical in form, and no attempt was made on any full-length study devoted exclusively to him.

Traditionally, poet-critics are expected to produce criticism that informs their poetry, in the manner of Arnold, Eliot, and Pound. To base an analysis of Jarrell's poetry upon what one can glean from an entertaining but scarcely coherent body of criticism is to accept that Jarrell was a convinced follower of Eliot, in producing through criticism an aesthetic and political agenda that *demanded* application to his own art. However, if the interaction of poetry and prose is obscure at times in Jarrell's *oeuvre*, what must be considered is if that obscurity was self-consciously fostered by Jarrell or was it something endemic and habitual. Was it a deliberatedly antithetical anti-ideology that Jarrell adopted, or was it simply his inability to develop a coherent and sustaining intellectual fabric in his art? Intelligent readings of Lowell, Berryman and Bishop have emerged because of the evident evolution of an individual aesthetic in their work coincident with their developing cultural preoccupations; to identify a similar movement in Jarrell's output we will have to attempt to evoke an ideological environment within which his work may be read, a culture within which it may be informatively contextualized. However, reservations must remain as to the enabling potential of such an approach; certainly, it is necessary to go beyond the recent approaches that have attempted to problematize Jarrell from the relatively simple perspective of a single, iconic persona. Unlike Travisano or Flynn (who read Jarrell

in the post-romantic terms of the "gifted child" becoming profligate and lost) or in Lesser who focuses (albeit fascinatingly) on Jarrell's transgenderism, an approach is sought here which may see Jarrell's various and complex projections and personae as coalescent, rather than working to obscure each other.

It is fair to point out that Jarrell's reputation as a critic is founded mainly on his early reviews and his first published collection of essays, Poetry and the Age (1953). That book introduced Jarrell to the canon, and subsequent assessments of his status as a critic have been based mainly upon a small number of essays within it; in particular, the two essays on Robert Frost, the retrospective essays on Walt Whitman and John Crowe Ransom, and the general essays on "The Obscurity of the Poet" and "The Age of Criticism".

The principle behind Jarrell's understanding of Frost, Whitman and Ransom is that of necessary re-evaluation; his interpretations gain their authority by the extent to which they address the failure of past or contemporary analysis of the writers in question. The attraction of Jarrell's arguments lies precisely in his ability to convey to a reader "the other Frost" or "the good Whitman". By refuting standard interpretations of these poets, Jarrell was attempting to stress his self-imposed isolation from academic criticism, and also to surround his own reading with an aura of irrefutability and the allure of "otherness". In his review of Poetry and the Age, John Berryman remarked of Jarrell that a "salient truth, for the present reader, is that he is seldom wrong".[3] Jarrell's insistence on the plainness of his responses and the "common sense" of his attitudinizing are in part an attempt to evolve an inviolate method of reading appropriate to a perception of poems, novels and plays as inviolate works of art. It is also a method that relies upon stating the obvious as a method of assuming authority, a method which particularly infuriated René Wellek:

> Jarrell seems not to be aware of the possibility of theory or history which might not be dependent on the enhancement of the reader's enjoyment. He uses the oldest and most unconvincing argument that the poet alone knows what poetry is.[4]

The ironic consequence of Jarrell's relaxed attitude towards contemporary critical practices is that his endorsement of the ineffable accorded Jarrell a place in literary history, in a way that very few critics achieve; very few bibliographies of Frost or Whitman would exclude Jarrell's essays. Jarrell's rhetoric is "self-protective"- a term he used himself to describe John Crowe Ransom's poetry – in that it makes no overt ideological assertion, often to the extent that he denies the validity of any critical response in the face of art sufficiently "great". In "Some Lines from Whitman",

Jarrell identifies just such a moment of "great" – and therefore untouchable – art in "Song Of Myself". Of its celebrated sequence of lines 822-832, finishing "I am the man, I suffered, I was there", Jarrell writes:

> In the last lines of this quotation Whitman has reached– as great writers always reach– a point at which criticism seems not only unnecessary but absurd: these lines are so good that even admiration feels like insolence, and one is ashamed of anything that one can find to say about them. How anyone can discuss or accept patronisingly the man who wrote them, I do not understand. (*PA* 119)

Great literature is inestimable, and therefore self-sufficient. As Vendler writes in her review of The Third Book of Criticism, "he was no theorist",[5] yet Jarrell's attitudes towards what he perceived as the exemplary in art provided both the presumptive inspiration for his creative work and also the anxiety that frequently ennervated it. If poetry is independently communicable, then it is communicable to all. In his essay on Whitman, Jarrell indicates a belief that "nowadays it is people who are not particularly interested in poetry, people who say that they read a poem for what it says, not for how it says it, who admire Whitman most" (*PA* 106). Jarrell here apparently endorses a democratic poetic, yet in the opening essay of Poetry and the Age, "The Obscurity of the Poet", he had bemoaned the lack of the same disinterested yet nonetheless existent readership for poetry in general that he had claimed for Whitman:

> When a person says accusingly that he can't understand Eliot, his tone implies that most of his happiest hours are spent at the fireside among worn copies of the *Agamemnon*, *Phedre*, and the Symbolic books of William Blake; and it is melancholy to find, as one commonly will, that for months at a time he can be found pushing eagerly through the pages of *Gone with the Wind* or *Forever Amber*, where *with head, hands, wings, or feet* this poor fiend *pursues his way, and swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies;* that all his happiest memories of Shakespeare seem to come from a high school production of *As You Like It* in which he played the wrestler Charles; and that he has, by some obscure process of free association, combined James Russell, Amy and Robert Lowell into one majestic whole: a bearded cigar-smoking ambassador to the Vatican who, after accompanying Theodore Roosevelt on his first African expedition, came home to dictate on his deathbed the "Concord Hymn". (*PA* 21-22)

This vivid satire of middle-brow complaint is reminiscent of Jarrell's incandescently cruel rubbishing of literature he considered inferior:

> Sometimes it is hard to criticize, one only wants to chronicle. The good and mediocre books come in from week to week, and I put them aside and read them and think of what to say; but the "worthless" books come in day after day, like the cries and truck sounds from the street, and there is nothing that anyone could think of that is good enough for them. In the bad type of the thin pamphlets, in hand-set lines on imported paper, people's hard lives and hopeless ambitions have expressed themselves more directly and heartbreakingly than they have ever been expressed in any work of art: it is as if the writers had sent you their ripped-out arms and legs, with "This is a poem" scrawled upon them in lipstick. (*PA* 159-160)

Jarrell's belief in the self-sufficiency of great literature, and an equal sense of its inestimability, contrasts violently with the odd form of sympathetic contempt he accords in his commentary upon "inferior" writing. Some art is above analysis, some is beneath it. Whatever Jarrell's reputation as a popularizer of "great" but unread books, his concept of literary culture was obsessively hierarchial, reliant on imponderable questions of taste and sensibility. Delmore Schwartz made the point that for Jarrell poetry was too often "the *most* important thing in the world, which is surely too close to poetry as the *only* important thing in the world"[6]; however rewarding we may find Poetry and the Age, we have to acknowledge the limitations of Jarrell's perspectives.

Indeed, when he attempted to apply his literary arguments to general culture in A Sad Heart at the Supermarket (1962), the passionate concern that was perhaps the most attractive feature of his defence of poetry in Poetry and the Age had hardened into a paranoid cynicism, evidenced not so much by resigned disillusion as a neurotic, hectoring intolerance. Leslie A. Fiedler said of the book: "the wit has grown too nervously aggressive, the tone bullies a little".[7] In these essays on "general culture", Jarrell was unable to insulate his rhetoric against accusations of inaccuracy and wilfulness as he was in his literary criticism through his indubitable competence and authority as a reader of poetry. Many of these essays leave the reader little wiser about American popular culture in the late 1960s, as they are much more concerned with the death of an older literary culture than they are with the phenomenology or potential of a new one. Nevertheless, they do convey a pervasive sense of Jarrell's intellectual vulnerability and entrenchment. Jarrell's reaction to the emergence of

what he called the "Medium", in other words a televisual, post-modern culture, was based wholly on his fear of its consequences for literature. This brought him to some astute and prophetic assessments, but also prevented him attempting to confront or countenance the possibilities for new literature, produced within the peculiar cultural predicament he has identified:

> Our culture is essentially periodical: we believe that all that is deserves to perish and to have something else put in its place. We speak of planned obsolence, but it is more than planned, it is felt; is an assumption about the nature of the world. We feel that the present is better and more interesting, more real, than the past, and that the future will be better and more interesting, more real, than the present; but consciously, we do not hold against the present its prospective obsolescence. Our standards have become to an astonishing degree the standards of what is called the world of fashion, where mere timelessness – being orange in orange's year, violet in violet's – is the value to which all other values are reducible. (*A Sad Heart* 64)

Jarrell could not see a role for art in a culture whose values pretend to no relationship with the past; for him, art was instinct with an understanding of the past:

> All this is, at bottom, the opposite of the world of the arts where commercial and scientific progress do not exist; where the bone of Homer and Mozart and Donatello is there, always, under the mere blush of fashion; where the past, the remote past, even – is responsible for the way that we understand, value, and act in the present. (*A Sad Heart* 64)

An effective modern poetry must therefore be able to moderate effectively between the present and the past; this is what initially attracted Jarrell to Robert Lowell's early work:

> Mr. Lowell's poetry is a unique fusion of modernist and traditional poetry, and there exist side by side in it certain effects that one would have thought mutually exclusive; but it is essentially a post- or anti-modernist poetry and as such is certain to be influential. (*PA* 194)

Interestingly, post-modernism here is synonymous with anti-modernism; and it is of course enticing for contemporary readers to believe that Jarrell shares their apprehension of the provocative potential of the term "post-modernist", and that his

"invention" of the term corresponds with his sense of crisis in the humanities and general culture. Certainly, Jarrell's remark has given a cue for Travisano's nebulous version of postmodernity as experienced by the "midcentury quartet", and elsewhere it has prompted more focused analysis of his language by Longenbach and Mazzaro. One might even suggest that "post-modernist" was a fortunate neologism as far as he was concerned; had he not made it, would his reputation as a critic have survived into the twenty-first century, other than as a celebrant of Whitman and Frost? Jarrell's post-modernity is practical rather than theoretical, as will be shown in the chapters to come. Generally, Jarrell's reponses to Spenglerian perceptions of crisis featured a stress on constant "classic" values that were "popular" rather than "fashionable". Under these terms, Jarrell would regard much of the conventional language of criticism and theory as self-indulgent and modish, typifying the "periodical" culture from which it emerged. In his essay on the identity of romanticism and modernism, "The End of the Line", Jarrell indicates the points of divergence between the two movements as only being of superficial interest. The "best" modernist poetry is therefore the logical consequence– in terms of traditional and generic continuity– of the "best" romantic poetry. In the final paragraph of "The End of the Line", Jarrell affirms the autonomy of poetry from the consensus-oriented prejudices of periodization. In an immediate sense, he is refuting the imperative classicism of Yvor Winters; furthermore, however, he is implicitly affirming his own concept of "classicism" in poetry as being equivalent to popularity and effective longevity. A sense of classicism cannot be prescribed for a text; it may only be given retrospectively through history; a theory of classicism is impossible, as the "classic" is simply that which endures, and that is unpredictable:

> I hope that nobody will dislike my article because he thinks it an attack on romanticism or modernism. This has been description, not indictment. Burke said that you can't indict a whole people, and I hope that I am not such a fool as to a century and a half of a world. Besides, so far as its poetry is concerned, it was wonderful. Wordsworth and Blake and Heine, Baudelaire and Corbiere, Hardy and Yeats and Rilke– the names crowd in; and there are dozens more. That some of these poets were, sometimes, as strange as they were wonderful, that some of their successors were, alas, rather stranger: all this is as true as it was obvious. But the "classical" prejudice which hints that these poets were somehow deceived and misguided as (say) Dryden and Valery were not seem every year more grotesque. One repeats to oneself, *whom God deceives is well deceived,* and concludes that if these poets were not classical, so much the worse for classicism. (*KA&C* 83)

"Description, not indictment"; Jarrell characteristically luxuriates in decrying and deconstructing the theoretical originality of modernism just as he celebrates its poetic range and resourcefulness. He saves himself from any accusation of disingenuousness by proclaiming his partiality; and yet the more evident Jarrell's dependency upon his partial instincts and intuitions for his aesthetic "arguments", the less relevant they seem in relation to his own poetry.

Jarrell exemplifies the paradox of the "democratic" critic in America; his self-assessment is that he is a popularizer and *provocateur*, encouraging the public to read, yet he is also a censor and legislator, blessing some books and banishing the rest. Leslie A. Fiedler, a more radical "democrat" than most in the 1960s, was of the opinion that Jarrell was "responsible only to his own responses, hushed only before the mystery of his own taste", and therefore " not *quite* a critic finally, but rather a 'real reader' joined in a single body to a compulsive talker".[8] This need not "devalue" Jarrell's criticism, but it should make us hesitate from regarding it in too facile or orthodox a manner, and particularly in relation to his poetry.

Even if we accept that Jarrell is "not *quite* a critic", that does not make him utterly untheoretical or unideological. However, it is not in his assessments of individual writers that we find such an aspect to his work, but rather in his vision of the cultural crisis imminent in America's moment of post-war, late-capitalist and implicitly colonialist triumph:

> The American present is very different to the American past: so diferent that our awareness of the extent of the changes has been repressed, and we regard as ordinary what is extraordinary– ominous perhaps– both for us and for the rest of the world. The American present is many other people's future; our cultural and economic example is to much of the world mesmeric, and it is only its weakness and poverty that prevent it from hurrying with us into the Roman future. But at this moment of our power and success, our thought and art are of a troubled sadness, of the conviction of our own decline. (*A Sad Heart* 75)

The complicity of American culture with capital is a constant theme in Jarrell's criticism; as early as 1941, he had written that the "poem, today . . . . is an unimportant commodity for which there is a weak and limited demand; it is produced, distributed, and consumed like any other commodity" (*KA&C* 58). Throughout his life, the more convinced Jarrell became of the compromised cultural status of poetry, the less he wrote about poetry. Poetry and the Age was Jarrell's most

comprehensive and effective book of poetry criticism, but it was also his last; the emphasis in his subsequent criticism was on prose at least as much as poetry, and on European writers rather than American. Chekhov and Kipling replaced Frost and Whitman; indeed, it could be argued that his most significant task as a critic (after the pieces on Whitman and Frost) was undertaken in his popularization of a novel, The Man Who Loved Children by Christina Stead, in the essay "An Unread Book". Jarrell's analysis of Stead's novel is still regarded as definitive – it was used to introduce Penguin editions of the novel until it recently went out of print– whereas his criticism of Auden and Stevens (in particular) is comparatively insignificant in discussion of those poets. This suggests that Jarrell's criticism does not stand up particularly well to the challenges of discourse; in part, "An Unread Book" is still a vital critique because there are so few extant studies of Stead available (but that is changing). Jarrell's work appears foundational to any discourse around Stead's novel because of its rarity value, and implicitly because he failed to make the novel sufficiently fashionable for other critiques of it to follow. By comparison, Jarrell's analysis of Stevens, which appeared radical and groundbreaking in its time, was quickly surpassed and consequently by-passed.

Another reason for Jarrell's switch of "allegiance" from poetry to prose is that he felt less inclined to write about poetry as he found it increasingly difficult to write any of his own. Jarrell took six years to produce the poems for his last volume; indeed, he only produced one poem between the summers of 1958 and 1960, "In Montecito"(*Letters* 445), and at the time of his death had only written five poems for his projected next volume, to be called either Women or Let's See. A later chapter in this thesis, "California", will state the unique significance of some of these poems, and stress their potential for radicalizing the Jarrell canon. However, it is worth remarking now that these potentializing texts were written by Jarrell at the time when he perceived himself to be most compromised as a poet, when "one can say anything in verse and no one will mind" (*PA* 71):

> All of us are living in the middle of a dark wood in a bright Technicoloured forest– of words, words, words. It is a forest in which the wind is never still: there isn't a tree in the forest that is not, for every moment of its life and our lives, persuading or ordering or seducing or overawing us into buying this, believing that, voting for the other. (*A Sad Heart* 28)

In this context, Jarrell appears to be contradicting himself, establishing a value for poetry by attempting to write it but simultaneously discrediting its cultural significance in prose. It is as if his writing "self" had divided into mutually exclusive

categories of "poet" and "critic", thus exploding the ideally interdisciplinarian modernist figure of the "poet-critic". Interestingly, this is a schism in persona that Jarrell had identified in other "poet-critics" of his time, such as Stephen Spender:

> It isn't Mr. Spender but a small, simple– determinedly simple– part of Mr. Spender that writes the poems; the poet is a lot smarter man than his style allows him to seem. (If he were as soft and sincere as most of his poems make him out to be, the rabbits would have eaten him for lettuce long ago.) He is a shrewd, notably competent literary journalist, but all his prose intelligence and worldliness, everything that a Stage American would call "technological know-how" is kept out of the poem. (*KA&C* 239)

This reads rather like Helen Vendler's assessment of Jarrell that his criticism reveals his "genius" while his poetry indicates his mere "talent". However, Vendler does not question the mutual origins of Jarrell's poetry and prose; they emerged from the same temperament, but prose suited that temperament better. On the other hand, Jarrell implies that the poetry of Spender emerges from a "small" part of Spender that is wholly ignorant of the intelligence and competence of his critical self; by implication, Spender's criticism cannot inform the poetry or make it seem less "embarrassing", but at least the poetry does not diminish the effectiveness of the criticism.

A more significant analysis of a "poet-critic" by Jarrell is his 1951 review of Russell Hope Robbins's The T.S. Eliot Myth for The New York Times Book Review (Nov 18):

> Eliot is a fact, not a myth: a good poet; a bad dramatist; a sometimes bad and sometimes wonderful critic; a serious, limited, and often disquietingly unsatisfactory thinker about our culture. (*KA&C* 173)

The review reads primarily as a characteristically funny and eloquent rebuttal of Robbins's attack on Eliot: "It is a shame that readers have to read a book like this, and a worse shame that Robbins had to write it : the readers are through with it after a couple of hours, but Robbins has had to live with it for years"(*KA&C* 173). However, Jarrell does not "defend" Eliot by "defending" his myth, rather he does so by deconstructing it, not accepting the view of Eliot as an integral modernistic whole but dissecting him into poet, dramatist, critic and thinker. These are not modernist "personae" to Jarrell, various *ulterior* masks for a single dominant identity– or "myth"– but separate *alterior* identities. If ever a critic has been regarded as having

written criticism so as to provide an intellectual and aesthetic context for his own poetry, it is Eliot; yet Jarrell refuses to accept such self-validation. Jarrell's criticism is at its most convincing when his opinions are at their most informal and uncodified– or most "uncritical"– as if a modernist sensibility was too narrow and too agonized. Jerome Mazarro points out that Jarrell's "sensibility, for all its stress on modernism, relished sports cars, bucolic atmospheres, traditional art, good music, poetry, technological advances and Russian Ballet"[9]. Jarrell was a critic of modernism rather than a modernist critic, and a "sophisticated" late-capitalist consumer who wrote reviews rather than composed lectures (Eliot's most habitually effective form). For all the momentous talk of reputations and demands on the canon, critics for and against Jarrell have tended to list his "pastimes" with apparent neutrality, thereby avoiding theorization of Jarrell's extremist connoisseurship, driven as much by trivia as it was by the momentous, desiring irrelevance in the face of the supposedly pertinent. Such strategies enable critics to construct a Jarrell that withstands an incremental and canonical argument; by eliminating what was perverse (and by implication either interesting or damning), they have license to adjudicate.

Jarrell's eclectic and excremental tastes refute any simplistic characterization of him as a cultural reactionary, unless he may be considered one in the same way as Oscar Wilde, whose "iconoclasm had a conservative subtext"[10] ,according to Kirby Farrell; in Michael Hoffman's review of Jarrell's Letters for The Times Literary Supplement (July 11, 1986), an important point is made regarding Jarrell's conservatism:

> If by now his modern canon– Frost, Stevens, Williams, Moore, Bishop, Lowell– seems classically obvious and enlargeable, it is worth bearing in mind that it wasn't at the time.[11]

One of the reasons that Harry Levin could term Jarrell "the archetypal modernist" in his review of Faust is the vital role he performed in the institutionalization of certain cherished American modernists: Frost, Williams, Stevens, even Whitman. However, that role in canonizing sections of the modernist canon also consigns him to a limited role within it, that of a critical spin-doctor. Yet it is also vital to recognize the role that Americanist discourse has played in tending to erase the work on non-American writers that Jarrell gave primacy to after the 1950s, such as Kipling and classic Russian authors. As an Americanist critic, Jarrell's achievement is equivalent to his writing on Frost, Stevens, Whitman and Williams; he was unable to get anywhere near the completion of his large-scale projects on Hart Crane, Eliot or Pound. It is interesting to reflect on how limited Jarrell's criticism is by comparison to Berryman's

agonized and long-term scholarship on Stephen Crane and Shakespeare, yet Jarrell's work is that which is valorized; the inference could be made that Berryman's poetic reputation is sufficient in the eyes of the canon so as not to require boosting him as a critic. On the other hand, the problematic overall picture of Jarrell's work has led to the privileging of his criticism; firstly, because in narrating the middle generation it has been expedient to present Jarrell as the movement's critic-in-residence, and secondly that his criticism at least deals confidently with questions of value while the rest of his writing is of questionable value.

To see how Jarrell worked instinctively and heuristically as a critic, it is also worth paying attention to the correspondance between Jarrell and Adrienne Rich from 1963 until his death, in which he expresses how "crazy" he and Mary were about the poems that would make up Rich's ground-breaking book of 1963, Snapshots of a Daughter-in-law (*Letters* 465, 467-472, 480-482). Jarrell was to Rich what he had been to Robert Lowell prior to the publication of Lord Weary's Castle, a confidentially committed critic. In his essay "Randall Jarrell and Robert Lowell: The Making of Lord Weary's Castle", Bruce Michelson argues that Jarrell "plays the critic he himself called for, the critic in the highest possible role, precise, circumspect, cautiously insistent"[12]; in this role as "coach", Michelson asserts that Jarrell far surpasses what he achieved in his published criticism, by facilitating through Lowell "the expression of the post-war mind".[13] Similarly he can be credited with helping to stimulate Rich's book, which is also of particular significance to its historical moment; furthermore, it can be argued that Jarrell's reaction to Rich signalled a radical renunciation of Lowell's writing, with which Jarrell had been signalling disenchantment through public silence after the 1959 publication of Life Studies.

Characterizing and categorizing Jarrell as the "archetypal modernist" is to conceive of him as a conventional "poet-critic", and also to stress the published criticism of Jarrell as being a public and political statement of his aesthetic *credo*. Not only does this occlude any perception of Jarrell's promotion of "new" literature by Lowell and Rich in his "private" correspondence, but it also imposes a false authority and determinacy on his "public" critical canon; as a result the presumed "authority" of that canon is turned upon his own poetic output, often to its detriment. This paradoxical hypothesis, that Jarrell the critic would not have liked Randall Jarrell's poetry, actually denies the public status of Jarrell's writing by prescibing a very limited role for the reader as a passive intermediary between critical and poetic canons that censor further analysis. Furthermore, it implies that the critic was so dominant that the poet did not exist. Which brings us back to Helen Vendler's assessment of Jarrell, re-phrased and re-iterated in her 1990 review of Pritchard's biography:

> One could say that Jarrell put his passivity into his poetry, his ferocity into his criticism (and into his one novel Pictures from an Institution, a satire on Sarah Lawrence, where he had briefly taught) . . . Pritchard is just, and more than just, to Jarrell's virtues and to his sufferings– as a man, as a critic, as a poet. Time will forget the first, be charmed by the second, be grateful for the third.[14]

This amounts to the ultimate designation of Jarrell as "a very touching American minor poet".[15] Interestingly, Vendler is every bit as hierarchial and untheoretical a critic as Jarrell, and in that context her valorization of the criticism is unsurprising. Jarrell did not accept the authority– nor the homogenous identity– of the "poet-critic" in his analysis of Eliot and Spender, nor does his criticism posit any ideological agenda for literature; the most pressing concern in his criticism is educational, aspiring to preserve literacy and the "democratic" concept of common knowledge within the exclusively monetarist values of the age of the Medium, an age when "the poet's public's gone"(*A Sad Heart* 82):

Significantly, Jarrell's criticism does not attempt to write anyone *out* of the canon; rather, he created or renewed interest in writers whose work had been peripheralized or trashed by "conventional" critics. Jarrell's rejection of deterministic exclusivity– as in his criticism of Winters' supposed "classicism" highlights his own canonical predicament, in that arguments over Jarrell's canonical status and "reputation" have erased analysis of his literature. Standard interpretations of Jarrell's criticism as evidencing his "modernist" credentials have led to standardly modernist assessments of his poetry, as in Donald Davie's withering account of Jarrell's "failure":

> Jarrell . . . while asking an act of faith in psychological hypotheses, himself is incapable of an act of faith in poetic as distinct from factual truth, in the validity of the poem as artefact rather than document.[16]

Jarrell's instinct for democratization makes him an object of modernist ridicule; however, if we don't think of Jarrell as a "poet-critic" modernist whole, there is huge potential for analysis of him as a post-modernist series: "poet", "art critic", "literary critic", "novelist", "writer for children", "teacher" and "cultural commentator". This is not to say that his writings in each of these roles are not mutually informative, but rather that they are not *wholly* compatible and do not necessarily contribute to a single ideological agenda, or indeed a single persona. If modernism is essential and evaluative, post-modernism is a continuum of distinctions and coincidences; within

this environment, the "contradictions" in Jarrell's "persona" no longer have to be regarded as abject "failure", rather they can be explored as vital and radicalizing differences or necessary weaknesses.

Wendy Lesser has written of the division in Jarrell's writing voice as being:

> between critic and poet, male and female, persecutor and victim, wit and sentimentalist, aristocrat and democrat, bitterly knowledgeable adult and ingenious child. . . explains much of what was best about him as a writer, even if it also makes some of his work problematic.[17]

Lesser's identification of Jarrell (through the by now familiar trope of the list) as divided and antithetical might be expanded beyond these fundamentalist opposites that still imply an ongoing dialectic of the self. Similarly, James Longenbach's analysis of "Randall Jarrell's Semifeminine Mind" identifies the palpable sense of division in Jarrell's writing, but resists problematizing his concept of identity beyond a transgenderism that is read as paradigmatically conflicted; therefore, in a poem such as "A Girl in a Library" Jarrell is read as both asserting "male authority in the guise of sympathy for women" but at other times occupying "within our culture a legitimately and productively feminized position".[18] Splitting Jarrell into two still enables critics to "produce" a centred Jarrellian self, as there is always an implicit synthesis in identifying pairs of paradoxes. It may be more enabling to regard Jarrell as shattered rather than split, his "self" irrrecoverably broken and disintegral, usefully discontinuous.

II. Poetic, what Poetic?

> Indulgent, or candid, or uncommon reader
> —I've some: a wife, a nun, a ghost or two—
> If I write for anyone, I wrote for you;
> So whisper, when I die, *We was too few;*
> Write over me (if you can write; I hardly knew)
> That I—that I—but anything will do,
> I'm satisfied ... And yet—
> and yet, you *were* too few (*CP* 29)

Critics who accept Jarrell's published criticism as the only evidence of a Jarrellian aesthetic are in the predicament of proclaiming some of Jarrell's essays – such as "The End of the Line" – as "his manifesto on modern poetry"[19], or his "a good description of what was to be his own practice as a poet"[20], only to end up admitting defeat in the application of that "manifesto":

> The notion I should put forth is one that is supported by his later poems – is that no special vocabulary or system of concepts need or should be employed to analyze his art when that art is both at its freest and its most controlled.[21]

This determination to find a "manifesto", however implicit and latent, ironically distracts from what is manifest in Jarrell's poetry; by debating over the existence of a conventional theory of art, critics have been able only to describe Jarrell's poetry in terms of what it is not rather than what it is. The implication of Pritchard's comment is that if *he* cannot find a suitable theoretical language for discussing Jarrell's language, then no-one can; what Pritchard does not discover is that just because an analysis of a Jarrell poem may have to improvise its analytical terms – because no established theory appears adequate to it (which is a contentious claim in itself) – that does not make the vocabulary less "special", indeed it makes it more "specialized", and more dependant upon the idiosyncratic responses of the reader who in turn becomes responsible for "theory".

However, the "want" of theory need not imply the non-existence of a "poetic", and it should be noted that Jarrell did write about the practice of his own poetry– albeit with an avowed reluctance– on two particularly notable occasions: his essay on the composition of "The Woman at Washington Zoo" for the third edition of Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's Understanding Poetry (1960), and "Answers to Questions", which is Jarrell's response to a questionnaire that every poet in John Ciardi's anthology of Mid-Century American Poets (1950) was obliged to fill out if they wanted to be included. Jarrell resented the imposition of the latter format– "To write in this way about one's own poetry is extremely unpleasant and unnatural" (*KA&C* 171) – but it also indicates a poet's sense of priority: "to have you read the poems, I was willing to write the prose".

Jarrell's reluctance to theorize about his own poetry was in part a defence against the modernist criticism it would receive, and his "answers" to the questionnaire attempt to by-pass the evaluative criteria for such criticism and instead directly address the prospective reader, critical or otherwise:

> The questionnaire ... says that *Any statement you make about the ethical-philosophical relation of the poet to his writing will be most welcome.* My poems show what this relation actually is for me; what I say that it should be matters less. I *think* that I am relatively indifferent to the poem-as-performance-of-the-poet, and try to let the poem have a life of its own; the reader of the poem can know whether this is true. (*KA&C* 171)

However, it also has to be noted that he was performing according to his identity as a poet when he expressed his discomfort; the last thing he wanted to be was the critic that people presumably wanted him to be.

The apparent emphasis here is on textuality, and the creation of a *scriptible* poetry as opposed to *lisible*; and the remarks could be seen as a reaction against both a poetics of personality (Lowell,Berryman) and technique (Richard Wilbur), while being deliberately vague and discreet as to what his own encrypted poetic strategies or effects may be. To have you read the poem, Jarrell was willing to write the poem.

By his own admission, Jarrell does not want to give anything away; however, rather than resenting the desacralization of his poetic process, Jarrell is signalling his boredom with academic conventions of self-promotion or institutional prestige; in this limited regard, as Ferguson asserts: "Jarrell's is not finally a poetry of the academy, but of the people".[22] As has been remarked upon in earlier chapters, Jarrell's foregrounding of the materiality of the text and his surrendering of the superficially individuating tropes of a lyric poet's persona and monologic "voice"– all of which have been characterized as symptomatic of his democratic impulses– have contributed to his canonic peripheralization:

> Jarrell's passionate desire to preserve poetry as a realm apart from professional self-interest, which made him famous as a reader of poetry, has made him virtually forgotten as a writer of it.[23]

When read by Vendler, Jarrell's lack of interest in the "poem-as-performance-of-the-poet" (however "democratic") inevitably consigns him to minority status, particularly in relation to his nemesis-bearing contemporaries. As Perloff has written: "To be a poet, at midcentury, was to "find one's own voice", to "bring to speech", as Denise Levertov put it, one's own experience"[24]; yet again, Jarrell falls foul of the paradigm:

> What I miss in Jarrell is the presence of something formally new in addition to the pitying and querulous Jarrellian tone, which was already a considerable poetic achievement. Jarrell's free verse is often lame and wandering; his

iambics are everyone's iambics, his soldiers hapless boys, his children generic children, his closures familiar closures.[25]

What Vendler wants are signature gestures; instead she alleges that Jarrell is too like everyone else, a poet of the lowest common denominator; one irony that belies such a criticism is that Jarrell could be said to resemble no-one, particularly if he is so deficient in the poetics of presence as Vendler implies. That deficiency is indicated by her implication that the poet had a "tone" rather than a "voice" (such a key term in Vendler's criticism). Such a perception is based on Jarrell's frequent use of the dramatic monologue, about which Lesser has said "there is something inevitable-seeming", as "His is a divided voice in any case".[26] For Lesser, Jarrell's female personae express fundamental divisions in his self, while for Vendler "Jarrell's voice as a woman is his own voice, only more so", "as though an arrestedness in childhood kept Jarrell a brilliant boy, not quite a man".[27] Vendler regards his "weakness" as a failure of masculinity and non-fulfilment of masculine destiny (and "voice"), while Lesser asserts that "If...contradictions are to blame for what is disturbing about Jarrell, they are also responsible for what is powerful and compelling about him".[28] The transgenderism that Lesser embraces has provided the impetus for the scarce but innovatory recent criticism of Jarrell, while Vendler indicates what Hammer has described as "a general sense that Jarrell's poetry is somehow embarrassing".[29] That embarrassment is related to what may now be seen as Jarrell's radically ambiguous sexuality, which was expressed not just in his adoption of feminine roles but in his aversion to fixed roles of any kind, whether gendered, class-based or professional:

> Jarrell's desire to write in "the voice of a woman" can thus be seen as the pretext for a reassertion of masculine power (including, in this case, the Tiresian power to represent the desires of both sexes). But it is also possible to see the end of these fantasies as the boundary (rather than the goal) where Jarrell's imaginings of female desire abruptly halt– with an effect of enforced closure which expresses, rather than resolves, Jarrell's contradictory attitudes toward his authority as a poet and a man.[30]

Jarrell is a knowing *poseur*, rather than someone neurotically adopting roles to repress his "true" self; as such, he is a determinedly post-Freudian poet rather than a Freudian one, as many critics have assumed on the basis of his championing of Freud's writing. Many of his speakers are their own analysts, and the weight of repressed material is significantly light. Jarrell's recently "recovered" lecture from 1942, "Levels and Opposites: Structure in Poetry" indicates just how Jarrell regarded

as vital not only dialectical structures in poetry, but also how necessary was a sense of the diversity of the material text and the radical choices that implied for a poet:

> If people took as much pleasure in diversity as they do in unity, poets would long ago have found it necessary to invent many ingenious wonderful formulas for revealing the "real" diversity that always underlies "apparent" unity.[31]

Jarrell's emphasis on non-unity, and implicitly the dialogic, brings him to a concept of the poem as a non-objective phenomenon, a desiring machine, "there are no things in a poem, only processes"[32]:

> When you are hearing or reading the poem, you perceive, at any one moment, only a limited portion, a few words; at that same moment you are affected, more or less directly, by a certain proportion of the earlier moments of the poem, and you anticipate, more or less correctly, a certain proportion of the later moments. Each of the moments of the poem is perceived, and then drops out of perception, adding something of itself to the total impression that is being built up.[33]

In effect, Jarrell's version of poetic practice is remarkably close to definitions of postmodern poetics of indeterminacy, such as Mutlu Konuk Blasing's:

> Poetry is no more reducible to any given set of formal practices than to meanings; it names the distance between the two. It is the text of the historically and metaphysically unstable rhetoric that persuades the trope, letter, or form to mean.[34]

This understanding that a poem is simultaneously incremental and excremental suggests that much of what is regarded as weak or irresolute in Jarrell's poetry might be so by design; and in his anticipation of the limitations of a reader's attention span, we might see a motive for what in his later poetry was to be seen as an excessive use of vulgar tropes of language such as sentimentality and bathos. At the same time, Jarrell frequently refused to employ the devices of poetry designed to keep slippage to a minimum: regular forms, full rhymes, logocentric argument: "The poem is not only *more than* a logical generalization, it is *different from* one".[35] Ironically, Jarrell's most anthologized poem– "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner"– is also the one that

obeys laws of poetic convention the most, with its compressed rhythms, compound images and final rhyme that brings a devastating closure:

> From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,
> And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
> Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
> I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
> When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose. (*CP* 144)

The "voice" is not Jarrell's, nor is the experience his own; the poem is spoken out of the deliberately and dislocatedly backward gaze of the dead gunner, reminiscent of Benjamin's angel of history for whom "the past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again".[36] The moment of recognition is surreal and the compression of the poem is absurd and grotesque; particularly in the context of Jarrell's other poetry, it directs the reader to retrace what was there prior to compression. Its brevity is as grotesque as the horrific experience that is recalled; its superficially modernist shape accounts for "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner"'s anthologization and canonicity, but its effect is ultimately not that of five haiku in succession but instead a hideously phantastic limerick or nursery-rhyme.[37]

The ultra-closure of Jarrell's best-known poem directs us to address another of his most frequently cited failings, that "last lines are the Achilles' heel of Jarrell's poems", as if "the poet almost seems to give up at the end".[38] Jarrell's reputation for being half-hearted is an inevitable consequence of the perpetual dissolution of restrictive forms in his poetry; one thing such persistence would not produce is resolution. In addition, in many instances the poet has given up at the poem's beginning, never mind its end, as in "A Conversation with the Devil" quoted at the beginning of this section. Looking at some of Jarrell's endings, however, it is tempting to say that he was trying too hard rather than too little; a Jarrellian *gestus* is the inflated flat line at a poem's end:

> —So John Doe, Don Juan—ah, poor Honest John,
> Mailing your endless orders west from Patmos! (*CP* 109)

> What does it mean? Why, nothing.
> Nothing? . . . How well we all die! (*CP* 116)

> You know what I was,

You see what I am: change me, change me ! (*CP* 216)

Had you not learned-have we not learned, from tales
Neither of beasts nor kingdoms nor their Lord,
But of our own hearts, the realm of death-
Neither to rule nor die? to change, to change! (*CP* 82)

Jarrell's determination to signal the conclusive ironies of his poem also provides a semi-ecstatic signification of the text's expiration; they also provoke the "embarrassment" of modernist standards of poetic utterance. Jarrell's exclamatory habit is a poetic signature of which Vendler would not approve; this is mainly because Jarrell gives primacy to rhetoric rather than voice. When Jarrell said that he wanted his poems "to be said aloud", it was with the implication that their "performance" was rhetorically encrypted into the poem[39]; his preferences as a reader confirm this, as the Frost he promoted was the dialogic poet of "Home Burial" rather than the monologic poet-speaker of "Birches" or "After Apple-Picking".

One of the ironies of Jarrell's reputation as a monologist is just how dialogic and multivocal those poems are; from the woman in "Next Day" who alternatively remarks the voices of others (including William James's) in mediation with her own, to the mess of intertextual voices at work in such multi-referential poems as "A Girl in a Library" (featuring the voices of Jarrell, Tatyana from Eugene Onegin, Kipling and Goethe amongst others in quotation, and the girl herself) or "An English Garden in Austria" (a frenetic narrative of European culture from the Enlightenment through Romanticism to Hitler and Stalin and the Age of Totalitarianism).

Jarrell's insistence on mediation is evidenced by his use of quotation in his poems; instead of undeclared allusion or remotely echoing intertexts past, Jarrell *cites* external voices and influences in his poetry, insisting on the surface of his text over its "depth". Firstly, this can be seen as an example of his bad faith, his inability to find credibility in the modernist poetics and canons that he was assumed to be propagating in his criticism. More than that, it indicates how Jarrell's most urgent commitment was to making his poems effective in culture through being discursive, and his aesthetics were constructed in that context. In this instance, Davie's mockery of Jarrell's "common-mannerism" appears justified; Jarrell was incapable of writing "good" poetry (at least "good" modernist poetry or lyric poetry) because of the specific cultural function he had designated for it. More than an abdication of his responsibilities as a modernist and a maker, this may be read as Jarrell's abdication of sovereignity over his subjectivity. Jarrell appears to have reached the conclusion that if the poem is a process, then it did not require closure. In this sense, his writing is

antithetical to New Criticism; it also means that his poetry is difficult to quote with any economy. To sample Jarrell representatively, it has to be done massively; this also sabotages actively the complacent notion of Jarrell's usefulness.

Privacy is never respected in Jarrell's poetry, nor is it ever narrated harmoniously; his monologists are illogical and incoherent, occasionally insightful, often sentimental, momentarily brilliant. Crucially, they do not have confidence in the integrity of their voices or the authority of their personal narratives, so the woman in "Next Day" invites William James to interlope; likewise, Jarrell's disbelief in his own integrity has him summon Goethe to provide closure in "A Rhapsody on Irish Themes". Frequently, it is difficult to locate both the source and the destination of speech within Jarrell's poems, as in "Hohensalzburg: Fantastic Variations on a Theme of Romantic Character":

> I should always have known; those who sang from the river,
> Those who moved to me, trembling, from the wood
> Were the others: when I crushed on a finger, with a finger,
> A petal of the blossom of the lime, I understood
> (As I tasted, under the taste of the flower, the dark
> Taste of the leaf, the flesh that has never flowered)
> All the words of the wood but a final word:
> Pure, yearning, unappeasable-
> A word that went on forever, like the roar
> The peoples of the bees made in the limes.
>
> When they called from the rushes I heard you answer:
> *I am a dweller of the Earth.*
>
> The old woman who sat beside her wheel
> In her cottage under the hill, and gave you tea
> When the mist crept up around her, evenings,
> And you came to her, slowly, out of the mist
> Where you had run, all evening, by the shore
> Naked, searching for your dress upon the sand-
> She would say to you, each evening: "What you do will do,
> But not forever . . .
> What you want is a husband and children."
> And you would answer: *They will do,*
> *But not forever.*

The old woman,
The stone maid sunk in the waters of the Earth
Who murmured, "You too are fair-
Not so fair as I, but fair as I was fair-"
These said to you, softly: "You are only a child.
What would you be, if you could have your wish?
You are fair, child, as a child is fair.
How would you look, if you could have your wish? "
You answered:
I would be invisible. (*CP* 86-87)

As David Young wrote about Jarrell's "Nestus Gurley", the "qualifyings and overlappings of the style also give rise to incantatory effects of repetition"[40]; in "Hohensalzburg", repetition is the dominant formal trope of the poem, but also significant is the indeterminacy of its associative movements between the phantastic and the real, the spoken and the thought as the poet's desire is negotiated through the poem. Ultimately, the poem moves into a bizarre series of gothic scenarios mediated through Hollywoodese; lovers become vampires: "I felt in the middle of the circle/ Of your mouth against my flesh/ Something hard, scraping gently, over and over/ Against the skin of my throat" (*CP* 89), only to be persecuted by the vengeful villagers (straight from James Whales's Frankenstein, Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia", and anticipating the vampirism motifs of Sylvia Plath):

When they find me, here except for my blood,
They will search for you all night– harsh clumsy things
In their tunics and leather shorts and pigtails.
All the badges along the bands of their hats will shine. . . .
When all but one has said to you, *Gute Nacht,*
And you have answered, are almost free
To call to me there in the bonds of the moonlight,
The last will mutter cunningly, *Grüss Gott.*
Then as all my blood
Flows from your limbs into your heart–
When, at the name of God,
You can say nothing, O dweller of the Earth -
You will cry out bitterly, and they will seize you
And bind you and boil you to death-the dead also die -
There at the fountain of the square

Just under the castle, by the iron deer;
Make of you a black-pudding, deck it with schillings and thaler,
And serve it, all *herrlich*, to the Man of the castle
With a sign stuck on it:
To eat is *verboten*."

Or so it went once: I have forgotten. . . .

What shall I call you, O Being of the Earth?
What I wish you to call me I shall never hear. (*CP* 89-90)

The poem's bizarre montage of innuendo, cliché and bombast, sexual and physical violence and intoverted and projectile voices is licensed by the adoption of the musically formal title "Variations"; the emphasis is not on structured metamorphosis, however. Instead, the poem is a series of mutations and parodies (the sub-title is a parody of Richard Strauss's Don Quixote: Variations on a Theme of Knightly Character) of Romantic postures, not attempting to impose a unity or harmony on the material of the poem, but instead investing in the noise that harmony represses. In this sense, Jarrell may be seen as participating in resistance to the modernist forms of fugue, ideogram or vortex, instead promoting relativistic postmodern structures in their place:

> Deprived . . . of any sure sense of what poetic form should be, poets have increasingly turned to nonliterary analogues such as conversation, confession, dream, and other kinds of discourse as substitutes for the ousted "fixed" form, substitutes which in many cases carry with them assumptions that are distinctively antimodernist.[41]

Hammer sees "the manifest excesses of Jarrell's poetry– excesses of sentiment, cleverness, and often simply length – as evidence of his dissatisfaction with the boundaries within which he was obliged to work".[42] This implies that the poems exhibit resistance to recognizable conditions of literary discourse within themselves, but it is arguable what context of argument a poem like "Hohensalzburg" is situated within or may contain; it looks more like a willed attempt to produce something *sui generis* that will not bear comparison with anything. Of course, this is a phenomenon right across Jarrell's writing, moving and mediating between genres and presumptive readers.

In "Answers to Questions", Jarrell pointed out the poles of organization in his poetry:

> If the poem has a quiet or neutral ground, a delicate or complicated figure can stand out against it; if the ground is exaggerated and violent enough, no figure will. (*KA&C* 170)

Jarrell's poems are materially-driven rather than formally-oriented, wavering between complicated figures (as in the "monologues") and exaggerated grounds ("Hohensalzburg" or "An English Garden in Austria"): "It seems to me that the poet's responsibility is to his subject matter, but that one of the determining conditions of the poem is the hypothetical normal audience for which he writes it" (*KA&C* 170). Form was only another mode of mediating the material of the poem to that audience; structures were useful only if they allowed contradictions and indeterminacy to persist.

The idiosyncratic tics and *gesti* of Jarrell's poems – manifold sets of quotation marks, parentheses, dashes, ellipses, dots, exclamations, questions – are in practice conditional and temporary replacements for formal coherence, giving emphasis to the rough textures of Jarrell's dialogism as well as dramatizing (often melodramatizing) rather than lyricizing the surface of his texts. "And yet", "and if", "if" "yet", "but": all are machinic and problematizing terms for Jarrell, pretending to an illusorily rational discursive process but in fact mapping moments when dialectic has become static and logical movement has become artificially engineered:

> They say, man wouldn't be
> The best thing in this world—and isn't he?—
> If he were not too good for it. But she
> —She's good enough for it.
> And yet sometimes
> Her sturdy form, in its pink strapless formal,
> Is as if bathed in moonlight—modulated
> Into a form of joy, a Lydian mode;
> This Wooden Mean's a kind, furred animal
> That speaks, in the Wild of things, delighting riddles
> To the soul that listens, trusting . . .
> Poor senseless Life:
> When, in the last light sleep of dawn, the messenger
> Comes with his message, you will not awake.

He'll give his feathery whistle, shake you hard,
You'll look with wide eyes at the dewy yard
And dream, with calm slow factuality:
"Today's Commencement. My bachelor's degree
In Home Ec., my doctorate of philosophy
In Phys. Ed.
[Tanya, they won't even *scan*]
Are waiting for me. . . ."
Oh, Tatyana,
The Angel comes: better to squawk like a chicken
Than to say with truth, "But I'm a *good* girl,"
And Meet his Challenge with a last firm strange
Uncomprehending smile; and—then, then!—see
The blind date that has stood you up: your life.
(For all this, if it isn't, perhaps, life,
Has yet, at least, a language of its own
Different from the books'; worse than the books'.)
And yet, the ways we miss our lives are life.
Yet . . . yet . . .
to have one's life add up to *yet!*

You sigh a shuddering sigh. Tatyana murmurs,
"Don't cry, little peasant"; leaves us with a swift
"Good-bye, good-bye . . . Ah, don't think ill of me . . . "
Your eyes open: you sit here thoughtlessly.

I love you—and yet—and yet—I love you. (*CP* 17-18)

Hammer has postulated that the essential theory behind Jarrell's poetry may be that "the ways we fail to say what we mean *are* what we mean":

> That, I think, is the knowledge at which Jarrell's stammered poems repeatedly arrive, producing a colloquialism which reveals the distance between literature and life, and a realism which depicts "unreal" existence.[43]

Jarrell created a rhetoric of inadequacy, in which punctuation signalled the failure of the lyric mode to convey anything other than a self-authorizing subjectivity of which the poet had to be wary; rather than a simple colloquialism or effect of

conversational style engaged in the "democratic" expression of the self, Jarrell was involved in colloquy between disparately schizoid aspects of his own "self" and the indefinitely realized implicit audience he was "apparently" committed to. Between the voices in his head and his apprehension of that unknown "other" of the audience, the "real" became so relativized as to resemble the "irreal"; what is remarkable about Jarrell is his preparedness to mediate that endlessly problematic and potentially enervating process.

In Lacanian terms, Lesser has shown how Jarrell made privileged objects out of mirrors in such poems as "The Face", in which the Marschallin from Richard Strauss's Der Rosenkavalier comments morbidly upon her reflection. For Lesser, Jarrell's "monologue characters are creatures in transition: they are halfway between formulations in his own mind – exaggerated versions of himself, or of one of his aspects – and living people out in the world"[44]. In order to recognize the plural aporias contained in a Jarrellian text, the plural mutations of the selves in the poems have to be recognized. The extreme *jouissance* of Jarrell's poems is a consequence of his anxiety of self-recognition; self-realization could be played out interminably and multiply, but recognition would imply the suturing of the self and the terrible knowledge that might come with it, as it does for the Marschallin: "It is terrible to be alive" (*CP* 23). Throughout, Jarrell preferred to persevere with misrecognition, as in "Thinking of the Lost World":

> When my hand drops to the wheel,
> It is brown and spotted, and its nails are ridged
> Like Mama's. Where's my own hand? My smooth
> White bitten-fingernailed one? (*CP* 338)

Misrecognition drives Jarrell into imaginary prosthetics, a deliberate disintegration of the self into irreconcilable parts; this is a phenomenon throughout the somatics of his poetry, whether writing about severed heads ("The Bronze David of Donatello", "The Head of Wisdom", "1789-1939") or bodies voided of integrity or violently dismembered (the war poems, "In Montecito", "La Belle au Bois Dormant").

Similarly, the disparate rhetorics employed by Jarrell facilitated combinations of styles in montage-structures that could commit unlimited heresies against modernist, canonical or academic orthodoxies; when Jarrell was lambasted for being sentimental or flat, it was assumed by critics that the poet was simply lacking in sophistication of expression. However, Lesser qualifies such disapproval by saying that: "At its best, Jarrell's sentimentality is the open, straightforward, self-conscious sentimentality of opera".[45] I propose that this could be taken farther, in that far from

being straightforwardly open, Jarrell's sentimentality is that of a designedly contrived quality more alike to soap opera. Indeed, Jarrell had by the mid-1950s invented his own imaginary soap, "*A Sad Heart at the Supermarket: The Story of a Woman who had Everything*", within which he exploited the the cash-valuation of emotions, and would refer to in the poem "Hope" and also use as the title of his polemical essay-series; effectively, the women in his poems after the war are all characters from that private but calculatedly vulgar drama. Jarrell's sentimentality is projected, simulating the standard mediation of emotions in American media culture and exhibiting the consequences for private subjects of the colonizing language of that culture. Just as the obviousness of Jarrell's sentiments ("It is terrible to be alive") may offend, they also actively resist interpretation; in the same way, Jarrell's simultaneous polyphony and cacophany of voice and structure resist any confirmation in the "real" language of definition and interpretation. Furthermore, Jarrell's fantasy-passages do not mystify or occlude any essential meaning but instead flagrantly announce their psycho-sexual knowledge, as with "The Woman at the Washington Zoo":

> The world goes by my cage and never sees me.
> And there come not to me, as come to these,
> The wild beasts, sparrows pecking the llama's grain,
> Pigeons settling on the bear's bread, buzzards
> Tearing the meat the flies have clouded. . . .
> Vulture,
> When you come for the white rat that the foxes left,
> Take off the red helmet of your head, the black
> Wings that have shadowed me, and step to me as man:
> The wild brother at whose feet the white wolves fawn,
> To whose hand of power the great lioness
> Stalks, purring. . . .
> You know what I was,
> You see what I am: change me, change me! (*CP* 215-216)

There is no sense of empathetically "entering the character's head" in this passage; instead, a voyeuristic distance is maintained between the projections of the woman's desires and the reading subject. This relationship is one of interpassivity rather than interactivity, as the symbolic order of the poem perpetually maintains that the repressed has not been imminent but has been revealed already; the "disclosure" of the vulture-phallus is no surprise at all but an open secret. The "real" subject of the

poem is not the woman's unfulfilled desire, but the active publicity of her desire for exhibition, to be made public.

This also relates to the scopophiliac impulse in much of Jarrell's writing, and its manifestation in regarding him as the photographer's son *poseur*, who may be seen in a variety of roles: "Strange, that one's photograph in kindergarten/ Is a captain in a ruff and a Venusian/ – Is nothing here American?"(*CP* 256). He is also a writer who employed tropes of photography throughout his poetry and in the "pictures" of his novel, and furthermore was obsessed with the reproduction of his own image, a phenomenon that will be explored in the final section of this chapter. This is also manifest in Jarrell's admiration for the photo-poetics of Rich's Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law as well as in his own poetry: in "The Player Piano", the poem coalesces in the narrator gazing at a photo of her parents; in "The Bronze David of Donatello" (see "Steam on the Magnifying Glass") Jarrell wrote about photos of Donatello's sculpture rather than the object itself, and the prose-poem "1914" (*CP* 201) reads the world wars through the mediation of photo-journalism, and the war poems incorporate images of aerial photography and training films. Jarrell's poetry is spatial, and attempts to create scope rather than subliminity. Furthermore, photo-poetics enabled the maintenance of the gap between the subject self and the projected image, the projected-form and content language.

Jarrell's continual attempts to cross between private and public discourse led him into various episodes of deliberate poetic debasement, notably in the venture into tabloidese that is "Say Good-bye to Big Daddy", a mainly-ignored late poem:

> Big Daddy Lipscomb, who used to help them up
> After he'd pulled them down, so that "the children
> Won't think Big Daddy's mean"; Big Daddy Lipscomb,
> Who stood unmoved among the blockers, like the Rock
> Of Gibraltar in a life insurance ad,
> Until the ball carrier came, and Daddy got him;
> Big Daddy Lipscomb, being carried down an aisle
> Of women by Night Train Lane, John Henry Johnson,
> And Lenny Moore; Big Daddy, his three ex-wives,
> His fiancée, and the grandfather who raised him
> Going to his grave in five big Cadillacs;
> Big Daddy, who found football easy enough, life hard enough
> To—after his last night cruising Baltimore
> In his yellow Cadillac—to die of heroin;
> Big Daddy, who was scared, he said: "I've been scared

Most of my life. You wouldn't think so to look at me.
It gets so bad I cry myself to sleep—" his size
Embarrassed him, so that he was helped by smaller men
And hurt by smaller men; Big Daddy Lipscomb
Has helped to his feet the last ball carrier, Death.

The big black man in the television set
Whom the viewers stared at - sometimes, almost were-
Is a blur now; when we get up to adjust the set,
It's not the set, but a NETWORK DIFFICULTY.
The world won't be the same without Big Daddy.
Or else it will be. (*CP* 344)

Jarrell does not indulge in Housemanesque sub-Pindarics here, nor does he judge the glib obituaries of the mass media on the life and mores of Big Daddy, a semi-famous American footballer. Instead, he appropriates tabloidistic language as the dominant trope of his poem, collapsing the authoritative role of the poet-elegist and replacing it with the reactive, commodified and disengaged language of a hack-reporter. The poem is therefore not styled as a unique contribution to culture but instead as an instrument of repetition with a fluctuating currency according to demand; in this way, Jarrell may be seen less as a cultural reactionary in the orthodox sense of reacting against the contemporary and more as reacting with and within it.

The primary demand that Jarrell makes upon readers of his poetry – patience – is an unusual one in the context of modernist canons, in that it privileges a temporal commitment over an intellectual one. This represents simultaneously a flagrant confirmation and rejection of the bureaucratization of culture and institutionalization of the modern that was becoming dominant in the post-war period. As section 4 below will explore, Jarrell may be read as being more politically-engaged than is conventionally surmised.

III. What Development?

The anxiety of Jarrell's critics over his "failure" to correspond to modernist paradigms has found fullest expression in the allegation that his poetry exhibits no conventional development; in particular, this is an idea propagated by Jarrell's promoters such as Ferguson:

> A study of Jarrell's poetry. . . will not be primarily concerned with the development of a highly individual style, or with biographical or historical or even, unususally, aesthetic contexts, but with the nuances of attitude and understanding Jarrell displays towards the characters and themes encompassed in his vision.[46]

As Longenbach has pointed out, narratives of American poetry are "usually turning on some sense of formal breakthrough"[47]; he regards Jarrell as marking the end of that particular narrative habit, in that his purpose was to reveal modernism "as the end of the romantic line" and "to speculate about what might come next".[48] Jarrell saw the need for change, but could only fulfil it hypothetically. Ironically, Longenbach implicates Jarrell within breakthrough narratives, despite his avowedly contrary intentions; firstly, he suggests that Jarrell's ultimate "rejection" of Auden represents a seminal moment in his aesthesis, and secondly he places Jarrell as a catalyst in American poetry discourse, theoretically if not in practice:

> Although a fully meaningful discussion of postmodernism in American poetry begins with Jarrell, the post-modern impulse has existed for almost as long as there has been a modernist achievement that poets could look back on.[49]

The difference between Jarrell's narrative and the more heroically masculinist one of Lowell is that the latter's breakthrough was "formal" but personal, whereas Jarrell marks a breakthrough for theory. In a sense, this is a repetition of the old wisdom that promotes Jarrell the critic over Jarrell the poet.

Any assumption that Jarrell's poetry shows no development and continuity implies that he had no ideas, and as such no poetic project. This helps in the characterization of him as a passive, reactionary poet of minority interest; in Morris's terms therefore, he is deficient in "the poetics of presence". Mazzaro attempts to read that deficiency as the necessary rather than accidental product of the poetry:

> the twenty or so outstanding poems Jarrell wrote do not allow for the "continuing", "significant, consistent and developing personality" that Eliotic critics have made prerequisite to a major writer. Instead, like the period which prompted them, the poems stand as isolated crystalizations[sic] of a mind that may have been too various and responsive to the discrete experiences of modern life to settle them into a single overriding pattern. It is as if in giving up the assurances of the modernists, the poet could not impose his views with any finality.[50]

Jarrell was well aware of the reception his poetry was due: "Ah well, I'm sure I'm glad I'm not a Great Poet, imagine how hard my things would be for them, then; it could take them forever to get used to me" (*Letters* 326). As has been already seen, his poems strategically resist the reading that "Great Poets" receive, and his entire canon of writing is not structured hierarchically or logocentrically. Hence the criticism that his work has no development; in effect, it is exposing and confounding prejudices relating to poetic "maturation". Jarrell provokes an absurdist but fundamentalist question, do "Great Poems" get made or do they just happen?

Rather than conceding that Jarrell has no development, it must be stressed that while there may be no linear narrative of an orderly expansive or concentrative approach, other forms of growth and wastage may be at work. The word that best describes Jarrell's writing career across disciplines would be "spread", but Mazzaro's term "crystalization" offers potential understanding of the production of individual texts. A term that might be adapted to combine these phenomena is Benjamin's concept of "constellation" from "Theses on the Philosophy of History"; it describes individual poems as monads, but still allows for degrees of monadary interrelationship between texts and the nomadic movement of the reader.

One of the reasons why Jarrell is not supposed to reveal any conventional development is that the separate volumes of poetry are superficially similar in their themes: war as childhood (and vice versa), psychoanalysis as myth (and vice versa), fairy tales, monologist isolatoes. This in part is a consequence of Jarrell's thematic ordering of his 1955 Selected Poems into sections entitled "Lives", "Dream-Work", "The Wide Prospect", "Once Upon a Time", "The World Is Everything That Is The Case", "The Graves in the Forest", "Bombers", "The Carriers", "Prisoners", "Camps and Fields", "The Trades", "Children and Civilians", "Soldiers". Pritchard has said that

> These categories overlap and need not be regarded with great seriousness, nor is there any progression in the war poems between the earlier poems that appeared in Little Friend, Little Friend (1945) and the slightly later ones that formed a good part of Losses (1948).[51]

In the next section, consideration will be given to the political implications of that judgement upon the war poems; the former dismissal of Jarrell's editorial strategy in Selected Poems is of more immediate concern. Firstly, Pritchard undermines himself in the biography at a later stage by insisting that: "At issue were questions not only of inclusion and exclusion but of sequence".[52] Jarrell's use of categories indicates the

partitioning and dismembering of linear or monologic "sequence" that is vital to Jarrell's process. The sections provide an activist mapping of a conventionally staid, surveying format. Editorially, Jarrell was attempting a dialectical structure between war poems and "other" poems that he had advocated in the poetic process itself in "Levels and Opposites", the effect of which was to emphasize that the rigid distinction between those "types" of poetry was in fact false. Furthermore, the repetition in The Complete Poems of the Selected Poems' organization of the earlier poems ensured the primacy and seriousness of those categories, at least in the reception of Jarrell's earlier work. On the other hand, Pritchard's version of Selected Poems (1990), while maintaining a strictly chronological method of organization collapses both the various parts and textures of Jarrell's poetry into a conservative and predominately lyric sequence of just over fifty poems. Hammer indicates the effects of this approach: "by excluding so much of Jarrell's poetry, Selected Poems [Pritchard's] does not eliminate his failures as much as limit his ambition, and thus presents us with a poet more sensible and less daring than the one Jarrell was".[53] In order to stress that Jarrell is a poet of refinement, he has to reduce all of his obvious excess to confinement.

The importance of the dissemination of Jarrell's work by editors must not be underestimated, particularly in relation to The Complete Poems and perceptions of his poetic growth. The complete volume attempts and achieves comprehensiveness to the extent of publishing all of Jarrell's extant work, but the overall shape of the volume problematized his canon with negative consequences. Instead of publishing the poems chronologically or within the contexts of their individual volumes, the 1955 Selected begins the collection, and is then followed by the entire individual volumes of The Woman at the Washington Zoo (1960) and The Lost World (1965). Poems omitted by Jarrell from the Selected are consigned to the rear of the collection, presuming that his selection of 1955 was not to be revised, even though his letters indicate that there was at least one poem – "Orestes at Tauris" – that he had wanted to include but had omitted out of considerations of length.

The Complete Poems, which have no named editor, is partly edited by the vestigial spectre of Randall Jarrell circa 1955, and the rest of the volume's editing is according to the apprehension of that ghost. Therefore, Jarrell's first full volume of poems, Blood for a Stranger (1942) appears as an excremental trace or discharge after the "main" text of The Complete Poems, as Jarrell had only included ten of his first volume's poems in the Selected and in edited versions at that. At best, these poems have as a consequence been recovered only intermittently by critics such as Mary Kinzie in her essay "The Man Who Painted Bulls", which promotes the permanent interest of the early work.[54] Furthermore, as Jarrell only omitted two poems from his

second volume Losses, and a single translation of Rilke's "The Olive Garden" from his fourth volume, The Seven-League Crutches, in the Selected, it does suggest that a new Complete Poems might choose to challenge the 1955 organization and re-assemble the disparate poems into their "original" constellations, using appendices to display Jarrell's extensive revisions and relocations for the Selected.[55] This would not only re-vitalize argument as to Jarrell's development, but would reverse and revolutionize the de-historicization in the Selected of his poetry before 1955.

Yet it is not just editorial timidity that has created a perception of Jarrell's non-growth, as the poems themselves rarely exhibit the effect of a single structuring belief, narrative or conventional principle of order. As has been demonstrated, they tend to be organized spatially and diversely, rather than concentratedly or deterministically; and for all the stress on Jarrell's Freudian credentials, the later poems in particular resist symbiosis and symbol, and rely upon montages and association of image-series, multi-vocal interventions and explicitness to supply signification and sensation. There is more often coalescence than coherence in Jarrell's poems, and what narratives there are tend to be minor ones; similarly, there are small groups of poems that can be regarded as Jarrellian constellations that are perhaps consistent in theme or atmosphere but variously significant for the unique political, historical and cultural contingencies they momentarily reveal. Two such poem-clusters will be looked at in subsequent chapters, with Jarrell's poems about California and his writing on the visual arts. In addition, there are mappings of poems within individual volumes that demand constellatory readings but are obscured by the organization of Selected Poems, as in the locations of the Marxist vying of use and exchange value in "The Carnegie Library, Juvenile Division", the Kafka and Rilke-like "becoming-animal" poem "The Snow Leopard" and riddle-poem "The Boyg, Peer Gynt, The One Only One" within what are otherwise explicitly and exclusively "war poems" in the 1945 volume, "Little Friend, Little Friend".

Jarrell's writing is discrete, and to an extent demands discrete reading strategies; the artificial categorization of sections of the poetry is a viable strategy, but only if that artificiality is self-consciously acknowledged. In such a way, variously tropical readings of Jarrell may enable more complex narratives of his poetry's growth or overall shape, and the question of his development will no longer censor or obscure the radical energies of his work.

Hammer identifies Jarrell's poetic strategies as resisting the institutionalization of American poetry in the post-war era. One of the ironic effects of the institutionalization of literary culture is that Jarrell has been de-institutionalized; and it may be further constructed that Jarrell de-institutionalized himself. The Foucaultian irony is that as Jarrell was doing this he was being absorbed into the

institutionality and collective paranoia of depression and psychotherapy. The theoretical attraction of psychoanalysis had always existed for Jarrell; however, there was no talking cure available for Jarrell, and he was instead corralled by a psychiatric regime of chemicals and diets.

To proponents of transgressive, anti-institutional poetry, Jarrell often appears as the manifestation of the spectre of the institution, the "arch-hierarchist", as in Hank Lazer's use of Jarrell to personify the establishment's reaction to Ron Silliman's Demo to Ink:

> A tropical criticism leans toward its source. The ghost of Randall Jarrell and ghosts of New Yorker and Bostonian conservatism howl in harmony: But where is the evaluation in it? Criticism must make judgements (as if attention weren't already one such discrimination). . . .Are you happy sad Randall pacing the shoulder of these pages, turning around a little dumbfounded, staring into the confusing headlights of an oncoming modernism that seems too enthusiastic and energetic for the graceful melancholy of your tender monologues? Maybe you preferred tennis, maybe you played tense. Baseball too plebeian? There's lyricism there.[56]

Despite the bizarre sports-coach psychopathology and morbidly vengeful atmosphere of this passage, the irony remains that Jarrell has become a cast-off in the narrative of poetic evolution described by "official verse culture". He is not assimilable into either that culture or any avant-garde, and his work in disparate areas of literature and identity reveals his anxiety over assimilation and the ultimate judgement subsequent to it; tropical criticism may represent his only hope.

As Jarrell mediates the discrete parts of his poetics and poems, his indeterminacy enables the realization that politics were not limited to thematic content, but that they were active in the reception, the materiality and the projection of the poem. The next section will look at how for Jarrell the politics of the poem related to the politics of the subject and the state; how consequence outweighed sequence, narrative necessitated critique, consensus must be met with nonsense.

IV. (A)political?

Mary Jarrell's comment that her late husband had been "apolitical since the 1940s" (*Letters* 486) until his devotion to John F. Kennedy has become definitive of his lack of commitment, helping to peripheralize Jarrell as a *disengagé* cloistered in the

North Carolina backwoods. Throughout this section the thoroughness of Jarrell's avoidance of the political will be questioned; and the political potential of that avoidance in itself will be assessed. Rather like references to Jarrell's "asexuality", the implication is that Jarrell "disappeared" himself out of a disillusionment that has been interpreted as a lack of faith; this is particularly prevalent in critics' perceptions of Jarrell's "choice" of workplace, the low profile Women's College at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Certainly, there are vivid omissions in Jarrell's correspondence on contemporary political issues in the cold war era, particularly in relation to issues close to home; the beginning of the mobilization of the non-violent civil rights movement began at a lunch counter in Greensboro on February 1st, 1960, yet there is no record of any response from the hometown poet.

Compared to the political harlequinade of Lowell from the Caesars to pacifism to Hitler to McGovern, Jarrell certainly looks reticent, yet it is interesting to speculate that if Jarrell had completed the elegy for Kennedy that had been commissioned by The New York Times, then Jarrell might have become a "national" poet rather than an apolitical minor character. Jarrell's failure to progress beyond an opening phrase – "The shining brown head . . . " – in that elegy could be seen as evidence of the poet being overwhelmed with the monumentality of the task. On the other hand, a reading might be made of the text as it is, "The shining brown head . . . ", and that its slippage into silence suggests that Jarrell regarded the image as sufficient, and had nothing more to say. The image is grotesquely and excessively poignant, providing a simulacrum of the TV footage immediately preceding the gunshots; the violent explosion of the "shining brown head" is only a phrase – or a frame – away. That the image should be televisual is both appropriate and unsurprising; Mary Jarrell has described how the poet rented a TV set for the first time in 1960 in order to "Kennedy-watch". In the poem, Jarrell recognizes his voyeuristic relationship to the subject (and the medium that conveyed him), then self-censors, effectively turning the set off. A radical disillusionment had taken place, for which Jarrell would attempt qualified restitution in the children's book The Animal Family (1965).

The significance of Kennedy for Jarrell will be related later on; but for now, it is neccessary to re-affirm the confusion amongst critics as to Jarrell's political character (or lack of it). Ferguson, like Mary Jarrell, emphasizes Jarrell's withdrawal from politics "after" his Marxist youth and wartime experience:

> Like some other writers of a fixed world view – particularly Americans, for some reason – Jarrell seems to have had his say about what interested him, then kept relatively quiet.[57]

Ferguson declines to be over-specific about what that "fixed world view" was; but others have been less reticent. For Antony Hecht, Jarrell was an "ardent liberal secularist"[58]. Alfred Kazin says that: "The writers Jarrell loved were usually moralists as decent as himself; he was a democratic Christian, in the country where democracy is our Christianity",[59] the problem being that a democratic Christian is a self-identification that could be claimed by a Klansman, a sharecropper or a teamster. The other dimension that features in attempts at profiling Jarrell politically is his "southernness" and presumed "roots" in Fugitivism:

> Yet Jarrell's war poems are not politically resolute. He was not a pacifist, after all, but a participant. Too much the poet to be a patriot. Too much of a traditionalist, a Southerner, to resist.[60]

As was already seen in the lists defining Jarrell the writer, Jarrell the "politician" appears to be the sum of his contradictions (something which may have been by design). The "irresolution" implicit in these various positions has been translated into an indictment of Jarrell's lack of commitment, and has ensured that his move to Women's College in Greensboro is read prejudicially as a retreat or surrender from the political demands of the East. As Shapiro put it: "there was a terrible conflict in his soul between his instinct for freedom and his desire for cultural asylum"[61], and to most critics he took the Faustian and irresponsible option of seeking freedom (however unsatisfactorily) in asylum; under these terms, there is the implication that Jarrell never rid himself of his inner Fugitive, whatever his overt protestations to the contrary.

However, in Hannah Arendt Jarrell had a champion, a philosopher who advocated flight as a strategy of survival in the case of Lessing:

> Flight from the world in dark times of impotence can always be justified as long as reality is not ignored, but is constantly acknowledged as the thing that must be escaped.[62]

Yet Arendt saw no urge for flight in Jarrell, rather she saw him as confronting and resisting the public domain:

> His was not at all the case of the man who flees the world and builds himself a dream castle; on the contrary, he met the world head on. And the world, to his everlasting surprise, was as it was – not peopled by poets and readers of poetry, who according to him belonged to the same race, but by television

> watchers and readers of Reader's Digest. . . . The world, in other words, did not welcome the poet, was not grateful to him for the splendour he brought, seemed unneedful of his 'immemorial power to make the things of this world seen and felt and living in words', and therefore condemned him to obscurity, complaining then that he was too 'obscure' and could not be understood, until finally the poet said, "since you won't read me, I'll make sure you can't".[63]

Rather than hiding in obscurity, Jarrell is represented as revelling in it , perversely insisting upon it. He did not provincialize himself in North Carolina; he had gone nowhere in particular, rather than nowhere.

Jarrell's political life appears to be apportioned neatly into conventional and chronological periodizations: in the 1930s he was a young Marxist, flaunting the authority of his conservative Fugitive "mentors", in the 1940s he experienced the exemplary indeterminacy of a subject serving the war machine while questioning its motives, chose silence and inertia in the 1950s, while the early 1960s saw him energized again by a Kennedy-inspired liberal optimism that was bound for catastrophe.

The neatness of this narrative needs to be undermined, as it appears to correspond to a clichéd paradigm of the fate of the liberal intellectual in America; an attempt needs to be made to identify at what point Jarrell "relinquished" Marxism and why, and the politics of the war poems as a whole require more analysis than has been commonplace. Furthermore, the enigma of Jarrell's "apolitical" 1950s needs analysis, and the implications of his brief intoxication with Kennedy are more problematic than is immediately apparent.

Jarrell's Marxism, and the early poetry that expressed it explicitly, has been either dismissed or evaded by the majority of his critics. In practice, the effect of this is most palpable in the reception of the later and more familiar work, as it removes his Marxist commitments as a context for reading it. In J.A. Bryant's Twentieth-Century Southern Literature, Jarrell's distancing of himself from the Fugitives is described but not accounted for, and there is no suggestion that it may have been motivated by profound differences of ideology.[64] Only Hammer has attempted to assess how Marxism accommodated to Jarrell's desires:

> Jarrell saw himself as a Marxist intellectual who believed in the economic determination of aesthetic forms and opposed the domination of the people . . . by the state. . . . Jarrell desired a genuinely public audience for poetry, and Marxism gave him a language – a way of talking about suffering, solidarity, and change – with which he could imagine and address such a community.[65]

Crucial terms in Jarrell's writing (and writing about him) are "progress" and "change":

> But I had a scientific education and a radical youth; am old-fashioned enough to believe, like Goethe, in Progress – the progress I see and the progress I wish for and do not see. (*PA* 30)

This declaration in "The Obscurity of the Poet" does not impress Pritchard or Vendler:

> He did not, as Pritchard points out, have any faith in personal progress or change; he seemed to think that what happened to anyone, himself included, was inevitable. He always wished to change – and that wish gives his poetry his characteristic note of unsatisfied yearning – but he also always despaired of change, and that despair gives his poetry its typically static quality.[66]

Perhaps less than progress, the issue here is "belief", and just what Jarrell meant by it. Ultimately, Jarrell may not have "believed" in Marxism, but he nevertheless endorsed it as an interpretative strategy throughout his writing life, from the early poems to the writing on visual art.

Jarrell's correspondence in the early 1940s displays a tendency towards double-agency in regard to the expression of his politics. While maintaining a relationship with Tate that he assumed pragmatically would fast-track him towards publication and recognition, he wrote to Edmund Wilson and covertly sought his approval for the dialectical theory of poetry he outlined in "Levels and Opposites":

> I'm calling the lecture "Levels and Opposites", and part of is to the effect that the "logical" effect of poetry is, very often, roughly dialectical, this with many examples; but don't tell this to my friends, for they would disown me, or to my superiors, for they would discharge me – or would if they knew or cared what *dialectical* meant. I think I'll introduce it as a word Heraclitus and Plato were fond of, and not carry it down to date; perhaps Kant will be safe, and I have a charming quotation from Blake: "In poetry Unity and Morality are secondary considerations. " I'm kidding – halfway. (*Letters* 60)

Even in the period when Jarrell is assumed to have been most overtly political, he is in fact agitating "underground", as if anticipating the covertization of politics that would take place throughout American culture in the post-war years. Nevertheless,

1941 and 1942 were Jarrell's most prolific and engaged years of criticism at an appropriately decisive moment in American politics and global history, and produced the review of Tate ("Tate versus History") that defined the older poet as Jarrell's political and cultural adversary:

> Mr. Tate, fighting desparately to preserve traditional European culture, is part of an old and growing campaign against science, progress, humanitarianism, Economic and Perfectible Man. (*KA&C* 64)

Ironically, "fighting desparately to preserve traditional European culture" has come to be regarded as a Jarrellian position (although as later chapters will attest, that is a perverse simplification of Jarrell's complex relationship with Europe). The positions that Jarrell endorses are less familiar, but the term "humanitarian" indicates how a concept of humanism might be adapted to Jarrell. If he was a "humanist", it was of a more radical manifestation than the liberal humanism that has been ascribed to him, as he would always give equal stress to material effects and consequences as well as ethical or aesthetic ones:

> A poem, today, is both an aesthetic object, and a commodity. It is an unimportant commodity, for which there is a weak and limited demand; it is produced, distributed, and consumed like any other commodity. (*KA&C* 58)

This comment is superficially significant of Jarrell's despair, cynicism and disillusion; rather it ought to be read as evidence of his refusal to invest in the illusory, or as Arendt put it, meeting the world "head on". In fact, Jarrell is anticipating what an self-styled radical writer such as Ron Silliman would declare over forty years later: "poems both are and are not commodities".[67] Indeed, his prolific writing at this period indicates that Jarrell had recognized that he was living in a state of emergency, and that the emergency had to be recognized and expressed through work. As Benjamin put it "To articulate the past historically . . . means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger"[68], and in the sheer material mass of Jarrell's writing before and during the war his alertness to the dangers of the present – historical, human, environmental – is palpable.

As Hammer has pointed out, the hyperactivity of Jarrell's war-writing is more reminiscent of journalism in its approach:

> Few of these poems are unequivocally successful; one feels that Jarrell, instead of revising his work, just finished one poem and went on to the next.

> It is as if Jarrell felt morally compelled to write these poems, and to keep writing them – as if it were his special responsibility to turn the war into poetry so that his readers might see and know (or see again and remember) the enormous suffering that was his subject.[69]

Yet rather than following a moral compulsion, Jarrell's hyper-productivity may simply signify his desire for production in itself, rather than production that could achieve something only by its translation into moral terms. This mediatory position may come to be seen as Jarrell's signature, relating him to Ernie Pyle (whom Jarrell admired) more than Ernest Hemingway, although it was a position that undermined principles of poetic authority and replaced them with political necessity.[70] As Hammer sees it, this led to Jarrell's ultimate disillusion:

> Because the audience Jarrell's war poems project was either hopelessly atomized – a world of isolated victims – or as hopelessly monolithic as the State, it should not surprise us that Jarrell came to view the public and the State as one, or that he finally felt revulsion for the people he wished to address.[71]

This over-estimates Jarrell's assumption of an audience, and likewise his "revulsion" at that audience, and insists that Jarrell's "moral responsibility" was in fact conditional on his poetic ambitions. However, if anything, Jarrell adapted to the demands of an "audience" more and more assiduously throughout his career, and in a wide range of mutations. Furthermore, isolated individuals remained the core cast of his poetry, and were still conflicting and resisting the impulses of institutions and bureaucracy. For Jarrell, alienation was experienced in collectivity, rather than personally.

Nevertheless, Hammer brings up a recurring issue in the reception of Jarrell's work; that the war poems represent a separate section of Jarrell's canon and as such identify a turning point in his career, poetically and politically, in another manifestation of the "breakthrough" narrative. One of the ironies of the thorough separation of Jarrell's war poetry from the rest of his work is that it limits his "war poems" to those written while he was in the army. However, the main body of the poetry written while he was a postgraduate between 1935 and 1939 was already identifying the theoretical conditions of war, the economic inevitability of imminent conflict. In Blood for a Stranger, Jarrell had already created the poetry of no resistance that would prevail in much of his later work; the significant difference between Blood for a Stranger and later "war" volumes is that in the earlier book

politics is expressed in terms of consequences upon classes, groups and historical processes, whereas in the later books it is the consequences of the war on particular localized individuals that Jarrell expresses. This shift does not necessarily signify a rejection of Marxism, but the adaption of a Marxist way of seeing to a qualifiedly humanist project of exemplifying historical processes in terms of subjectivity. The key for Jarrell was not wholeheartedly to adopt an ideology – whether Marxist, Freudian, Christian, democratic or Humanist – but to comprehend its parts and then break with it or assemble it in the context of what he already knew. At the same time, the suggestion that Jarrell's speakers are all the same (all versions of Randall Jarrell, as Vendler implies) ironically suggests that he was still talking about a class-identity, that of the alienated and disempowered. The prejudice that Jarrell's voice and subject was essentially himself need not imply that he thought his alienation was unique; rather, the alienation he experienced could be understood (in fundamentally Marxist terms) as the inevitable product of the predominance of the State. He radically objectified himself rather than intensely subjectified himself.

To characterize Jarrell's war poetry as being solely focused on individual subjects obscures his perception of the globalization of the conflict; Jarrell's mapping of the war takes in Europe, Western colonies, Japan and the United States. Furthermore, he countenances territorial and aerial perspectives, exploring the terrible omniscience of trade and navigation charts and the conscience of disempowered individuals. When Bawer writes that the "predominant subject" of Jarrell's "early impersonal poetry is a war in which he did not participate"[72], the implicit suggestion is that the poetry is inferior in terms of commitment to that of an active participant. Yet in Jarrell's version of the war, everybody does and does not participate. In the context of the war, even the "killers" such as the pilots of "Eighth Air Force" are seen as non-participant; morally, nobody is participant. Jarrell's poetic energies were directed towards the evocation of the general disengagement the war had produced; individuals' awareness of war began and ended with their performance of the role allotted to them by the state. As consciousness was so disabled, the possibilities for conscientious objection were nullified, and non-participation had become a universal morality. In this way, Jarrell was profoundly alert to the war as a global phenomenon, and how that globalization had erased individual potential for local self-realization:

> The westering lives were steadied to a north
> A little distant from that sombre pole
> The centuries had dreamed was Chance or Fate;
> We learned—our poor wits sharpened with their blood—

That last cold center of our wish was Trade.
Where our blood ran the German books are red;
Because we died a bank in Manchester
Ships textiles to the blacks the Reich had taxed. (*CP* 402)

That Jarrell excluded "The Soldier" from his Selected might signify his disenchantment with its overtly Blakean and Marxist programme of consequences, yet other poems retained by Jarrell in 1955 also express that vision, such as the Audenesque commodity-imagism of "The Metamorphoses":

Where I spat in the harbor the oranges were bobbing
All salted and sodden, with eyes in their rinds;
The sky was all black where the coffee was burning,
And the rust of the freighters had reddened the tide.

But soon all the chimneys were burning with contracts,
The tankers rode low in the oil-black bay,
The wharves were a maze of the crated bombers,
And they gave me a job and I worked all day.

And the orders are filled; but I float in the harbor,
All tarry and swollen, with gills in my sides,
The sky is all black where the carrier's burning,
And the blood of the transports is red on the tide. (*CP* 194)

Fussell has written that Jarrell's war poems in Losses represent "a world where myth *is* of no avail and where traditional significance has been given up for lost"[73]; yet the fallen-Icarus speaker of "The Metamorphoses" looks ahead to the much later "The Old and the New Masters" and represents the culmination of a myth, not its failure, and the horror of the poem is in the aptness and harmonious contrivance of its metaphors rather than their failure. Jarrell's attitude towards myth, like his attitude towards Freud, was critical; the dominant narratives of Western thought are relativized in his writing, rather than endorsed. When Jarrell looks at individuals, he sees them as inescapably contaminated by the competing discourses of State, Trade and Nation, nor can the products of culture escape that contamination:

The world is something even the books believe,
The bombs fall all year long among the states,

> And the blood is black upon the unturned leaves. (*CP* 401)

Again Jarrell approaches a Benjaminian position, that there "is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism".[74] Identifying the contaminations of barbarism, Jarrell was attempting to distance himself from them, yet his poetic project meant that he had to keep on contributing to a culture that he knew to be debased. This paradox could not be got around, and it led Jarrell's imagination into ever-increasing atmospheres of the grotesque and surreal. Significantly, Jarrell expressed himself most unguardedly about the war – and its impact on America – in a letter to an ex-girlfriend, Amy Breyer:

> I don't think there's any real chance of my being killed; the war will be over in a couple of years and I'm so much better off than practically everybody else in the world that I feel ashamed. There are just three races: the rich, the poor, and the Americans.
>
> I get more political every year; the army makes you more so, and confirms all your hardest beliefs. This *you* is strictly *me*: 99% of 100 of the people haven't the faintest idea what the war's about. Their two strongest motives are (a) nationalism, pure nationalism (they find it easy to believe that German generals are paid $30 a month – they find it easy to believe anything about foreigners) and (b) race prejudice – they dislike Japanese in the same way, though not as much as, they dislike Negroes. They feel neither gratitude nor affection for our allies – they'd fight Russia tomorrow, for instance. They have no feeling against the Germans – they dismiss all information about them as 'propaganda'. This *propaganda* is their one response, frightening and invariable, to anything they haven't always known (and they have known almost nothing). The innocent idealism and naive whipped-up hatred (which collapsed into fraternizing when it really encountered the enemy in the First World War) were a good deal better than this. I believe nationalism, so far from dying out as people once believed, is going to reach heights it's only in isolated cases attained before – in the first World War there was a real queer feeling of solidarity between the "workers" of the opposing armies; how little of *that* is left. (*Letters* 103)

There is considerable disillusionment in this passage, but it is not with his audience or politics, whether Marxist or otherwise, rather it is pessimism founded in disenchantment with America and how it was accustoming itself to its newly-

discovered authority in the world order. Jarrell was identifying what Jameson (appropriating Benjamin) would much later define as the inception of a new culture:

> this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new-wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror.[75]

Direct evidence of Jarrell's awareness of this new culture in his writing can be found in his startling 1945 essay for Partisan Review, "Freud to Paul: The Stages of Auden's Ideology", the second part of a projected trio of articles that would perform an excruciating autopsy on the still-living body of W. H. Auden's poetry. At the conclusion of the essay, Jarrell quotes Auden's review of the brothers Grimm at length to indicate how "he submits to the universe without a question; but it turns out that the universe is his own shadow on the wall beside his bed" (*Third Book* 186):

> On the first page of the *New York Times Book Review* of November 2, 1944, there appeared a review of the new edition of *Grimm's Tales* – a heartfelt and moral review which concluded with this sentence: "So let everyone read these stories till they know them backward and tell them to their children with embellishments – they are not sacred texts – and then, in a few years, the Society for the Scientific Diet, the Association of Positivist Parents, the League for the Promotion of Worthwhile Leisure, the Coöperative Camp for Prudent Progressives, and all other bores and scoundrels can go jump in the lake. "
>
> Such a sentence shows that its writer has saved his own soul, but has lost the whole world – has forgotten even the nature of that world: for this was written not in 1913, but within the months that held the mass executions in the German camps, the fire raids, Warsaw and Dresden and Manila; within the months that were preparing the bombs for Hiroshima and Nagasaki; within the last twelve months of the Second World War.
>
> The logical absurdity of the advice does not matter, though it could hardly be more apparent: people *have* been telling their tales to the children for many hundreds of years now (does Auden suppose that the S.S. men at Lublin and Birkenau had not been told the tales by their parents?); the secular world Auden detests has been produced by the Märchen he idealizes and misunderstands, along with a thousand other causes – so it could not be changed "in a few years" by one of the causes that have made it what it is.

> But the moral absurdity of the advice – I should say its moral imbecility – does matter. In the year 1944, these prudent, progressive, scientific, cooperative "bores and scoundrels" were the enemies with whom Auden found it necessary to struggle. Were *these* your enemies, reader? They were not mine. (*Third Book* 186-7)

This passage gives a clear indication that Jarrell was far from intellectually and morally disengaged from politics in the aftermath of the war. What he found particularly intolerable was Auden's obliviousness to the historical trauma that had just unfolded, particularly as that trauma needed to be understood as a collective experience. The individual's aspiration for redemption (Auden's greatest sin, in Jarrell's view) was an irrelevance in the context of a war that defied narration and comprehension. As Jarrell concludes contra Auden, "it is hard for us to learn *anything*" (*Third Book* 187), particularly as the value of traditional knowledge had been placed in jeopardy. The tales of the Brothers Grimm were not politically useless, but they were not *innately* benign or enlightening either. Jarrell's distaste for Auden's boisterousness about the value of those stories is founded particularly in what he saw as a deeper complacency about the world and the security of its liberal and communal values.[76] To Jarrell, the immediate problem for a writer after the war was how to avoid offering the illusion of redemption while simultaneously maintaining tacitly that something still might be learned. For Americans in particular, the assumptions of isolationism could not be maintained and an understanding of the war as collective *human* experience rather than collective *American* experience was vital.

The war and its causes and consequences remains a compelling discourse throughout Jarrell's writing, which is discrete and discontinuous in so many ways. By serving in the army as a non-combatant, Jarrell was able to maintain an understanding of the war that was all political rather than experiential; he was exceptionally well-placed to see the institutional and bureaucratic machinery of the army and the State, not to mention the war itself. Alienation was not simply something that individuals felt; rather, it was produced for them by that machinery; this machinistic process would in turn produce the fetishization of such self-identifications as nationality. Even at the time of enlisting, Jarrell was loath to write as an "American":

> I'd better not write any poems about *my* army experience: after all, nobody but New Masses would print them. Of course, I could pretend to be a German soldier writing about *his* army (*Letters* 81).

Talking treason – however privately – became Jarrell's method of reconciling his military service with his political vision, and his own post-war assumption of a fetishized Germanic self ("Deutsch Dürch Freud") parodies the artificality of a native identity, just as he parodied the artificality of nativist genres such as rural landscape and pastoral poetry in poems such as "A Country Life" (which maps the covertization of politics in Losses), "A Soul" (in The Seven-League Crutches) and "The Mockingbird". "A Rhapsody on Irish Themes", also from The Seven-League Crutches, is an active disavowal of ethnicity, a poem in which Jarrell comically but pointedly rejects his Irishness on his mother's side, which is represented through tropes of commodity-fetishism:

> At six in the morning you scratched at my porthole,
> Great-grandmother, and looked into my eyes with the eyes
> Of a potato, and held out to me—only a dollar—
> A handkerchief manufactured with their own hands
> By the Little People; a *Post* wet from no earthly press,
> Dreamed over the sinking fire
> of a pub by a Papal Count.
> Look: a kerchief of linen, embroidered cunningly
> In the green of Their hearts, in Their own hand:
> A SOUVENIR OF OLD IRELAND. (*CP* 74)

Jarrell's resistance is expressed intertextually via the appropriation of Joyce, which enables the fulfilment of his desire for deracination:

> I'm from nowhere, I'm Nobody. But if I'm to be reminded
> By any nobody—
> Ireland, I've seen your cheeks
> The red of dawn: the capillaries are broken. (*CP* 76)

However, the poem's final turn ends curiously, but significantly, with not rejection but endorsement of a cliché of Irishness; pragmatic duplicity:

> Here're some verses of Goethe's—
> An old upright man, a lover of Ireland—
> You Senate of Ireland, to straighten the conduct
> Of such of your people as need it: *In peace*
> *Keep tidy*

Your little coops.
In war
Get along
With quartered troops. (*CP* 77)

This may be endorsing a stereotype, but it is a stereotype of double-agency; the self-casting of the Irish as victims of history is at the same time seen by Jarrell as a performative strategy of double-agency, a strategy for which he had his own uses, as has been seen.

Without wanting to exaggerate the stringency or trauma of the investigation of Jarrell's "Communism" prior to his appointment as Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress in 1956, it does suggest that Jarrell might have desired to appear "apolitical" in the context of McCarthyism; certainly, it demands more attention than Pritchard gives it:

> Early in 1956 Jarrell was invited to serve a two-year term as Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress. After an awkward moment – when an informant told authorities at the Library that he was a Communist (since he had published poems in "leftist" magazines like *The New Republic* and had worked for *The Nation*) – a character reference from the chancellor of the Woman's College cleared him.[77]

Rather than being apolitical in the 1950s, Jarrell was primarily self-protective; after his investigation – the possible consequences of which were obvious, particularly after F.O. Matthiessen's suicide in 1950 – it should not be surprising that he suppressed the political orientations that were manifest in his earlier writing. Even Jarrell's reputation as a critical "terror" could be regarded as a source of anxiety, with its undertones of the red menace and the *provocateur*. Self-censorship is both a political act and also one of self-expression, particularly in a context of collective paranoia. It is significant therefore that not only did Jarrell write much less poetry during the 1950s (and particularly during his tenure at the Library of Congress), but he also began to make the frequent use of feminine speakers that has come to be regarded as the dominant trope of his post-war poems. This has been regarded as intrinsic to psycho-analytic studies of Jarrell, but only Hammer (yet again) has begun to consider the political implications of Jarrell's accentuation of the feminine, seeing his "withdrawal" into the "highly charged domestic space" of housewives, children and *kitsch* as a gesture of resistance against the institutionalization and normalization of the masculine world of production "outside" (yet another phenomenon of the

1950s was the mythicization and fetishization of the family as a core institution of American life). Jarrell, a surrogate parent rather than a natural one, created characters that signalled their dissent from the normative constraints of conventional sexuality and prevailing social-psychological mores. In these poems, Jarrell shows women in Washington resisting the bureaucratization of their sexuality, housewives rendered mad by Levittown ("Seele im Raum", "Next Day").

In the context of containment culture, it may be more useful to substitute terms such as persona, mask or speaker with the political and performative vocabulary of espionage. In consciously and strategically obscuring himself, Jarrell took "covers" as women, children and senior citizens, partly, as Hammer says, because of "his will to disengage literature from power"[78], but also as it provided him with a mechanism for evading definitive norms of gendered, cultural and national identity. Furthermore, there are recurrent motifs of autosurveillance and surveillance throughout those monologues. In poems such as "Three Bills", based on an "overheard" conversation in a Washington park and initially published in Partisan Review, Jarrell "snidely"[79] produces a Soviet-style indictment of the colonialist complacencies and inevitable sexual deviancy of the American upper classes:

> Once at the Plaza, looking out into the park
> Past the Colombian ambassador, his wife,
> And their two children—past a carriage driver's
> Rusty top hat and brown bearskin rug—
> I heard three hundred-thousand dollar bills
> Talking at breakfast. One was male and two were female.
> The gray female complained
> Of the plantation lent her at St. Vincent
> "There at the end of nowhere." . . .
> . . . . . .
> The bearded male went for a moment to the lavatory
> And his wife said in the same voice to her friend:
> "We can't stay anywhere. We haven't stayed a month
> In one place for the last three years.
> He flirts with the yardboys and we have to leave. "
> Her friend showed that she was sorry; I was sorry
> To see that the face of Woodrow Wilson on the blond
> Bill—the suffused face about to cry
> Or not to cry—was a face that under different
> Circumstances would have been beautiful, a woman's. (*CP* 304)

Lesser indicates how "The feminine is presented, at the last minute, as the only possible salvation from greed, cynicism and depersonalization"[80]; however, this underestimates the effect of the word "Circumstances", which offers no room for redemption and instead confirms the poem's indictment of late-capitalism's conversion of women and men into "Wilsons". Yet the poem fails as satire, mainly because Jarrell cannot resist his impulse to identify compassionately with the failed lives of his characters, making their weakness his own and destabilizing the authority and resolution of his poem. Both the poem and the enfeebled humans in it are emasculated. The power of Jarrell's compassion is such that it undermines the focal point of his critique; at the end of the poem, it is not so much the U. S. Treasury Department and its related institutions as the characters' innately human capacity for failure that has made them what they are. Jarrell's frequent avoidance of an overt "male" voice/persona has readers guessing at what type of male identity is left behind his polysexual speakers, indicating the partial success of Jarrell's effort to write the maleness out of himself; to avoid becoming a "person", he instead adopted personological covers.

Jarrell's reaction against the institutionalization of the modern during the 1950s has to be remarked, and will be assessed particularly in relation to Pictures from an Institution (Chapter Three); but it is apparent also in modernism's colonization of the same domestic space that he had chosen as his domain:

> In the 1950s much decorative art displayed a cubist lineage, and many suburban living rooms, spotted with mock Picassos, showed equally the influence of Mondrian.[81]

This phenomenon – and its implications for culture – was readily dealt with by Jarrell in the vivid satire and prophecy of "The Taste of the Age":

> Our society, it turns out, can use modern art. A restaurant, today, will order a mural by Miró in as easy and matter-of-fact a spirit as, twenty-five years ago, it would have ordered one by Maxfield Parrish. The president of a paint factory goes home, sits down by his fireplace – it *looks* like a chromium aquarium set into the wall by a wall-safe company that has branched out into interior decorating, but there is a log burning in it, he calls it a fireplace, let's call it a fireplace too – the president sits down, folds his hands on his stomach, and stares relishingly at two paintings by Jackson Pollock that he has hung on the wall opposite him. He feels at home with them; in fact, as he

looks at them he not only feels at home, he feels as if he were back at the paint factory. And his children – if he has any – his children cry for Calder. He uses thoroughly advanced, wholly non-representational artists to design murals, posters, institutional advertisements: if we have the patience (or are given the opportunity) to wait until the West has declined a little longer, we shall all see the advertisements of Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Smith illustrated by Jean Dubuffet.

The president's minor executives may not be willing to hang a Kandinsky in the house, but they will wear one, if you make it into a sport shirt or a pair of swimming trunks; and if you make it into a sofa, they will lie on it. They and their wives and children will sit on a porcupine, if you first exhibit it at the Museum of Modern Art and say that it is a chair. In fact, there is nothing, nothing in the whole world that someone won't buy and sit in if you tell him that it is a chair: the great new art form of our age, the one that will take anything we put in it, is the chair. If Hieronymous Bosch, if Christian Morgenstern, if the Marquis de Sade were living at this hour, what chairs they would be designing! (*KA&C* 291-292)

While Jarrell was enjoying his camp connoisseurship of European sports cars, imported pilsner and liebfraumilch, he depicted the levels of Corporation America immersed in the idiocy of Fordist consumption; this position is apparently anti-democratic in its contempt for the bourgeois consumer, but it is not simply conservative. Nadel has indicated that for America's "consumer-oriented society, 'democracy' has been the narrative of consumer preference".[82] If consumption is the cultural dominant, then preference is limited to what consumption finds available. Jarrell's satire is aimed at the machinery of consumption and how contemporary art had been colonized by it; his position towards consumer-modernism is a Bartlebyesque "I would prefer not to" in the spirit of Diogenes. Connoisseurship, and writing about it for Mademoiselle, could become a precariously liberationist and dissident gesture, however weak; so Jarrell flaunted his consumption rather than normalized it.

Normalized consumption translated everything into domestic usage; Jarrell's valorization of the privacy of domestic space may be seen as under threat from that consumption. The woman in "Seele im Raum" subordinated and pressurized by the culture of ownership, invents fantastically a companion creature that cannot be given an everyday use, cannot be domesticated:

It sat between my husband and my children.

A place was set for it—a plate of greens.
It had been there: I had seen it
But not somehow—but this was like a dream—
Not seen it so that I knew I saw it.
It was as if I could not know I saw it
Because I had never once in all my life
Not seen it. It was an eland. (*CP* 37)

The dislocating and liberating fantasy is intolerable to the institutions of culture, which claim it, "cure" it, and kill it:

And after some years, the others came
And took it from me—it was ill, they told me—
And cured it, they wrote me: my whole city
Sent me cards like lilac-branches, mourning
As I had mourned—
and I was standing
By a grave in flowers, by dyed rolls of turf,
And a canvas marquee the last brown of earth. (*CP* 38)

The eland is the woman's fantastic objectification of herself, a liberating schizoid manifestation of herself that deliberately problematizes the issue of ownership. Rather than ending the poem with the death of the eland, and the woman's "cure", thus confirming her as a hysteric in the eyes of society's institutions, Jarrell re-invests in the woman's fantasy and the questions it exposes, concluding to the embarrassment of the institutions of society and poetry:

Yet how can I believe it? Or believe that I
Owned it, a husband, children? Is my voice the voice
Of that skin of being—of what owns, is owned
In honor or dishonor, that is borne and bears—
Or of that raw thing, the being inside it
That has neither a wife, a husband, nor a child
But goes at last as naked from this world
As it was born into it—

And the eland comes and grazes on its grave.

This is senseless?
Shall I make sense or shall I tell the truth?
Choose either—I cannot do both.

I tell myself that. And yet it is not so,
And what I say afterwards will not be so:
To be at all is to be wrong.
Being is being old
And saying, almost comfortably, across a table
From—
from what I don't know—
in a voice
Rich with a kind of longing satisfaction:
"To own an eland! That's what I call life! " (*CP* 39)

This is a double heresy: not only the commitment to the manifestation of fantasy rather than its cure and containment, but the priority of fantasy over family. In this fashion, Jarrell turned the covertization of politics during the 1950s to his advantage, allowing him to combine political critique with the psycho-analytic language to which he was always committed.

Not all of Jarrell's politics were "underground" during the 1950s, however. In 1957 he was asked (along with Schwartz and Berryman, among others) by the Virginia Quarterly Review to write a poem to commemorate the founding of Jamestown, the first British North American colony. The eight-month long celebratory festival that took place there provided the opportunity for "Southern chauvinists. . . . to savour Virginia's priority in the genesis of U.S history and escape from New England's hegemony".[83] However, Jarrell was not interested in producing a sample of Virginian triumphalism, and was initially hesitant about accepting the commission:

> I like the idea of writing a poem about Jamestown – whether I can really write one I don't know. We'll try to drive to it early this Spring and see what it's like; perhaps seeing it will work. If it does I'll send you the poem before the first of June.[84]

Belying his uncertainty in January, Jarrell took to the task with enthusiasm (presumably having made his trip) and had finished the poem by April, when he sent a copy to Elizabeth Bishop:

> I've just written a queer, nay weird, poem and can't resist sending it. I was asked to write a poem about Jamestown (390th anniversary) and said that I doubted that I could but if one came I would. I imagine the magazine will turn pale when it sees what came. (*Letters* 422)

Significantly, the poem begins with a memory of an educational institution, which for Jarrell was always the critical site of American culture, as his novel evidences (see later chapter). As the speaker remembers the prints of engravings of the myth of Jamestown on a kindergarten wall, a sense of anachronism is immediately introduced into the poem. As would prove vital in his poems on the visual arts, the pictures of the legend immediately offer space for interpretation, critique, discrepancy: Pocahontas saving John Smith resembles Pocahontas erotically smothering – or mothering – the white male hero. Jarrell alludes to the conventional narrative of Jamestown, what Fiedler termed a "deep American legend of American race relations", and its orthodox significations, "passionate and domestic and Christian".[85] However, the obviousness of the legend's emphatic ideology invites conjecture. Jarrell rehearses the sentimental allegory of the myth: "Nature,/ Nature at last is married to a man" (*CP* 256). His rhetorical repetition of "Nature" affirms that the colony's inception was an activity of language above anything else, the beginning of an allegory of inevitability. The opening of the second stanza brings closure to institutional America's official version of the story: "The two lived happily/ Forever after. . . . " (*CP* 256). The familiar Jarrellian pause signifies the speaker's self-consciousness as an Ishmaelean or Job-like conveyance of mythology:

> And I only am escaped alone
> To tell the story. But how shall I tell the story?
> The settlers died? All settlers die. The colony
> Was a Lost Colony? All colonies are lost.
> John Smith and Pocahontas, carving on a tree
> *We Have Gone Back For More People*, crossed the sea
> And were put to death, for treason, in the Tower
> Of London? Ah, but they needed no one!
> Powhatan,
> Smiling at that red witch, red wraith, his daughter,
> Said to the father of us all, John Smith:
> "American,
> To thyself be enough! . . . " He was enough—

Enough, or too much. The True Historie
Of the Colony of Jamestown is a wish. (*CP* 256-257)

The myth of self-sufficiency and harmony that Jamestown propagates makes history into just so much irrelevant detail; never mind their execution, or that Pocahontas married John Rolfe, not John Smith. The "True Historie" is a fantasy of American destiny, a potent myth in containment culture, yet the national impulse to sustain such a fantasy was symptomatic of what Jarrell said after Hiroshima and Nagasaki: "I believe our culture's chief characteristic, to a being from outside it, would be that we are *liars*. That all except a few never tell or feel anything near the truth about anything we do" (*Letters* 130). As long as the wish of the American is self-fulfillment and self-justification, the American will be a political idiot and a servant of ideology; Jarrell implies the need for the legend to be regarded as a product of history and not its determinant. This theoretical crisis of American self-identification is replayed in the sub-Beckettian dialogue of the poem's third stanza; Pocahontas is re-imagined as a witch, Smith as a man; but she is the dynamic figure, insisting that "the father of us all" understand that the "originality" of America is more problematic than its myths allow:

Long ago, hundreds of years ago, a man
Met a woman in a wood, a witch.
The witch said, "Wish! "
The man said, "Make me what I am. "
The witch said, "Wish again!"
The man said, "Make me what I am. "
The witch said, "For the last time, wish! "
The man said, "Make me what I am."
The witch said: "Mortal, because you have believed
In your mortality, there is no wood, no wish,
No world, there is only you. But what are you?
The world has become you. But what are you?
Ask;
Ask, while the time to ask remains to you." (*CP* 257)

The pseudo-historical language of the colonial myth has been replaced with the fundamental dream-language of folk-tale; The "man", synonymous here with "American", is unable to break out of an idiotic desire for self-confirmation rather than self-realization. "Jamestown" manifests how the "real" is kept at bay by myth.

At the poem's end, when the witch finally tells the man "what he is" (Jarrell makes us assume that the idiot has finally asked the question), her answer is in terms of the urgent temporality of the "sputnik-effect" 1950s:

> The witch said, smiling: "This is Jamestown.
> From Jamestown, Virginia, to Washington, D.C.,
> Is, as the rocket flies, eleven minutes. " (*CP* 257)

The implication is that the "time to ask" remaining is very short; the witch's voice has mutated into that of the big Other, the flight-attendant tone of technological and ideological authority. The project instigated by Jamestown was one of national self-denial, an erosion of the political subject's ability to recognize consequences and resist the authorizations of geography and history that the dominant ideology exerts to justify itself; the man, the American, the idiot, has surrendered himself to the machine, and the rocket is about to obliterate Jamestown once and for all, making it finally irrelevant. Jarrell re-interprets Jamestown as a foundational element of America's quest for apocalypse.

The irony of Jarrell's endorsement of Kennedy in the 1960s is that it signifies not so much a re-politicization of himself but a manifestation of political "faith"; the oppositional work of Jarrell's writing was not relinquished because of this faith, but was kept separate from it. Indeed, there is little of Kennedy in Jarrell's writing before his death, which suggests that Kennedy only became politically significant for Jarrell as a writer in the aftermath of assassination. When Jarrell began "Kennedy-watching", it was out of both his seduction by and identification with the politician, rather than an ideolgical endorsement of him. Jarrell adopted a mystic emphasis in regard to Kennedy. In part this was because the candidate presented Jarrell with an illusion of tolerance and enfranchisement for himself as an intellectual, something confirmed by the invitation of Robert Frost to the inauguration:

> The president made his invitation not as a friend, not as a politician, but as a reader: any of us who heard the president talk about Frost's poetry, on television . . . will remember that he spoke as only a real reader of Frost could speak, and read the lines almost as Frost himself would have read them . . .It is a pleasure to think that for the next four or eight years our art and our government won't be complete strangers. (*Letters* 449).

The supreme irony is that Jarrell's wishful valorization of the reader-president had made the poet into one of the television-viewers of which he had so loudly despaired.

Kennedy was a minority-elected candidate who had to rely on a coalition of the marginalized for his election, therefore addressing the peripherics where Jarrell had variously situated himself. Jarrell may have believed in progress, but he had not believed in its public, political or cultural expression; media-friendly, sexually attractive, morally ambiguous, politically expedient but still avowedly committed to liberalism, Kennedy ironically represented the double-agency that Jarrell had adopted but not necessarily recognized in himself. Kennedy was a substitute for politics, enabling Jarrell to commit himself to the role of a licensed aesthete, evidenced by Mary Jarrell's bizarre narrative of the National Poetry Festival (at which Jarrell gave the lecture, "Fifty Years of American Poetry") and its coincidence with the Cuban missile crisis:

> The next morning, Mrs. Kennedy's sherry party was canceled and the National Poetry Festival found itself competing with the Cuban missile crisis. Though Jarrell wrote afterward that the panels and programs in Washington "gave one no time to worry much over Cuba, " he was speaking for himself and his own absorption in poetry. Rexroth re-booked on an earlier flight to San Francisco, and Ogden Nash holed up in his room with the television, not to be seen again until his own reading. Frost spent the day in bed with the curtains drawn, his companion, William Meredith, reported; but rumors flew that this was not from fear of nuclear attack but from grief at losing the Nobel Prize to Steinbeck. Rousing himself sufficiently for his reading that night, Frost seemed touchingly broken, and Jarrell was irate at the disrupting late arrival of Snodgrass, Berryman, and Schwartz, who were full of spirits and rude remarks. . . . Jarrell, inside his poetry bubble, felt no cause for alarm and stayed to the last (*Letters* 459-460)

Rather than Kiplingesque *sang froid* or dandyist idiocy, Jarrell's immunity to the crisis indicates his assumption of an ambassadorial role, however deluded; as a self-styled mediator between poetry and the presidency, he defined himself as diplomatically rather than individually responsible. Effectively, and despite the efforts of the narrative, Jarrell appears as an absurdist figure, wilfully re-inforcing the role that he believed had been created for him. Ironically, therefore, Jarrell aligned himself with the institutions of the State rather than the institutions of poetry. Kennedy's subliminal presence allowed Jarrell to separate himself even more radically than before into distinct roles, including that of Poet-Minister (he also "became" a children's writer at this time), and further separating himself from his own "professional" milieu. Pritchard has identified that

> in reading Jarrell's letters after his return from Europe in November 1963 (it coincided with Kennedy's assassination) until his death less than two years later, one is mainly struck by the absence of *any* voice. . . . It is as if the real Jarrell had gone away somewhere – and perhaps, in a sense, that is what happened. The focus turns to his physical and psychic condition, beginning with his grief over Kennedy's death and his subsequent complaints about fatigue.[86]

Yet as the later chapter on his writing for children will show, Jarrell did not just disappear after Kennedy's death; if anything, he "re-appeared" from his absorption into the spectre of Kennedy, demonstrating the terrible consequences of his identification but ultimately producing (in The Animal Family) a fable of adapting to catastrophe rather than being engulfed by it. Altieri has written that

> poets – especially American poets – tend to be impatient with the work of political judgement, finding it tragically easy to project their own powers as necessary and sufficient for the state.[87]

With Kennedy, Jarrell did the opposite, perversely adopting the State (or the head of State) as a surrogate for himself, then having to recognize the discrepancy; the violence of that recognition cast him – and not Kennedy – in the familiar role of victim, making that "shining brown head" his own.

Jarrell's politics are precarious and incoherent, made manifest by allusion (and illusion), stopping short of self-identification within a specific ideological or political site. Rather than reading this as profligacy or disengagement, it might be read in terms of a Rortyesque recognition that boundaries of political identification are negotiable and therefore convertible: "One cannot be irresponsible toward a community of which one does not think of oneself as a member".[88] Jarrell's politics may be seen as a refusal of the community-values of America before, during and after the war; but they may also be represented as a projective quest for a community that would make possible the expression and manifestation of his politics. On the other hand, Arendt's analysis of Jarrell's refusal to flee the world, despite his apparent evasiveness, can be re-examined in the context of Deleuze and Parnet's comment that "lines of flight" followed by writers onto self-destruction "turn out badly not because they are imaginary, but precisely because they are real and move within reality".[89] Instead of struggling to comprehend the circumstances of Jarrell's death as either tragic accident or tragic suicide, we can speculate heretically on those circumstances

and read them in the political terms of the achievement of happiness. Rather than judging him according to his end (or his beginning) as a loss to humanity, Jarrell could be said to have died happily, as his real project was to prove his erasure by society and realize impersonality, as if to make "The Obscurity of the Poet" a literal truth. The adolescence of this apparently spiteful desire represents what is most interesting about Jarrell; that he is able to be simultaneously a serious critic of culture, advocate of humanism and nihilist gad-fly.

Continually acting as a mediatory presence in culture, Jarrell could only manifest himself through the energy created by that mediation; to sustain that energy, he gradually multiplied the positions he would mediate between to the point of breakdown. Politically, this afforded him a dandy's precarious exploration of an exchange of identities in his poetry and fiction that can be read as subverting the norms of cold war containment and late-capitalist culture, yet he also imposed a conservative response to those "transgressions" in his critical prose; he was a critic of capitalism, but also a self-knowing exponent and a product of it.

V. "J"

In 1941, the year in which Jarrell produced much of his most vital and interrogative writing, he produced a brief but significant review of Edward Muir's translation of Kafka's Amerika in which he identified aesthetic and political positions that have been shown as coalescent in this chapter:

> The blank innocence with which relevant, irrelevant, sensible, absurd, are set down beside each other, the absence even of any implication or suspicion of separation (accompanied by the character's interminable analysis of motive and logic), suggest more disquietingly than anything else could: In *this* world how can we possibly believe that we know what is important and what is unimportant? . . . this world is the world of late capitalism, in which individualism has changed from the mixed but sought blessing of the romantics, to everybody's initial plight: the hero's problem is not to escape from society but to find it, to get any satisfactory place in it or relation to it. How shall a unit of labor power be saved? The hero – anomalous term – struggles against mechanisms too gigantic, too endlessly and irrationally complex even to be understood, much less conquered. Kafka understands that there is no separation between ideas and things, that contradictions are the

shocking ends of a continuum, that everything is a *process*: justice and salvation both are represented as a sort of infinite regress. (*KA&C* 73-74)

Jarrell's description of the world of Amerika accommodates his own America:

> if it is unlike Europe, its unlikeness has the partial, ostensible excuse that is far-off and hardly known. There is a casual, accurately accidental, faintly comic pastoral quality about it; it is full of the humor or pathos of the irrelevant or absurd. This world is hardly *judged* at all; its cruelties and barbarities elicit only the blankly anthropological interest we extend to the vagaries of savages or children. (*KA&C* 73)

As Arendt (who links Jarrell with Benjamin and Kafka in turn) implies, Jarrell was not fleeing the world, but in meeting it "head on" he adopted the appearances of escape, stealing across borders of identity, language, taste, perspective. As Deleuze and Guattari said of Kafka's writing:

> It is a map of intensities. It is an ensemble of states, each distinct from the other, grafted on to the man insofar as he is searching for a way out. It is a creative line of escape that says nothing other than what it is.[90]

According to Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka's liking of children, animals, the weak and the ignorant enabled him to transgress radically the abiding rules and mores of literature; similarly (while not wanting to crudely re-name Jarrell as the American Kafka), adopting their vocabulary may enable an understanding of Jarrell's disparate schizoid identifications: becoming-woman, becoming-child, becoming-soldier, becoming-Freud, becoming-animal, becoming-German, becoming-Kennedy. Mary Jarrell indicated his Whitmanesque appetite for self-projection, projective resemblance, visual reproduction, to the extent of fetishisizing Jarrell's beard as a device for dissembling and resembling:

> Like that boy in Rilke's "Requiem", Randall "printed" on himself the names of Chekhov and Proust and Freud *so far off now, already so long ago*, and Gogol, too. When he discovered Freud's birthday was the same as his, we stopped calling it his and celebrated Freud's. When some guests mistook our small framed picture of Chekhov for Randall's father . . . . Before we went to bed that night, he took a long look at Chekhov's picture and a long look at himself in the mirror. "You know what? " he said. "What?" I said. "If you blur

your eyes . . . " And I said, "It's so, Randall. It's so." And with that he made his mind up to have a beard.

Years after, when people said he looked like Renoir's gentleman with the opera glasses in *La Loge* or like Donatello's head of Goliath, he'd ask with boyish delight, "Really? Do you really think so?" And gradually, with no overt plan, our bearded paintings outnumbered the others and every room has its Solomon, or Odysseus, or Constantine, or John the Baptist, or *der heilige Hieronymus*. (*Letters* 278-279)

As in Kafka, Jarrell's speakers in his poems never act straightforwardly but are instead acted upon by institutions and dominating individuals (often themselves instinct with institutions, as in the figure of President Dwight Robbins in Pictures from an Institution). The weight of those institutions is met with flight, although not into denial but across personal boundaries into various forms of transsubjectivity; furthermore, it could give expression to apparently inconsequent and contradictory impulses, as in Jarrell's comprehension of the necessary paradoxes of a "minor" writer such as Housman:

> In other words, death is better than life, nothing is better than anything. Nor is this a silly adolescent pessimism peculiar to Housman, as so many critics assure you. . . . The attitude is obviously inadequate and just as obviously important. (*KA&C* 27)

When Jarrell wrote about Kafka, he expressed the vitality of being dumbstruck; recognizing your pessimism, its inadequacy, but also its inexhaustability, could enable a weak poetics of indirect resistance:

> It is absurd not to call the world evil, and it is impossible to take the condemnation seriously: either laughter or tears are impossibly inadequate, we have for it only the stare we give Medusa's head. (*KA&C* 74)

With poems such as "The Bronze David of Donatello" we will see later how Jarrell explored the risky jouissance of meeting the petrifying gaze with your own, yet throughout his writing he invested in the strategies of approach – comedy and pathos – that he identified as insufficient. As Arendt said : "he had nothing to protect him against the world but his splendid laughter, and the immense naked courage behind it".[91] Occassionally, as in Pictures from an Institution, that laughter was an adequate defence against an idiotic and hegemonic bureaucracy, but Arendt's statement also

shows just how exposed Jarrell was most of the time, as he self-consciously made attempted to laugh off the imminent apocalypse that his characteristic prescience intimated to be inevitable. Comparisons of Jarrell to Kafka are impossible, as they are of him to any writer, but it is just such an impossibility that Jarrell strategically adopted as an ironic resource; inventing various Jarrells and recognizing his invention of them, recognizing them as distinct subjectivities that may not be connected except in the knowledge that such a process is arbitrary. In turn, this may provide a strategy for reading the minor poet, Randall Jarrell, as *seeking* and *achieving* minority rather than tragically lapsing into it. Writing for Jarrell was politically exploratory within the terms of a "majority" culture that preferred the personally expurgatory. The peculiar urgency and jouissance of his work is in its attempt to remain interrogative and active within an environment of inevitability. Beliefs are replaced by options, the personal is replaced by the transpersonal, heroes by nonentities, the emphatic by the fantastic, reticence with exuberance, harmony with noise, the formal by the material. Jarrell's writing refuses to ignore the improper, the weak, the indifferent:

> What's happening to all of us is in its way
> Laughable—why don't I laugh? Why don't we laugh?
>
> It's bad music; but it's what we hear. . . .(*CP* 368)

Chapter Three. Bentham's Benton: Within and Without the Institutions

> A culture is like a big organization which assigns each of its members a place where he can work in the spirit of the whole; and it is perfectly fair for his power to be measured by the contribution he succeeds in making to the whole enterprise. In an age without culture on the other hand forces become fragmented and the power of an individual man is used up in overcoming opposing forces and frictional resistances; it does not show in the distance he travels but perhaps only in the heat he generates in overcoming friction.[1]

Jarrell wrote in his introduction to The Anchor Book of Short Stories (1958) that what made Kafka "so marvellous a writer is his discovery of – or rather, discovery by – a kind of narrative in which logical analysis and humour, the greatest enemies of narrative movement, have themselves become part of the movement" (*A Sad Heart* 133). In his only prose fiction of significant length, Jarrell attempted to emulate Kafka's capacity for altering conventions of narrative or formal practice using his gift for analysis and criticism as a paradoxical method of storytelling. Just as Jarrell may be contextualized in a number of ways, his fiction presents a similar dilemma of definition and reception; in this sense, Pictures from an Institution is the exemplary Jarrellian text, resisting precise definition by genre, politically perceptive (if duplicitous), stylistically and linguistically exuberant. Replete with epigrams and one-liners, its overall structure collects rather than contains. Superficially, it is a campus novel; yet it is probably more pertinent to describe it as a fiction set in and around a university. It is also vital to note its mark in literary history, coming just before Lucky Jim(1954) and the satirized academy of Mrs. Pratt in Lolita(1955). Like those novels, Jarrell's book provided a momentous critique of institutionalism before such critiques were commonplace, divining the moment at which "all of us felt the rot of institutionalism in our bones", as Karl Shapiro put it.[2]

Despite its obvious merits, the book has generally received a succession of agreeable plaudits and favourable mentions but a derisory level of active analysis. A common excuse for not giving it sustained and serious reading has been the reported implication that Jarrell himself did not take the book absolutely seriously:

> I won't make any pretentious claims for it, but I'll bet you a dollar against a penny that you enjoy reading it, poor vain mortal that I am. I *loved* writing it: Cal, you ought to write a – prose book of some length; I still don't want to say *novel*. (*Letters* 285)

All of Jarrell's contemporaries praised the book , making frequent reference to the "satirical" voice of Jarrell the critic. However, they were just as energetic in refusing to term it "fiction", thus subscribing to Jarrell's modest disclaimers regarding its seriousness:

> It is a prose narrative that isn't exactly a novel, more a comedy; it's quite a funny book, I believe, and might interest a good many readers in other ways. (*Letters* 302)

The following comment on the book by Robert Lowell reflects the diffident tone of Jarrell's remarks, with some minor elaborations as to its generic identity:

> His novel, *Pictures from an Institution*, whatever its fictional oddities, is a unique and serious joke-book. How often I've met people who keep it by their beds or somewhere handy, and read random pages aloud to lighten their hearts.[3]

Lowell's comments are a burlesque of Jarrell's own more anecdotal moments as a critic. Friends and colleagues were all prepared to say they liked the book , but mostly they were either unwilling or unable to substantiate intellectually their admiration. "A unique and serious joke-book": strong praise, of a sort, but how much credibility is given to the description "serious" through analysis? It rather appears that "serious" was the flattering term employed by Jarrell's acquaintances to signify profundities that they were wary of but nevertheless needed to be seen to acknowledge. An acceptable terminology for Jarrell's book was coined, "the seriously funny" book, and once the validity of that term was agreed there was no need to persevere with analysis. Peter Taylor re-hashed Lowell's assessment:

> Of course, the whole method of *Pictures from an Institution* is that of letting us hear what the characters in the book have to say about each other. It is a book full of Randall's witty talk, and in it we see to what serious places his witty talk could take one.[4]

Following Lowell, there is a danger of presuming Pictures to be a diversionary stop-gap or play-thing, an intermission in the heroic progress of the poet; simultaneously, it is possible to valorize the novel to the point of de-emphasizing the poetry. In 1966, Sylvia Angus noted Lowell's influence upon critical reception of the novel; she indicted Lowell's "destructive epithet" of "joke-book" as being "evidence of the

remarkable degree to which Jarrell's novel has been undervalued and misunderstood by the reviewers".[5] Angus's article provides an exhaustive review of the inadequacies of criticism for the complexities of Pictures. She sees the novel as "clearly allegorical"[6], referring to the dualism of Gottfried and Gertrude as God and Devil which in turn represents the conflict of the malign and benign within Jarrell himself.

The image of Jarrell as the graceful yet scathing wit with a hidden cultural agenda has been sustained by the biographical bias in critical works published since his death, and perhaps it also accounts for critics' timidity when approaching Pictures; to apply too stringent a critique to Jarrell's book would be rather too much like engaging the "literary terrorist" himself in argument. Better to award it the special status of "unique and serious joke book" rather than assail it for its lackings as a "novel", or to worry aloud like Ferguson as to the extent that the novel is "in part 'an antinovel' and 'Metafiction'", but "also a mock-epic prose poem"[7]. Yet from a contemporary point of view, the problematic generic identity of Pictures from an Institution looks like cause for exploration rather than hesitancy. Furthermore, it appears to have been a vital part of Jarrell's design; not only did he say that his book "has no plot, no action, no sex, no violence . . . no sweep, no scope"[8], which reads ironically as a denial of cinematic adaptability as much as epic credibility, Jarrell also indicated to Harry Ford how a problematic reception for the novel was prescriptive: "I can see how an odd book's an odd problem; after all, if I'd wanted it easily acceptable I shouldn't have given it two heads" (*Letters* 334). It inevitably appears to critics that there must be *something* precariously post-modern about a novel that is clearly a novel, even though its author, his friends, and the majority of its reviewers and critics question or deny the novel that status. Such a perspective has been afforded by subsequent developments in fiction, and one benefit has been a move towards regarding the autobiographical element (in terms of the satire being directed at specific individuals) in the novel as being of less significance than the earliest readings have asserted. An insistence on the novel as a *roman à clef* is an insistence on the monotonous real, but also affirms that the book belongs to an essentially American genre, the campus novel, thus denying it its generic complexity but also containing it within the institutional milieu. Jarrell said in a letter to Ransom that "Benton College is completely synthetic, fanciful, typical" (*Letters* 367), indicating that we may therefore care less about whether Irene Rosenbaum is modeled on Hannah Arendt, or Gertrude on Mary McCarthy or Flannery O'Connor, and emphasize the fictionality of the book. William H. Pritchard has alluded to the possibility of such a reading in his Randall Jarrell: A Literary Life:

> This "disbelief" in fictional plots, and his own lack of interest and conviction about hammering one together, could be looked upon as a forerunner of what, fifteen or so years later, would be called metafiction, the "anti-story" as practiced by a Coover, a Barth or a Barthelme.[9]

"Could be"? Pritchard's identification of Pictures as not belonging to its time holds some potential, but the suggested connection to metafiction is unconvinced, as is evidenced by Pritchard's failure to pursue such an analysis any further himself. What makes Jarrell different from Barth *et al* was that their "disbelief" in "plots" was intrinsic to their aesthetics of fiction, whereas with Jarrell the "plot" is simply alterior to what he wants to write. Indeed, he proved his "belief" in plots conclusively elsewhere with the publication of his books for children, "pure" fictions which might make his only novel appear to be a transitional work in his career as a fictionalist rather than its supreme achievement. As if to confirm this, Pritchard undermines his own suggestion that Pictures is "metafiction" by failing to pursue it and by ultimately adopting the less potentially complex approach of regarding the work as a form of dramatic platform for Jarrell's "showmanship":

> *Pictures* is as theatrical a book as could be written; the showman continuously performs to a (presumably) delighted audience that only demands more of the same.[10]

Kathe Davis Finney asserted more confidently that: "Jarrell, in *this* apparently conventional novel, is pre-occupied with the metafictional concerns of the 'reality behind the outer reality'"[11]:

> His fiction is post-Joycean, though not obviously so: short on plot, heavily autobiographical . . . if only in disguised form – with fictionality itself as one of its subjects. Jarrell wrote, that is, a fiction moving in the direction of what we now call metafiction.[12]

However, rather than emphasizing "disguise"and latency, the novel's manifestations of fantastic reality (attitudinizing, performance, hyper-erudition, grotesque spectacle, the confusion of public and private discourse, exaggerated physicality, "abnormal" and "hypernormal" sexuality) make the articulation of an essential "inner" reality impossible. Inner reality is the big Other, the ultimate and unsayable. What readers "know" about each character at the end of the book is nothing compared to the hypersensitvity created in them by the novel's inexhaustible re-depiction and re-

definition of characters. Jarrell's writing *is* exhibitionistic, projecting rather than repressing; it is therefore autobiographical, but in a radically subjective mode rather than in a pseudo-democratically confessional manner.

If Jarrell does prophesy the "coming" of metafiction, it is only in his camp but horrified sense of popular culture and its effect on literacy, history, and the university. Everything is ironized, and all characters appear as caricature or parody (entrapped in their roles as specialists) living out the contradiction between the cosseting market-friendly culture of post-war America and the Judaeo-Christian *ur* ethos of the university. As can be seen from Jarrell's cultural essays in A Sad Heart at the Supermarket, he saw that 1950s America was in mutation and transition; and that its emergence as the concierge of the world had necessitated the distortion and manipulation of the values of the "old" world, Europe. As 1950s America ascends, another America declines, and Jarrell feared that this would inevitably involve the relinquishing of Europe as a reservoir of culture and education to which Americans could resort.

Indeed, Mary Jarrell has written that her husband made "the superiority of European education and culture to American" " the underlying theme of his novel"(*Letters* 181). However, that "theme" is not really quite so simplistic or dogmatic as a vindication of Europe over America. What Jarrell posits is how America must be read in the context of division, and from divided perspectives, whether Martian or European, resisting the colonizing impulse to make the other the same by imposing consensus. The novel's Gottfried Rosenbaum is heroized not as an exemplary European but as an individual possessed of a devouring appetite for new ideas and experiences but also the ability to refuse what attempts to limit that desire: "He did not want things to be European, to be at all like Europe: it was a New World, wasn't it?" (*Pictures* 131). Rosenbaum's pleasure in diverse America is energized by his recognition of the Institution's (Benton's) indifference towards that diversity.

Jarrell's mediatory position on culture was not wholly Spenglerian; his pessimism could be apocalyptic, but was also aspirational. Culture would not "disappear"; if anything, his recognition was that it was bound to be bastardized, manipulated, manifested by the emergent Medium and had to be met with his own contention and dissidence. Minutely asserting use values, he could adopt his own mediatory positions between "high" and "low" cultures by not distancing himself from the "low" but instead insisting upon his separation from the homogenizing institutions of culture. The pseudo avant-gardism of Benton – consensus posing as free-thinking – is as symptomatic of the same late-capitalist malaise as are the arch pieties of the supermarket selling "Cheer", "Joy" and "All" in "Next Day"; Jarrell's emphasis in the

book is not so much on complaint as agitation. Wendy Lesser quotes a passage that exposes his appetite for trouble-making:

> Gertrude and Sidney had, instead of pictures, two reproductions from the Museum of Non-Objective Art, in frames or containers half of plastic, half of mirror. One was romantic, and showed a kidney being married to the issue of a sterile womb, and trailing clouds of mustard-or Lewisite, I am not sure; the other was classical, and showed two lines on a plain – or plane, perhaps.
>
> "Is that a Mondrian?" Constance asked politely.
>
> Gertrude looked as if she had asked whether it was a Landseer. It was plain that Mondrian's day was past.
>
> Sidney said, saving things: "No, but it *is* influenced by Mondrian, I think."
>
> I did not want them saved. I said, "How can anything be? If it's influenced by Mondrian it's a Mondrian."
>
> There was a silence. I looked around me. (*Pictures* 32)

Lesser sees Jarrell as giving himself away in this moment, exposing the hard ironies behind his surface "naivety":

> In that admittedly contentious "I did not want them saved," and in the pretended innocence of the action in "I looked around me," Jarrell gives away his own technique. If this novel is "mainly a book of Randall's witty talk" (as Peter Taylor has said), then this passage in particular demonstrates how Jarrell was capable of assuming a mask of naivety to disguise a searing mask of mockery. And yet to call it a mask is not quite accurate either, for something of Jarrell's own face was in all of the other faces he assumed. He looked at children or at women and saw himself.[13]

The passage may show his strategic use of "masks" or alternative "covers" (which will be explored later in this chapter) but it fundamentally exposes his preparedness to introduce a dissident voice into a consensual discourse, substituting the "termagant" Gertrude's voice with that of his narrator's.

It is appropriate that the two most significant contributions on Pictures from an Institution to Jarrell's memorial volume should come from writers – Ransom and Shapiro – with radically different intellectual backgrounds and antagonistic aesthetic assumptions. Shapiro emphasizes the importance of the book's political and cultural positions:

> I am not reviewing the novel but I give it a central place in Jarrell's work as a kind of negative plate of the poetry. The empty intellectualism of America is pinpointed at Benton.[14]

Despite the modest claims he makes for his analysis, Shapiro's five pages of commentary provide a unique context for reading the novel:

> Jarrell's novel Pictures from an Institution is so brilliant that it defeats itself as fiction; it becomes a hornbook of avant-gardism, sophisticated to the point of philistinism. Jarrell is misleadingly philistine, say, about Modern Art of all varieties. It is because he is impatient with failure or imperfection or goofing around with the Muse. But this impatience of Jarrell's is also a veritable lust for perfection; and both the impatience and the philistinism are what you might call Texan. Jarrell was a good Texan in the way that President Johnson is a bad Texan.[15]

"Texan" represents Jarrell's in-and-outness of America as well as what Shapiro saw as his essentially benign liberal cussedness. While Shapiro acknowledges their shared experience of dogmatically progressive academies, he still insists upon the differences between himself and Jarrell; Shapiro was under no personal obligation to Jarrell, which allowed him to assume both a degree of objectivity and also released him from the atmosphere of competition that pervades the assessments of Jarrell's "friends" such as Lowell and Taylor. Shapiro was therefore not prepared to apologize for Jarrell's "cruelty" as a reviewer, but simultaneously he was prepared to regard Jarrell as an isolated maverick – even redneck – rather than place him within a hierarchical narrative of contemporaries and competitors. Furthermore, he would read Jarrell as a cultural phenomenon, and therefore could recognize that the novel was fundamentally political: "Benton – American higher education – is only a rarer kind of custom-built Cadillac."[16]

If Shapiro's approach is based on characterizing Jarrell in terms of his inconvenient exposition of institutions but also his determinedly problematic positioning of himself within – and without – culture, then Ransom's valorization of the novel is predicated in his commitment to tenets of decorum and grace:

> Is it not possible that our younger readers will not be made to attend sufficiently to his prose? I must insert some notice of what just might be his masterpiece: Pictures from an Institution. And I have elected to recall enough of it to prove that it really is a novel, having a plot and an outcome;

not merely a script for filming a lot of odds and ends. It is one of the merriest and wittiest things of our age, and Randall's metaphors are bold and almost innumerable. He equates his characters and their behaviour with stunning figures and figurations from literature.[17]

Ransom is at his most astute when describing the novel's resolution of itself within the fictional hypothesis; in doing so, he insists upon a nineteenth-century coincidence of plot and morality. This also pertains to Ransom's reading of Jarrell's characterizations. Following one character (Gertrude) through the novel, Ransom demonstrates how the narrative's progress acts upon her; from that he infers Jarrell's own position upon Gertrude as opposed to that of his narrator (or "reporter", as Ransom calls him). Refusing any automatic identity between author and narrator, Ransom instead insists that any such relationship has to be proven textually rather than complacently assumed, and therefore the reader must in turn experience "the change that must come over Gertrude, if Randall is the man we think he is":

> That is, if he wants his book to be more than *Pictures*; helpless as it seems, let it come to its point and be a Novel. . . . But to most intents and purposes she seems saved, insofar as our bright reporter's testimony permits us to judge. So the novel is concluded, if we read it well, without getting out of the one school year at Benton.[18]

Time is vital in Ransom's critique; he indicates how the novel is partially resolved in the first chapter when President Robbins and Gertrude are first seen bidding each other farewell at the end of Summer Term. Therefore, the framework of the plot is mapped onto the reader's consciousness before the narrating and describing process has begun. The beginning and the end are established; it only remains to "earn" them. Yet elsewhere, Jarrell tells us that the generics of the story must not imply a generic story-telling or a generically-confident reading response; once the basic hypothesis of "A Story" is manifest, the fictive content must overwhelm the formal construct:

> When we understand completely (or laugh completely, or feel competely a lyric empathy with the beings of the world), the carrying force of the narrative is dissipated: in fiction to understand everything is to get nowhere.
> (*A Sad Heart* 133)

So fiction requires both belief and bewilderment; Jarrell does not achieve this so much by mystification as by rhetorical hyperactivity and by making strenuous demands on a reader's belief. While Ransom's citing of the novel as Jarrell's "masterpiece" is predicated on its appearance to the critic as a unified work of art (rare in the Jarrell canon), the principle of construction in Pictures is the product of his loosely spatial but cumulative poetics. The novel's sentences are epigrammatic, defining their own monadic significance as "gags" and only then offering themselves to the whole. As such, the sentence is read simultaneously as a comic moment and a satiric event into a fabric of critique that is unconditioned by plot conventions; metonymy has been denied, no part may stand for the whole, Jarrell's tropes resist the hegemony of an overbearing formal structure. The novel is discursive, more than American metafiction, looking back to the eighteenth century and ahead to the post-modern Europeans such as Grass, Eco and Kundera. Jarrell himself admitted that the discursive dwarfed the narrative:

> I liked some of the narrative parts well enough to think, "No, Homer was right – it *is* better to have narrative with digressions rather than digressions with narrative." I'll remember next time. Man is the animal that likes narrative. (*Letters* 265)

Yet the novel is not formless; Jarrell employs a number of structures to frame the book's material, diffuse as it may be. Firstly, there is the time-frame, as indicated by Ransom; secondly, the momentum gained by the book's cumulative characterizations, which is most evident in the naming of chapters after particular characters. This technique was derived from Turgenev's Sketches from a Hunter's Album, (which Jarrell regularly included in his "lists" for summer reading that he urged on readers and contemporaries). Sketches, a series-novel that divides the world into portraits of village Hamlets and Quixotes while satirizing Tsarist bureaucracy; significantly, Jarrell described the Turgenev as "a whole greater and more endearing than even the best of its parts" (*A Sad Heart* 128). The chapter headings of Jarrell's novel ("The President, Mrs, and Derek Robbins", "The Whittakers and Gertrude", "Miss Batterson and Benton", "Constance and the Rosenbaums", "Gertrude and Sidney", "Art Night", "They All Go") suggest the influence of Turgenev, although the world of Benton College is populated almost entirely by Quixotes, with the spectral exception of the narrator; the institution itself is "a gratefully primitive" "delusion" (*Pictures* 66), where self-perpetuating fantasy has become the normalized real:

Sometimes you meet, coming down the leafy path along which you are walking, a man dressed as Napoleon; as he talks to you you look at him with distrust, pity, and amusement – carefully do not look, rather. But as the two of you walk along, and people come up with wallpaper designs full of Imperial bees, rashly offer their condolences on the death of the duc d'Enghien, ask for a son's appointment as Assistant Quartermaster-General of the army being sent to the Peninsula, you realize that it is not he but his whole society that has lost touch with reality. (*Pictures* 67)

Furthermore, the rural setting of Benton permitted pastoral versions of satire, carnival and romance. Benton is situated on the edge of "Mount Pleasant", a "little city", but the reader is encouraged to forget about it, as the institution itself has. Pastoral gives expression to the spaciousness and apparently eclectic "nature" of Benton, while also emphasizing its inert enclosure and hyperreality:

> But Benton was like this all year. In Spring the air was full of apple-blossoms, and Benton was like – like Spring everywhere, *but more so*, far, far more so; in Winter the air was full of snow-flakes, the red-cheeked snow-booted girls stood knee-deep in their pedestals of snow, and the frost-crystals of their windowpanes were not frost-crystals at all but cut-outs, of Matisse's last period, that had been scissored from the unused wedding-dress of Elaine the Lily Maid of Astolat; in Autumn all Benton was bunting, and the students walked under the branches of the fire – how was it that they walked among flames, and were not consumed? – and picked the apples the blossoms had grown into and threw the cores on the tennis courts, where Yang and Yin and the Rosenbaums' blue Persian played with them.
>
> But in Summer it was best of all; it was dark, cool, and green under the great trees, and in the hush of desolation (even the President was gone) the secretaries shot with the school's bows and arrows on the shady lawn – if Robin Hood and Johnny Appleseed and Uncle Wiggly had come up behind them and kept score for them, how could they have been surprised? The secretaries, the assistant to the Director of Admissions, the girl who sent out remembrance and admonition and entreaty to the alumnae: these sweet mice, all the old cats gone, yawned for bliss, danced for joy, and played seriously in Saturday afternoon round-robins with the mothers and fathers and vacationing college-children of Mount Pleasant, winning for themselves ash-trays and cans of tennis-balls and golden opinions; and behind the dark gold of their faces, Summer was turning gold. (*Pictures* 165)

The multi-faceted texture of Pictures is an attempt to represent divisively the unifying forces in the University; to insist implicitly on the responsibility of individual subjects to choose and prioritize from the diversity of material contained by the University, rather than passively adhering to the progressive programmes that make all resources and all intellectual choices equivalent. Jarrell's "A Girl in a Library" is "studying" "the *Official Rulebook / Of Basketball*", when she could have chosen Proust or Pushkin; the Library contains but does not enable, it neutralizes rather than empowers. Jarrell would express this comically in Pictures, whereas elsewhere – as in "The Intellectual in America" – he would express it polemically and aggravatedly:

> Living among them as he does, he can hardly avoid realizing that Americans are a likeable, even loveable people, possessing virtues some of which are rare in our time and some of which are rare in any time. But if he were to talk about the faults which accompany the virtues, he might say that the American, characteristically, thinks that nothing is hard or ought to be hard except business or sport; everything else must come of itself. (*A Sad Heart* 16)

America's popular pastimes and occupations were elitist and meritocratic; on the other hand, education and art were only tolerated to the extent that they fostered self-esteem and perpetuated consensus. Jarrell's method of response to this culture in Pictures grew up very much out of necessity; the cultural moment shaped the book, as well as giving it a particular anxiety and humanity. For Donoghue, "it is the residue of the war feeling which, turning sour, sets the cruel moments astir in Pictures from an Institution"[19]; the homogenization of culture represented by the progressive academies, and its soporific effect on students, had as a precedent the bland paternalism of the State during wartime that imposed an apathetic equivalence on servants, soldiers, consumers. However, in Pictures Jarrell's response to this was euphoric rather than complaining, and readers like Marianne Moore responded in kind:

> Pretensions to ominiscience and apathy toward moral insight – these contemporary hobgoblins are here laid bare by Mr. Jarrell. While busy at his mighty task how gay he seems; how gay are we as we look on! How can we ever thank him?[20]

The novel's relaxation of conventions, by establishing simultaneously the beginning and the end of the novel, licenses the use of minute structures of epigrams and jokes, but also signifies formal resistance to the orthodoxies of plot and gives emphasis to the immediate material effect of the novel. This represents a Bakhtinian travestying of orthodox narrative, with the novel's continual availability of carnivalesque laughter as a reponse to a bureaucratically banal world, and furthermore in the liberties Jarrell's narrator takes with the proprieties of first-person narrative. By speaking on behalf of the internal psychology of other characters and assuming their emotions, he explodes any claim the narrative may have on realism. The fiction is not so vital as the friction.

The novel's jokes are a continual reminder of the gap between writer, narrator, character and reader; insistence on the difficulty of reaching a reader, as Jarrell did in his poetry, was in fact a method of re-inforcing the gap, insisting on difficulty even while employing obvious language and relying on its "translucency"[21]. The reality of the world of Pictures from an Institution is in practice the world of rhetoric, as is made evident in Brian Vickers' unprecedented and invaluable chapter on Jarrell's novel in In Defence of Rhetoric. Vickers shows how rhetoric signals the complexity of human relations within the book and the institution, beginning with how Jarrell's choice of title

> puts his work outside the traditional connected narrative of a novel. . . . it could equally have been called *Characters from an Institution*, since most of the seven chapters are named after the actors.[22]

The seriality of the novel – in Turgenevian "Album" format – was implicit in Jarrell's initial publication of separate chapters in periodicals as Books I, III, IV and V; furthermore, a selection of epigrams from the novel was published in Vogue, again emphasizing its capacity for division into parts and potential for disassembly.

Most importantly, however, Vickers has indicated how the stylistics of the novel are designed persistently to remind the reader of Jarrell the rhetorician's presence:

> rhetoric is essentially a written, not a spoken art, and belongs less to the utterances of the characters in the novel than to the narrator's analysis, and judgement of them.[23]

Gertrude and Gottfried's eloquence is Jarrell's; ironically, however, Jarrell's narrator does not have a lot to say about *himself*. The familial complexes and intricacies of the groups in the novel – the Rosenbaums plus Constance, Gertrude plus Sidney, the

Whittakers, the Robbins – are not repeated in relation to the narrator and his wife. Their presence in the book is spectral, they are the most dislocated and asocial characters in the book, inwardly opinionated but outwardly reticent (with some exceptions). This is remarkable, because even though this is the first time that Jarrell used a first-person speaker with an occupation identical to himself, each character other than that speaker (and his partner) is treated with the same simultaneously compassionate sympathy and scornful distaste. It is as if they were less conventional but still recognizable further versions of that American poet teaching in a small Women's College. When the book ends with "They All Go" – with its shades of Hamlet – the effect is of scattering the remains, dispersing the phantasms of Jarrell that have been manifested.

The narrative positions in Pictures represent an assemblage of temporary projections of Randall Jarrell that do not cohere under the auspices of plot but coalesce as fantasy; as such, Flannery O'Connor could say of the book that "it was good Randall Jarrell but it wasn't good fiction"[24]. Žižek provides a language for understanding the spectral dimension to Pictures:

> Fantasy . . . . creates a multitude of "subject positions" among which the (observing, fantasizing) subject is free to float, to shift his identification from one to another. Here, talk about "multiple, dispersed subject positions" are to be strictly distinguished from the void that is the subject.[25]

Žižek's "void self" helps to explain the spectral figure of Jarrell's narrator, whom Ferguson sees as "basically an observer rather than a participant in life, a type seen with suspicion in American fiction from Brockden Brown to Fitzgerald".[26] The narrator is only ever outlined by means of partial resemblance, as when Gertrude says to him: "You remind me of someone" (*Pictures* 76); the reminiscent first name of Dr. Whittaker ("Jerrold"), the shared novelistic project of Jarrell and Gertrude, the merging of the narrator with all the characters (no matter how grotesque), the meeting of the narrator and John Whittaker at the book's end, the novel's many dialogues all represent the jouissant interactivity of the disparate aspects and activities of Jarrell's alterior "selves". Without their availability, the narrator comes uncomfortably close to confronting the "absent" real; "I was beginning to feel that I was a ghost and that the rest of the people of Benton were not even that" (*Pictures* 202). Furthermore, Žižek's description of the "void self"s perverse narration of itself helps to provide a context for the "plotlessness" of Pictures:

hysteria displays the linear narrative of origins (the neurotic's "family myth"), while in perversion the narrative remains stuck in the same place and repeats itself indefinitely – that is to say, the perverse narrative is unable to 'progress' properly.[27]

The radically schizoid separation of the self by Jarrell in Pictures contradicts the monotonously assertive selfism of Benton; its pseudo-therapeutic atmosphere entails collective paranoia, stating the academy's identity with total institutions: the army, the madhouse, the jail. The creator of the panopticon lingers over the Whittaker's house: "Jeremy Bentham's stuffed body would not have been ill at ease in their house." (*Pictures* 43), and Jarrell insists upon the grotesque abnormality of the collectively paranoid culture of "democratically responsible" individual development at Benton, where "normality of the intellectual environment . . . was rigorously maintained" *Pictures* 62):

> Education, to them, was a psychiatric process: the sign under which they conquered had embroidered at the bottom, in small letters, *Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?* – and half of them gave it its Babu paraphrase of *Can you wait upon a lunatic?* One expected them to refer to former students as psychoanalysts do: "Oh yes, she's an old analysand of mine." They felt that the mind was a delicate plant which, carefully nurtured, judiciously left alone, must inevitably adopt for itself even the slightest of their own beliefs.
>
> One Benton student, a girl noted for her breadth of reading and absence of co-operation, described things in a queer, exaggerated, plausible way. According to her, a professor at an ordinary school tells you "what's so", you admit that it is on examination, and what you really believe or come to believe has "that obscurity which is the privilege of young things". But at Benton, where education was as democratic as in "that book about America by that French writer – de, de – you know the one I mean"; she meant de Tocqueville; there at Benton they wanted you to really believe everything that they did, especially if they hadn't told you what it was. You gave them the facts, the opinions of authorities, what you hoped was their own opinion; but they replied, "That's not the point. What do you *yourself really believe?*" If it wasn't what your professors believed, you and they could go on searching for your real belief for ever – unless you stumbled at last upon that primal scene which is, by definition, at the root of anything . . ." (*Pictures* 63)

Literally, Benton is a cultural asylum. Significantly, when the narrator attempts to articulate his own position as a subject within it, the novel's comedy collapses into angst:

> I hated to come to anything so uncongenial, so un-American, as a theoretical conclusion – to anything so theoretical and conclusive as a theoretical conclusion. I felt (to put it in my own terms, which were more than fair to me) that it is better to entertain an idea than to take it home to live with you for the rest of your life. But I sat surrounded by the results of doing the opposite: the light I read by, the furnace that kept turning itself on and off to warm me, the rockets that at that moment were being tested to defend me from the rockets that were being tested to attack me, all were the benefits of coming to theoretical conclusions; I was a living – still living – contradiction. (*Pictures* 132)

Contradiction keeps him alive; a proactive and dissident contrariness is what is most vital to the novel, resisting the certainties of progressive presidents and moralising novelist-zealots such as Gertrude. Her mastering gaze is equivalent to the other master-narratives that demand – and receive – absolute credence from an audience:

> People looked up to her just as they look up to all those who know why everything is as it is: because of munitions makers, the Elders of Zion, agents of the Kremlin, Oedipus complexes, the class struggle, Adamic sin, *something*; these men can explain everything, and we cannot. (*Pictures* 142)

Critics have tended to look for substitutive structures for plot in Pictures, frequently taking analogues from the visual arts, theatre , and music in particular. Adapting the musical paradigm suggested by Jarrell's appropriation in the title of Moussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition, Angus described the novel as "a series of portraits, but they are interwoven, contrapuntal portraits, balanced and moving in relation to each other, as well as in relation to his several levels of development"; as such, "it is not architectural. It is musical in form and therefore obscure to readers who do not expect this".[28] Overlooking the ill-judged opposition of music and architecture by Angus, it must be stressed that "obscurity" was not a substantial issue in the reception of the novel; rather it was that the novel's potential interpretations were so manifest. Pictures could be interpreted as a *roman á clef*, a satire, a musical comedy, a one-man show, an exercise in serial portaiture, a "serious joke-book". No single art is sufficient, no analogue is dominant.

However, the most thorough description of a musical piece in the novel is revolved significant, particularly because it is the most widely-recognized piece by the "minor" composer, Rosenbaum, for whom "failure" was "the common condition of composers – of common composers" (*Pictures* 192). The piece is a tone poem called Lucifer in Starlight, and itself is an adaption of a "minor" poem of the same title by a "minor" poet, George Meredith.

> The devil was a yearning, Faustian, chromatic devil, but orchestrated in a style that made the orchestration of a Mahler scherzo sound wholesome and straightforward: each combination of instruments in which the devil's pride or lust or longing was expressed (he was a *very* affectionate devil, and there was no one like him in the universe for him to love) was a combination of the instruments wrong for it, the combination that could most ingeniously and conclusively disgrace it – and when you had seen that it was entirely disgraceful, and when it had seen that it was entirely disgraceful, it grew louder, it went higher; this happened to each in its turn; it was as if the devil's heart had been cut from his breast and turned inside out before you, and it did not mind that any more than it minded anything else, it laughed at itself without meaning its laughter, and in complacent, yearning, abject shamelessness, went on beating. Then the stars came in.
>
> They were the brain of heaven, but they made no sense. They moved to a thin, muted, march-like succession of notes – it was not a tune exactly – that went around and around and around in eerie, mechanical, incomprehensible infinitude; you felt that you were overhearing the sound of something that had gone on a long time, seeming to change sometimes but changeless, a machine that as it kept running made little sounds that – the sounds were as small and far-off and inhuman as they had been in the beginning, but their repetition had come to seem to you, almost, a kind of sense; come to seem to you, almost – but the piece was over. (*Pictures* 193)

Disgrace, anachronism, shamelessness, yearning, complacent; this could read as a litany of "embarrassing" Jarrellianisms, as could the ultimate refusal of Rosenbaum's piece to reveal "a kind of sense". In the context of music, Rosenbaum's piece appears as the antithesis of the harmonious structure that Angus attempts to impose onto Pictures. In Noise: The Political Economy Of Music, Attali argues that "excess of order (harmonic) entails pseudodisorder".[29] Rosenbaum's music creates pseudodisorder so as to expose the harmonic excesses of the institutional forms of music, but in doing so has consigned himself to the periphery of culture; his ludic

and wilful refusal of assimilation is identical to Jarrell's indeterminate and unresolved position in university discourse. Attali argues that the "musician, like music, is ambiguous":

> He plays a double game. He is simultaneously *musicus* and *cantor*, reproducer and prophet. If an outcast, he sees society in a political light. If accepted he is its historian, the reflection of its deepest values. He speaks of society and he speaks against it.[30]

Aspiring to be historians, Rosenbaum and Jarrell are instead outcasts, articulating their dislocation within culture through dissonance and comedy; yet the noise they create is not independent, but relative to the repetitive patterns of the systems (musical, bureaucratic, academic, political) with which they are engaged.

Angus implies that the musical structure of the novel is exactly analogous to the thematic content of the novel; however, music is relativised along with other products of culture according to how it is disseminated by the institution. As such, the narrator's regard for Rosenbaum is expressed combatively, motivated by his desire to resist perversely conventions of cultural and institutional hierarchy:

> He had once spent a year and a half recording the songs of the inhabitants of the Gulf of Papua, and was still admired by anthropologists, who would say when you mentioned his name: "Oh yes, the friend of Malinowski." (I said to one of them, when he happened to mention Malinowski, "Oh yes, the friend of Rosenbaum"; he looked at me as though I was insane.) (*Pictures* 103)

The tendency of critics to insist upon a dominant formal trope in the novel has also been evident in their insistence upon its supposedly overt conservatism:

> Jarrell's major argument in Pictures is that the family, an internally conservative institution, is our only vehicle to escape the uniformity that pervades the culture.[31]

However, it is questionable whether Jarrell plans a lesson for American culture in Pictures to the extent of asking for the uniformity of family values to replace the uniformity of the academy. Jarrell is not prescriptive in the novel; perhaps this was due to an innate fear of failure, but it is also evidence of Jarrell's decision to place confidence in the ability of human imagination to ignore the confinement of the institution and produce something worthwhile and unorthodox anyway. At the

novel's end the apparently talentless sculpture-teacher has produced a semi-resolved masterpiece; even the hapless creative writing student, Sylvia Mooney, shows a certain kind of transgressive genius with her Kafka-inverting story of a bug who turns into a man.

All institutions in the novel – whether marital, familial, or educational – are defined by the egomaniacs or monomaniacs who populate them, whatever their liberal or conservative credentials. The "family" that supposedly exists as a benign model for "escape" at the end of the book – The Rosenbaums and Constance – is an expedient community of adult people whose needs are reflected in one another. It is more a three-way marriage of existential convenience than a "family"; it critiques the mythicized family of the 1950s, replacing improvised human relationships for institutionalized relationships. Individuals have all been incorporated into relationships at the book's end, but none of those relationships are identical. Indeed, the more "conventional" and conservative families in the novel – such as the Whittakers (2.2 children) and the Robbins (2.1) – are grotesque; the only children in the novel are represented as the dislocated products of dysfunctional families that are institutionally exemplary:

> In my whole life I had known only two children who drew snakes, John (Whittaker) and Derek Robbins; both were Benton children. Sometimes I wondered uneasily about this, and wanted to ask other parents at Benton whether their children drew snakes. (*Pictures* 45)

Flynn sees Pictures as heralding "a growing and highly polemical conservatism on Jarrell's part"[32], particularly with regard to education. Flynn alleges that Jarrell's essential argument is that "Benton seems to encourage perpetual adolescence, an arrested state of development that Jarrell became painfully aware of during the war".[33] Yet for all this emphasis on Jarrell's perceived conservatism, he is not an Allan Bloom, a cultural nostalgist, but instead wanted to meet the canon contentiously; Jarrell's view of education was not a simply nostalgic veneration of old methodologies and old texts. Instead, he was negatively aware of the exclusivity of contemporary educational practices that had replaced humanist values of discretion and difference with avowedly progressive ones of equivalence and therapy. Even the subtitle of Jarrell's supposedly arch-conservative "The Schools of Yesteryear: A One-Sided Dialogue" indicates that Jarrell's complaint is parodic rather than a thorough lament; despite that, the piece has been regarded as a sputnik-affected polemic along the lines of Admiral Hyman Rickover's "Why Johnny Can't Read – and What You Can Do About It", an embarrassment to critics such as Quinn

who argued that it "might better have been omitted" from A Sad Heart at the Supermarket.[34] In Pictures, which pre-dates the first successful sputnik-flight by three years, the Bloom role is fulfilled by the arch-canonist, professional Graecophile, and self-styled "democrat" Daudier: "Daudier spoke to us for – some years, we felt. It was the speech a vain average would make to an audience of means." (*Pictures* 178) If anything, Daudier elicits the novel's most stringent satire:

> He wasn't a Catholic, just a fellow traveller, but he did the Church more good than half a dozen ordinary *monsignori*. He couldn't talk for five minutes without mentioning Aquinas – Aquinas, or Thomas Jefferson. He would say it was sad how rusty your Greek got when you'd been out of college as long as he had; but if he read it a tenth as much as he talked about it, I don't see how his Greek could have got rusty. (I think it must have got worn away with use, the way a beaver's teeth do.) And he loved to read the *Divine Comedy* aloud to you, especially if you didn't know Italian; he would translate it to you as he went along. And he could tell you what Aristotle thought about *anything*. He was a liberal education in himself – a conservative one, I mean. (*Pictures* 181)

Jarrell's views on education are as paradoxical and contradictory as his views on anything else. He liked to stress his separation from professional academia – "I'm glad I'm not a professor but teach in a college"(*Letters* 300) – a view further propagated by Mary Jarrell:

> Randall didn't join things, unless you count Phi Beta Kappa, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and the Army. If he "had a hard time knowing what to do at parties", it was even worse at meetings. He went when he had to, protesting innocently, "The trouble is, there's nothing *to do*."[35]

Nevertheless, he became heavily involved in university politics several times, initially as a protesting student-leader at the time of Ransom's departure from Kenyon, but also later as a "non-professor" as Robert Watson indicated:

> Most writers who teach are reluctant to serve on university committees, because they wish to protect their writing time. Randall, though, was very conscientious about both committee meetings and faculty meetings. He served twice in Greensboro as chairman of a committee to revise the freshman and sophomore English courses. He turned his committee meetings into

> lectures on books he thought all students should know – or diatribes against works he detested: he hated *Tom Jones*, for instance, a novel which annoyingly crept back onto the syllabus whenever he was not on the committee.[36]

Jarrell's paradox is repeated in his narrator, when at the novel's end he recognizes his complicity with the institution from which he has finally managed to extract himself:

> I worked hard for the rest of the afternoon: I threw away and away and threw away, because after all – as I told myself to make things go faster – the part of Benton that had belonged to me I could not get rid of by throwing away; and Benton mumbled to me, stirring a last time in its sleep, that now there would be an empty place in the puzzle, and that it would be hard to find an uncomfortable one that would sit in it so comfortably as I. (*Pictures* 206-207)

This relativization of the novel's dissident parts (into the narrator's fatalistic acceptance that his resistance to Benton was in fact a constituent part of the institutional paradigm) could also be construed as a Jarrellian moment of "giving up at the end", the exhaustion of his faculties disguised as a pact-making *detente*.

Conventionally, it could be argued that in preference to the academic itineracy of some of his contemporaries, Jarrell preferred the redoubtable assurance of a North Carolinian retreat, as it meant he did not have to engage with "the world". On the other hand, it could be said that a small college suited Jarrell in that he could influence syllabus and programmes; furthermore, he could avoid the anonymity that evidently terrified him, and he could make the Marxist equation between liberation in work and liberation from work. Whereas Jeffrey Meyers claimed that Jarrell "was too intelligent and outspoken to get a permanent position at a first-rate university",[37] it is a likelier scenario that Jarrell chose the micro-politics of Greensboro out of a desire for empowerment, rather than as a martyr at the hands of the "first-rate universities".

What Ferguson describes as Jarrell's typically "conservative reproaches against progressive education" need to be seen as neither typical or conservative, but as highly subjective responses against both progressive and conservative education.[38] To an extent, Jarrell collapsed the distinction between them by adopting an adversarial stance towards the ideologization of education in general. This position was the product of Jarrell's relativistic and pessimistic view of the university and its significance in American culture; Benton is absurd and idiotic because it pretends to

be at the centre of the American project, just as Daudier absurdly pretends to be the democratic artist-critic incarnate.

Jarrell's view of the universities during World War Two did not change radically afterwards:

> The universities have neither the power nor the inclination to "transform capitalist society", of which they are a relatively weak but ultimately assenting segment. (*Letters* 143)

The dynamic space for Jarrell was not the University, but the particular environments of its classrooms – Jarrell was often quoted as saying, "I'm crazy about teaching. If I were a rich man, I'd pay to teach"(*Letters* 435). His fetishization of the act of teaching is significant, as in its performance he could adopt the mediatory position that he aspired towards in his writing without having to transgress professional or technical conventions of decorum or judgement. Furthermore, prioritizing teaching could permit institutional irresponsibility; in Pictures, the exceptional classes of Gertrude and her predecessor Manny Gumbiner are remarked:

> If Gertrude had made her writing students take off all of their clothes, pile them on the table with the chairs, and then had had them burn the next classroom's Spanish teacher on the pile, the old students would have only said to the new, with a smile: "You should have been in *Manny's* class." (*Pictures* 61)

> "I've known her quite a long time. Is her class fun for you?"
>
> "*Fun?*" she said. "It's just out of this world! I've never *had* a teacher like her – not the least bit like her." (*Pictures* 151)

Teaching could be used to minimize the extent to which the institution impinged upon work, and the classroom could become a space identified with self-determination as a manifestation of the will rather than an article of dogma; for Jarrell, the fundamental and necessary irony of teaching was that you can teach something that you only choose for yourself. Similarly, literature could be received with a political or humanitarian emphasis, but ought not to be institutionally pre-determined by such an emphasis:

> Our political or humanitarian interests make us wish to make our poetry accessible to large groups; it is better to try to make the groups accessible to

the poetry, to translate the interests into political or humanitarian activity. (*Third Book* 149)

In Jarrell's terms, the teaching, studying and reception of literature in the classroom ought to remain a matter of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, the mediation of knowledge. In "orthodox" teaching at Benton in the novel, examinations are forbidden but every other bureaucratic and therapeutic tool is employed:

> The faculty of Benton, the true faculty, felt that if Benton were gone it would no longer be possible to become educated. They were a little awed by this, and cast their eyes down, but it was a truth that, in the end, they looked seriously at. They felt, toward, say, Oxford, as the kinder members of the Salvation Army used to feel toward the Established Church: they would have been forgiving except for all the harm it did without meaning to. They said, over and over: *What is the good of learning about Spinoza if you do not learn about life?* (And this is true: how much better it would be if we could teach, as we teach Spinoza, life!) They had heard intelligent people say, with monotonous regularity, that one gets more out of one's reading and conversation at college than one gets from college itself. Benton decided, with naked logic: Why not let that reading and conversation be college, and let students do the ordinary classwork on the side? – if they felt that they needed to; for some of it might profitably be disregarded, all that part that is, in President Robbins' phrase, *boring*. So the students' conversation and reading and "extra-curricular cultural activities" and decisions about Life were made, as much as possible, the curriculum through which the teachers of Benton shepherded the students of Benton, biting at their heels and putting attractive haystacks before their even more attractive noses: they called this "allowing the student to use his own individual initiative". There was more individual initiative of this kind at Benton than there was in Calvin's Geneva. (*Pictures* 64-65)

Individuality replaces subjectivity, belief replaces knowledge: "there at Benton they wanted you really to believe everything that they did, especially if they hadn't told you what it was" (*Pictures* 63). Jarrell indicts the implicit masochism of Benton's demand upon students to evolve "independently" but also according to the democratic rationale of the college:

> Many a girl, about to deliver to one of her teachers a final report on a year's not quite completed project, had wanted to cry out like a child: "Whip me, whip me, Mother, just don't be Reasonable!" (*Pictures* 64)

The culture of nurture turns out to be a culture of torture; more than a delusion or a dream, Benton is a trauma:

> The teachers of Benton were *very* grown up. To work as hard as they worked, they had to be. They had a half-hour conference once a week with each of their students – they conducted them over the *pons asinorum* one by one; they taught a couple of long classes, each was the adviser – they had a stranger name for it – of a number of girls, and the girls were encouraged to have problems (one famous student had so many that her adviser said to her at last, *If I were you I'd commit suicide*; but he was not one of the real faculty); instead of writing down grades for the students they wrote out, for the work of each girl in each class, analyses, protocols, brochures; they were expected to enter into the political and and social and cultural life of the community, all the group activities of the school; and there were reports, studies, reorganizations, plays, lectures, clubs, committees, committees – ah, how they searched each other's souls! (*Pictures* 66)

The intrusiveness of the institution is interpretable as surveillance and investigation (key tropes of the Cold War), and Benton is a vivid example of institutional efforts to impose "hygiene"; encouraging the girls to have problems is the institutional culture's mode of asserting its vitality and necessity, and indicates that the individual students are perceived as no more than symptoms. In this context, as Rosenbaum puts it: "knowledge, even if it is power, is still no consolation" (*Pictures* 90).

In The College Novel in America, Lyons said that "like so many of the novels which are critical of an educational doctrine, Pictures from an Institution does not pretend to offer an alternative course".[39] This "failure" represents the novel's conflicted politics, and also prepares for the tensions of A Sad Heart at the Supermarket eight years later in 1962, when Jarrell would say through one of his alter-egos, the Arnoldian Uncle Wardsworth:

> about school-buildings, health, lunches, civic responsibility, kindness, good humour, spontaneity, we have nothing to learn from the schools of the past; but about reading, with pleasure and understanding, the best that has been

thought and said in the world – about that we have much to learn. (*A Sad Heart* 56-57)

The machinery of institutions was as beneficent as it was sophisticated; however, its immaculate forms and instruments were devices for reducing and containing content and practice. The allusiveness and hyperactive content of Jarrell's novel does not serve to rebuke simply the hypocrisies of conservatives or the tyrannies of progressives; it is more an exercise in the impossible, the last book that would be taught in a college such as Benton.

In "A Sad Heart at the Supermarket", Jarrell wrote that "Our age might be defined as the age in which real parody became impossible, since any parody had already been duplicated, or parodied, in earnest" (*A Sad Heart* 68-69). Pictures from an Institution is impossible in that sense, registering the moment when parody becomes the real and manifesting the effect of that moment in writing that replaces empiricist structures of narrative and "belief" with immediately "artificial" language that requires perpetual double-take and double-thinking as a response. The resistance to docile "progress" in the novel was Jarrell's "effort to restore a human nature to Academe's otherwise denatured academic types".[40]

Adopting Wittgenstein's terminology from the epigraph to this chapter, the effect of Pictures "is not in the distance he travels but perhaps only in the heat he generates in overcoming friction". It is a novel with a physics rather than a generic identity, in which the atomic self of the satirist-parodist has been exploded into energetic fractions, undermining the explicit stability of the presumably controlled environment of the laboratory-university; the book's only "product" is the sense of residual waste expressed by the book's narrator, an exhaustion that suggests the fulfilment of desire, rather than its negation. The "humanity" of Pictures from an Institution exists in its commitment to activity that is manifestly complex, evidently comic, and just as obviously pointless.

Despite the modest claims Jarrell made for it, Pictures is an unrepeated experiment in being Jarrellian; he had derived a form within which he could express himself both variously and intensively, negotiating between Europe and America, criticizing the institutionalization of American intellectual life (as if from the outside) while admitting and demonstrating his own participation within institutions. Yet Jarrell never chose to repeat the experiment of Pictures, although he never stopped looking to other genres, topics and tropics for an equally enabling project; this does not suggest contempt for his achievement, but a characteristic reluctance to be defined by a single role. In Jarrell's perversion of a literary career, the only reason to write a novel was to never do so again.

Chapter Four. Steam on the Magnifying Glass: Jarrell and the Visual Arts

> I've just been writing, mostly on the aeroplane coming home from Texas, a poem about a Picasso picture. It's all too inspired; most of it, that is, just comes, and it isn't enough like my regular way of writing for me to know whether it's good; when I go along with the poem it all feels wonderful, and when I don't even know whether it will even be a mediocre poem. All in all, I'm so overjoyed to be writing a poem that I don't care. (*Letters* 420-421)

Pictures from an Institution is a one-off, a *sui generis* work that Jarrell devised at a time when he wasn't writing poetry as prolifically as he had during and immediately after the war. In other periods of poetic inability, he turned towards the visual arts as a resource. His three major poems on specific works of art ("The Knight, Death and the Devil", "The Bronze David of Donatello", "The Old and the New Masters") represent particularly dynamic instances in the chronology of the Jarrell canon. He is not unique among American poets in drawing upon painting and sculpture, and specifically European painting and sculpture, to poeticize his aesthesis. William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens and Ezra Pound spring immediately to mind, then get knocked over in the rush of a dozen others; as Heffernan has written, "the production of ekphrastic poetry has become nothing less than a boom".[1] However, no American poet more than Jarrell indicates quite so passionate and fastidious an involvement with the implicit politics of individual works of European art and the significance of their reproduction, representation and reception by America.

Critics have tended to regard this "art poetry" as being simply indicative of Jarrell's perceived Europhilia. M.L. Rosenthal has described how Jarrell "tried to make a European of himself, to change over from a bright young American southerner to a sort of German-Austrian-Jewish refugee of the spirit".[2] However, the extent of Jarrell's "southern-ness" is open to conjecture, and so is the notion of him as an elective European. Indeed, Jarrell liked to claim that he learned to talk (and more) in California.[3] Superficially, the sensibility expressed and addressed in the poems about art may be regarded as being very much American, and Jarrell could be regarded as one of the post-war American poets that Robert von Hallberg has described as " self-conscious tourists, with a mission" to take over curatorial responsibility for the culture of the West:

> At the end of World War II, Americans were extraordinarily united. The national spirit had every reason to be high, for Americans had come out of

> severe economic depression to accomplish what the Europeans had plainly failed to achieve – the defeat of fascism. Traditionally, Europeans had figured in American thought as guardians of the past; after the war America took over the military guardianship of Europe, and with it came a challenge: could Americans measure up culturally as well as they had militarily? We answered this challenge by assuming the outward signs of European tradition, the way one might undertake the administration of a museum – vigorously, ambitiously. Americans suddenly recognized a new relationship not just to their own past but to the entire history of the West.[4]

A powerful argument, but it must be stressed in advance that Jarrell's poems do not necessarily express the robust exuberance or presumptive authority that von Hallberg attests to. His letters in wartime continually express reservations about the war he was participant in, and in the post-war period he did not indulge in any complacent triumphalism; rather, quite the opposite, as in the post-war period he engaged more than ever with both German and Russian writers of the past, writing "about the enemy" and arousing suspicions as to his "unAmericanness". His poems on art reflect the anxiety that America, having apparently "resolved" one global conflict, was in the process of becoming the protagonist of the Cold War; "The Old and the New Masters"(*CP* 332) makes this particularly explicit. The poems on art do not therefore represent an American colonization of the products of European tradition, rather Jarrell views the spoils of war with a radical ambivalence.

It must also be kept in mind that the Dürer and Donatello poems are not "tourist" poems in as much as Jarrell instigated them from reproductions of art-works in books, rather than from trips to galleries. One poem in Jarrell's last book, The Lost World (1965) does admittedly describe – albeit whimsically – such "tourism". "In Galleries" compares gallery guards in Italy and America, and the Italian is predictably idealised at the expense of his American counterpart. The latter "notices when someone touches something/ And tells him not to"(*CP* 298), whereas the Italian "Cajoles you back to the Ludovisi Throne/ To show you the side people forget to look at"(*CP* 298):

> You say *Bellissima!*
> *Bellissima!* and give him his own rapt,
> Dumb, human smile, convinced he guards
> A miracle. Leaving, you hand the man
> A quarter's worth of nickel and aluminum. (*CP* 298)

Jarrell makes a very guilty tourist. His self-conscious tipping of the guard indicates his discomfort in adopting the role of patron, whose cultural influence is merely material. At the same time, he regards this cultural exchange as inevitable and unalterable.

In the poems on specific paintings and sculptures, Jarrell's declared interest was often in the art-works themselves – or their reproductions – as they impacted upon his eye on his terms, rather than their institutional context. Indeed, he often found his experience of European galleries to be disappointing; after a visit in 1963 to the National Gallery in London, he wrote to his publisher Michael di Capua: "I couldn't believe it, but the Mantegna *Agony in the Garden* is better in black and white reproduction than in reality" (*Letters* 474). This comment does not indicate an awed reverence for the originality or aura of the work. It exhibits rather a pragmatic interest in how art is received by its viewer and manifests Jarrell's de-institutionalizing and relativizing intelligence in its most habitual form, making his mediation of the art-work his poetic theme. It is important to recognize that Jarrell is actively resisting the contemporary conventions of the ekphrastic poem, in that he refuses to permit poetic or narrative space to the art-work's museum-setting; for Heffernan, the museum is the centre of modern ekphrasis, "the shrine where all poets worship in a secular age":

> Synecdochically, the museum signifies all the institutions that select, circulate, reproduce, display, and explain works of visual art, all the institutions that inform and regulate our experience of it – largely by putting it into words.[5]

The following analysis of Jarrell's poems on European art will attempt to understand the shifts in emphasis and praxis as Jarrell worked at his theory of response; rejecting the limited economy of the museum-context, Jarrell sought instead to explore what Mitchell has described as "the war-torn border between image and text"[6], interacting with the conflicting media to exhibit his refusal of a resolved and unproblematic self. For all their attention to detail and apparent deference to the art-works they describe, Jarrell's writing is committed to the obscuring of anything like a definitive response to them; as will be seen in "The Old and the New Masters", Jarrell's profoundest objection was to the tendency of poets such as Auden to utilize the art-work as a means of generalizing about existence. Jarrell attempts to imply that there is a residual indescribability about art, an ability to show experience without necessarily interpreting it. Yet again, such a commitment by Jarrell might open him to criticisms of having a quiescent attitude towards art to match his awed silence before Whitman.

However, behind the apparently reactionary nebulousness of Jarrell's attitude, there are radical energies committed to the idea that an unresolved and problematic art-work is still a useful art-work, and that the trophyist and contained economy of the museum can still be undermined by the messy practice of subjectivity.

I. "The Knight, Death and the Devil"

Albrecht Dürer's engraving, The Knight, Death and the Devil (see Appendix One), does not at first appear to be a particularly startling or inspired subject for a post-war American poet. The work has a long history of poetic and philosophical treatments: among them are writings by Nietzsche, Heidegger, D'Annunzio and perhaps most significantly for Jarrell, Rilke. However, Jarrell regarded his own version as one of his most necessary and considerable poems, placing it strategically as the third poem in the first section of his Selected Poems (1957), "Lives". He had first collected it in The Seven-League Crutches (1951) , the volume in which Jarrell appeared definitively to depart from the war-as-dream-narrative poetry of Blood for a Stranger (1942), Little Friend, Little Friend (1945), and Losses (1948). The Seven-League Crutches marks both the ultimate manifestation of Jarrell's war-analysis and the influence of his first actual experience of Europe; he had taught at the Salzburg Seminar in American Civilization in the summer of 1948. Jarrell's version of Dürer's knight signifies an American intervention into what was previously a privileged European tradition of argument and interpretation. As such, it could indicate the post-war prosperity – alluded to by von Hallberg – that confidenced such an intervention. Europe had the culture, but America was its arbiter and patron.

Jarrell's poem first appeared in the Nation on June 16 1951, and was quickly reprinted by the periodical Art News in November of the same year, with a reproduction of Dürer's engraving on the facing page. His cultural imperative was expressly to direct the reader towards the picture; in his note to the poem in Selected Poems, he called it "a description of Dürer's engraving"(*CP* 4), adding that "the reader might enjoy comparing the details of the poem with those of the picture". The term "description" implies a complaisant relationship between text and art-work, in which the poet is deliberately looking not to challenge the picture's perceived/inherited meaning, curatorship rather than authorship. Readings of Jarrell's poem have therefore tended to echo the most traditional and canonical interpretation of Dürer's engraving; that is of the knight as an emblem of heroic Christian determination – the *miles christianus* – or as a figure of humanist confidence in the integrity of the individual consciousness. The engraving has been read as a spiritual

self-portrait of Dürer, countering the immense ennui and cultural malaise of his in Melancolia I. Accordingly, Karl Malkoff saw Jarrell's poem as the delineation of an archetype of the humanist artist that was equally relevant to post-war American poets and Renaissance men: "the theme is the assertion of the self in the face of its ultimate – and in this case impending – dissolution".[7] Suzanne Ferguson referred to the "classically idealized equestrian figure" of the knight and what presumably are the equally classical "grotesque subsidiary figures" in a parody of the knight-squire relationship.[8] It is apparently clear to these critics why Jarrell wanted to participate in such an established mimetic discourse between Dürer's engraving and the mind of the writer or ideologue; as an aspirant proto-European he wished to establish an American response to Dürer that could nevertheless be regarded as exemplary by Europeans. A diplomatic mission, therefore, and a stage in the tutelage of post-war America, to learn the ways of art that was now America's curatorial responsibility.

Complaisance, mimesis, description: it does not sound like a particularly promising basis for a dynamic text. If Jarrell is merely "describing", that implies he is attempting to encapsulate the iconic resilience of the engraving without challenging or invoking its prescriptive basis in ideology. Most critics have based their readings of Jarrell's poem on the assumption that the art-work's perceived Christian-humanist ideology is indivorcible from its visual context. They also presume that Jarrell was party to the same assumption. However, if Jarrell's imperative was only to direct the reader to become a viewer, to look away from the poem to the engraving, then all the "pleasure" in the aesthetic relationship is in the viewing of the implicitly superior cultural artefact – the picture – and the poem is at best a vessel through which to express a cultural cringe. Under these terms, the poet is less of a tourist (which at least carries connotations of free choice and vacation) and more of a tour guide, a low-paid didact in the service of the heritage industry. In these terms, the poem is a guidebook that doesn't even offer a pictorial reproduction, for the simple accumulation of words may at best only become its own pictorial body (as in concrete poetry), and the poem cannot "become" Dürer's picture. However, what words can do with an engraving or painting is offer interpretative versions of the verbal meaning it may be communicating. The process of "writing" paintings in poetry is a relativist process, and has a unique discourse that is quite separate from that of art criticism; or poetry criticism, for that matter.

Jarrell begins "The Knight, Death and the Devil" with three compounds: "Cowhorn-crowned, shockheaded, cornshuck-bearded,/ Death is a scarecrow – his death's-head a teetotum/ That tilts up toward man confidentially" (*CP* 21). Already Jarrell has created a textual complex that puts his poetic language under great strain in order to approximate with violent immediacy what he sees in the engraving. The

they are delineated and characterized but retain more ambiguity and immanence than they do with Jarrell. Jarrell gives us "Death, the Devil and the Knight", although this is not necessarily to say that he is creating a narrative which promotes overwhelmingly Death and the Devil at the Knight's expense. Chronological priority need not imply moral or imaginative priority. In effect, Jarrell jeopardizes the rational hierarchy of Dürer's work to dismantle it as a self-explanatory icon by minimizing the interdependency of the figures, instead making a series of imaginative connections – or more accurately, reactions – to each of them in turn.

Significantly Jarrell's knight is not described so much in terms of "himself" as in the context of his trophies: his armour, decorated lance, castle, dog and horse: "So, companioned so, the knight moves through this world" (*CP* 21). Death and the Devil are portrayals of his own transubstantiation which he refuses to countenance:

> He listens in assurance, has no glance
> To spare for them, but looks past steadily
> At—at—
> a man's look completes itself. (*CP* 22)

The tunnel vision of the knight is perhaps a steadfast humanist gesture, as most critics have suggested, but it is also suggestive of the paradox of the *miles christianus*; as much mercenary and solipsist as he is hero, trapped within the economy of his materiality. Under the terms of any teleology, but particularly Christianity, the crusader is an anomaly; Jarrell does not labour to find a code with which to justify him. He relies on the perceived "wholeness" of the figure of the knight as Dürer engraved him: "A man's look completes itself." However, the Devil and Death are part of the same man, or at least representations of him, "set up outside of him". Jarrell has the Knight look past these representations, dismissing them as betrayals by the imagination:

> The death of his own flesh, set up outside of him;
> The flesh of his own soul, set up outside of him—
> Death and the devil, what are these to him?
> His being accuses him—and yet his face is firm
> In resolution, in absolute persistence;
> The folds of smiling do for steadiness;
> The face is its own fate—*a man does what he must*—
> And the body underneath it says: *I am.* (*CP* 22)

Having alerted us to the act of seeing, and the ability of the eye to exclude as much as it may encompass, Jarrell has withdrawn from the world of the work and its reception. He has approached that of the artist-engraver, commenting on the efficacy of certain technical details in communicating meaning: "The folds of smiling do for steadiness" (*CP* 22). Yet the use of "do for" alludes to the act of investing iconic significance as an arbitrary one, a gesture of the artist that comes from generic rather than aesthetic conviction.

There are several "looks" in this poem: from the poet's eye of Jarrell, the artist's eye of Dürer, the viewer/reader's eye (engaged with both text and engraving), and the eyes of Knight, Death and Devil. An interpretation of the poem is guided by experience of the interplay between these lines of sight, extending the complex of representation beyond a simple problem of relating one artefact to another. Gazes contest with each other for control; Jarrell's relativistic imagination can only see things in conjunction or in series. He can only present an illusion of isolation.

Jarrell's note for "The Knight, Death and the Devil" in Selected Poems invites his reader to note the dissimilarities between text and picture as much as the coincidences. If the only function of the poem is to turn reader into beholder, then Jarrell would be writing himself into irrelevance. Jarrell does not seek the tangential or abstract possibilities of the art-work, as did Stevens or Pound; indeed, he chose to write about a picture that refused abstraction, a work so fastidiously detailed and meticulously constructed that he also chose to study it with a magnifying glass. If anything, he aspired towards an intensification of the sense of the art-work by rendering a highly individual and partial version of the meaning of a selection of its details. Yet ironically, to convey the work he had to disorder, disturb and fragment it. Indeed, it is interesting to notice the detail Jarrell chooses to omit, particularly in the description of the Knight. There is none of the exactness and angularity that enables Dürer to establish his canon of proportions; the engraving keeps its beholders where they are, forcing them into being an ideal audience. The poem may not have a similar confidence in an ideal beholder, and has to demand covertly the attention of the reader by implicitly problematizing the proportionality and balance of Dürer's work. Jarrell's simultaneous obsession with and aversion to the knight finds expression in Deleuze and Parnet's analysis of the "knight of faith" as "no more than an abstract line, a pure movement difficult to discover; he never begins, but takes up things in the middle; he is always in the middle".[9] Like the knight, Jarrell aspires towards the energy of his mediation to avoid the determinacy of identifying himself or defining himself in relation to the picture.

Predictably, Howard Nemerov grouped Jarrell's poem along with John Berryman's "Winter Journey" and Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts", both of which were derived from paintings by Breughel:

> It is not, certainly, that the poems speak about the paintings they refer to; no, for the poems offer relatively bare and selective descriptions . . . . which sometimes hardly serve to identify the paintings, and where the poet was lucky his poem will speak the silence of the painting; it will say nothing more than: It is so, it is as it is. The poem, too, when it works, is a concentrated shape illuminated by an energy from within; its opinions do not matter, but it matters. Here, too, he observes, all that happens happens while the poem, like the painting, lies flat on a plane surface, the surface of the page.[10]

The agenda of poetry taking visual art as its subject is still poetry's, whatever Jarrell may assert. "The Knight, Death and the Devil" is more than a description, or a translation of one medium into another. Jarrell puts extreme pressure on his language not to prove the equivalence of poetic and visual art but to manifest the indeterminacy and difficulty of their relationship. At times he goes towards the oblique and abstract, only to return towards a density of descriptive language that communicates not by syntactical logic but by a rough and paradoxical conjoining of weight and hyperactivity.

Jarrell's poem analyzes the necessary weakness of representing art through poetry; it ends with two italicized mottoes that may be read as inadequate, even bathetic: "*a man does what he must*", "*I am*" (*CP* 22). What you say is the least that you can say. Jarrell's version of the Knight is closer to John Crowe Ransom's utterly mortal "Captain Carpenter" than to Nietzsche or Rilke's heroic responses to what seemed to them an *übermensch*. The determination of Jarrell's knight is rooted in the certainty of his death; he is irrepressibly mortal. As such, "The Knight, Death and the Devil" is an appropriate culmination of sorts to Jarrell's poetry of war. Jarrell is aware of the attraction of the Knight's heroic figure but is not seduced altogether; the distinctly unheroic world war that he had himself just served in made that inevitable. Jarrell's poem is encased in the borrowed armour of language, violently-wrought to preserve idiotically a humanist code that the poet can only endorse irrationally; significantly, if the knight is looking straight ahead then Jarrell is looking askance, unsure whether he is impressed or appalled.

The Knight comes out of the same consciousness that is represented in Jarrell's war poems; one of loss, amoral futility and impotent innocence. The figure of a dying airman in one of those war poems, "Siegfried" (*CP* 149), encased in his own

armour-plating of aircraft fuselage and glass, reveals the "essence" of what was to become Jarrell's knight:

> Yet inside the infallible, invulnerable
> Machines, the skies of steel, glass, cartridges,
> Duties, responsibilities, and—surely—deaths
> There was only you; the ignorant life
> That grew into weariness and loneliness and wishes
> Into your whole wish: "Let it be the way it was.
> Let me not matter, let nothing I do matter
> To anybody, anybody. Let me be what I was." (*CP* 149-150)

Ultimately, it fell to Adrienne Rich to express what Jarrell could only indicate subconsciously and sub-textually. In 1957, before she had begun what was to be a frequent correspondence with him, Rich provided in "Knight" an intertextual response to "The Knight, Death and the Devil" that provided an indictment of the Knight's situation whereas Jarrell had only delineated it:

> A knight rides into the noon,
> and only his eye is living,
> a lump of bitter jelly
> set in a metal mask,
> betraying rags and tatters
> that cling to the flesh beneath
> and wear his nerves to ribbons
> under the radiant casque.
>
> Who will unhorse this rider
> and free him from between
> the walls of iron, the emblems
> crushing his chest with their weight?
> Will they defeat him gently,
> or leave him hurled on the green,
> his rags and wounds still hidden
> under the great breastplate?[11]

Rich's determinedly moral rhetoric demands what Jarrell refused to consciously admit; his simultaneously traumatised and fascinated response to Dürer's engraving

maintains its precarious role of "translation", enabling him to give himself over to the vicarious seductions of both the material and ideological hardware on display while still experiencing a profound inadequacy on behalf of the knight and himself. For Jarrell, Dürer's engraving only communicates certainty as a fantasy within which he can countenance disintegration and annihilation; his avowed intention to reflect the picture in poetry and not to interpret it only indicates his desire for a prohibitive discourse within which he could continually re-experience Dürer's work as problematic, working up steam on his magnifying glass.

II. "The Bronze David of Donatello"

Jarrell's David[12], unlike the Knight, belongs to a specific mythology with specific referents, and so the "meaning" of Donatello's sculpture would appear to be less problematic than it is in the case of Dürer's engraving. Nevertheless, both the art-works may be read as connected by virtue of being definitive: Dürer's of his own canon of proportions, Donatello's of the energy of the early Renaissance.

The primary fascination of Jarrell's poem is in the difficulty of taking sculpture as a poetic subject, as it resists narrative interpretation even more than painting or engraving. If Jarrell aspires towards a plasticity of language to emulate Donatello's craft – as Rilke did in his poems and prose inspired by Rodin – then he does so in the knowledge that he must fail, as language does not have the substance or finite, demarcative abilities of stone or bronze.

Textual language cannot be three-dimensional; it can, however, suggest mass by an accumulation of two-dimensional perspectives, through linguistic cubism or collage. The series of photographic representations of Donatello's David in the Phaidon edition of his complete works offered such possibilities to Jarrell (Appendix Two). He confirmed this when he presented the poem "The Bronze David of Donatello" in a letter to Elizabeth Bishop in April 1957:

> I'll send you in this my letter my Donatello *David* poem, incidentally, you can't see all the things I talk about in an ordinary small photograph, but if you'll look at the ones in the Phaidon Donatello, they're all there. (*Letters* 423)

Jarrell had not yet visited Italy in 1957 – he would eventually go there the next year and again in 1960 and 1963 – so he had not yet seen Donatello's sculpture (which is housed in the Museo Nazionale, Florence) other than in pictures. His text is not so

much a poem about a sculpture as a poem about a series of photographic gestures. If Jarrell was at least implicitly aware of the distance between himself and the "original" sculpture, then it follows that a reading of "The Bronze David of Donatello" should acknowledge that distance.

In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Walter Benjamin noted that:

> The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissable from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction after which substantive duration ceases to matter and what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.[13]

And so, the "aura" (Benjamin's term) of the art-work is removed. Consequently, the paradox may arise of a poet – with an apparently intact sense of the art-work's "aura" – writing a "description" of a sculpture he has never seen except in the "inauthentic" form of a photograph or a series of photographs. Jarrell does not stress the "jeopardy" of the original object, rather he revels in the de-historicization of Donatello's Bronze David , the photographs of which offer a range of "still" perspectives that he could never experience by walking around the actual sculpture in Florence. An indication of Jarrell's intoxication with reproductions and the textuality offered by them can be seen in a letter to Michael di Capua prior to Jarrell's first trip to Italy:

> we're enchantingly flooded in maps, passports, steamer and airline tickets for us, a steamer ticket for the Jaguar, guidebooks, European picture books, the biggest Donatello book so that we can list all the Donatello places, two waterproof blue shoulder-bags Alitalia sent us, foreign driving licences, etc. (*Letters* 472-473)

The Donatello sculptures have already been apprehended, via the biggest Donatello book, but the places have not. In an age of mass reproduction, it is only "place" which has aura. Only geography may still be "conquered" by effort and expedition; culture is more easily processed at home.

So Donatello the sculptor is not an issue in Jarrell's poem, rather what should exercise the reader is how the photographs enable Jarrell to write his poem, and how they may alter or even undermine the sense of the art-work. In the first passage of the

poem, Jarrell ironically emphasizes this nude David's "nakedness" by itemizing his apparel; his language essays and utilizes the "neutrality" of objects:

> A sword in his right hand, a stone in his left hand.
> He is naked. Shod and naked. Hatted and naked.
> The ribbons of his leaf-wreathed, bronze-brimmed bonnet
> Are tasseled; crisped into the folds of frills,
> Trills, graces, they lie in separation
> Among the curls that lie in separation
> Upon the shoulders. (*CP* 273)

This inventory delays the more problematic search for a language capable of sexing and representing David: flesh and mass. Jarrell attempts to invest a sense of "aura" in his subject in the second passage:

> Lightly, as if accustomed,
> Loosely, as if indifferent,
> The boy holds in grace
> The stone moulded, somehow, by the fingers,
> The sword alien, somehow, to the hand. (*CP* 273)

The adverbs seek to project a sense of conjecture onto "the boy"; this enables Jarrell to further his analysis of the hierarchy of meanings within the representation of the art-work itself, and is subsequent to the challenge to the scriptural David that provokes the poem. Jarrell quotes "the boy David" from 1 Samuel 21:9 in The Old Testament: "There is none like *that*". However, despite this apparent stress on his origins as a biblical/mythological protagonist, the reader is already aware of the distinct levels of discrepancy between that David and his version in bronze by Donatello. Not to forget the photographer's David from his pictures of the sculpture, and Jarrell's David in "The Bronze David of Donatello".

Jarrell's poem works through descriptions and variations that are instinct with interpretation. They are not modernist variations on a theme, with integration and consensus as an abiding objective. The poem resists ideologically-determined interpretative orthodoxies; and one such challenge – to the conventionally heroic version from the Bible of the child warrior David – is made clear in the first extended description of him:

> The boy David's

Body shines in freshness, still unhandled,
And thrusts its belly out a little in exact
Shamelessness. Small, close, complacent,
A labyrinth the gaze retraces,
The rib-case, navel, nipples are the features
Of a face that holds us like the whore Medusa's—
Of a face that, like the genitals, is sexless.
What sex has victory? (*CP* 273)

This passage contains the first overt thematization in the poem. It is an erotic response to sculpture rather than an empirical or interpretational one; but it is also an erotica of hermaphroditic "sexlessness" and antique pagan archetypes, a sexual "labyrinth the gaze retraces" (*CP* 273):

The mouth's cut Cupid's-bow, the chin's unwinning dimple
Are tightened, a little oily, take, use, notice:
Centering itself upon itself, the sleek
Body with its too-large head, this green
Fruit now forever green, this offending
And efficient elegance draws subtly, supply,
Between the world and itself, a shining
Line of delimitation, demarcation.
The body mirrors itself. (*CP* 273-274)

In a description fat with knowledge, Jarrell refers the reader to David via a panoply of Renaissance subjects; the representation is reminiscent simultaneously of the sick Bacchus, sleeping Cupid, green-gilled Narcissus and callow Medusa painted by "wicked old Caravaggio", as Jarrell called him; a mythology of boys and nausea. Any trepidation as to seeking after what is to be addressed in this poem is heightened by the introduction of the portfolio of other Renaissance painters and secular subjects to facilitate the "description" of an early Renaissance sculpture of a Biblical subject. Specifically, the homo-erotic displaces the conventionally mythic. Furthermore, the possibility arises for phantasmic self-projection by Jarrell within the poem; not only did Jarrell see himself in the severed head of the bearded Goliath, but also in the figure of David, so reminiscent of the figure of Ganymede on the Nashville Parthenon frieze that Jarrell posed for as a boy. Between David and Goliath, it is David who returns the poet's gaze, and reveals the radical ambiguity of the poet's desire; Jarrell affects disgust, but is also enthralled. A poseur by nature, a model for artists and

presumably his photographer-father, Jarrell's life in photographs reveals him as an extremely willing and designing self-projector. Donatello's art-work is not being represented via description of itself, rather Jarrell is listing for the reader what the art-work reminds him of visually and textually within the limits of his subjectivity. The art-work is a conduit for expression and not its ultimate goal. Representation of the "original" is only one aspect of coming to terms with the visual and verbal intertextuality of self, poem and picture.

However, mid-way through the poem Jarrell does attempt an imaginative engagement with the "craft" of the sculptor:

> Where the armpit becomes breast,
> Becomes back, a great crow's-foot is slashed.
> Yet who would gash
> The sleek flesh so? the cast, filed, shining flesh?
> The cuts are folds: these are the folds of flesh
> That closes on itself as a knife closes. (*CP* 274)

The language of sculpture, but also a fetishistic listing of tools and weapons, incisions and wounds, carving and pain. The pain has been apprehended by the poet, not by David; indeed, Jarrell makes himself the object of the sadism immanent in David's disdainfully cold gaze. With that moment of masochistic self-abasement, Jarrell averts his gaze and the focus of his sympathy consequently falls on the severed head of Goliath; he moves from a subjective and psycho-sexual encounter with the image of David as a projection of his conflicted sexuality into political allegory . The poem mutates into an invective against the victorious killer and an epitaph for the defeated and the dead:

> The right foot is planted on a wing. Bent back in ease
> Upon a supple knee—the toes curl a little, grasping
> The crag upon which they are set in triumph—
> The left leg glides toward, the left foot lies upon
> A head. The head's other wing (the head is bearded
> And winged and helmeted and bodiless)
> Grows like a swan's wing up inside the leg;
> Clothes, as the suit of a swan-maiden clothes,
> The leg. The wing reaches, almost, to the rounded
> Small childish buttocks. The dead wing warms the leg,
> The dead wing, crushed beneath the foot, is swan's-down.

Pillowed upon the rock, Goliath's head
Lies under the foot of David. (*CP* 274)

The images are of martial triumph upon a totemic "crag"; but they also refer inversely to the myth of Leda and the swan, and of Ganymede's abduction by Zeus in the form of an eagle. Power and sex are complementary: the poem's earlier question of "What sex has victory?" now appears less rhetorical than before. The heroic appeal of the bronze David is only fetishistic. The passage's bird imagery – David's toes "curling" like talons over the "wings" of Goliath's helmet, the phallic leg of David being "warmed" by the "dead wing" attached to the same helmet – are suggestive of violent dominance, political and sexual. Military conquest is imaged as rape, and David's appearance of femininity is seen only to be an apparition. By making David a bird-man, Jarrell also denies his "boyishness" and severs his imaginative connotations for the reader with any benign pre-pubescence, and re-creates him as assassin and violator. His "innocence" has become murderous:

To so much strength, those overborne by it
Seemed girls, and death came to it like a girl,
Came to it, through the soft air, like a bird—
So that the boy is like a girl, is like a bird
Standing on something it has pecked to death. (*CP* 275)

The sculpted head of Goliath refutes his scriptural description: "*The stone sunk in the forehead*, say the Scriptures;/ There is no stone in the forehead"(*CP* 274). Furthermore, he is given the presumptive dignity of consciousness: "The head dreams what has destroyed it/ And is untouched by its description"(*CP* 274). Jarrell privileges Goliath with the ability to comprehend and interpret his own death; he is offered the nobility of a victim, just as David has become a tawdry and compromised victor. However, the treatment of Goliath is not conventionally elegiac; he is not sentimentalized and humanized because of his heroic potential and tragic aggrandizement. He is rather an ironic semaphor for Jarrell's critique of the European cult of victory. When Jarrell resurrects Goliath, he is in a contented Falstaffian sleep:

The new light falls
As if in tenderness, upon the face—
Its masses shift for a moment, like an animal,
And settle, misshapen, into sleep: Goliath

Snores a little in satisfaction. (*CP* 274)

Victor has become vanquished; more specifically ironic is how Jarrell has David – the Jewish hero of scripture – emerging as a figure of fascistic triumphalism, and Goliath – the Philistine ogre – as a victim of a brutalizing, arrogant aggressor:

> The boy stands at ease, his hand upon his hip:
> The truth of victory. A Victory
> Angelic, almost, in indifference,
> An angel sent with no message but this triumph,
> And alone, now, in his triumph,
> He looks down at the head and does not see it. (*CP* 275)

From David, the Jewish boy rebel and future king of the Bible, to the Christian David of the Renaissance artist and then to the modern warrior of fascism, Jarrell explores and exploits the vulnerability of myths and histories that automatically prioritize the significance of victory. Furthermore, in the aftermath of World War Two, Jarrell was anxious that America should not indulge in the same triumphalism that permeates the history of David.

At the poem's close, David is depicted as indulging in a public rite, a victory dance in which he demands idolatrous and craven attention for himself:

> Upon this head
> As upon a spire, the boy David dances,
> Dances, and is exalted. (*CP* 275)

The hollow paganism of this frenzied triumphalism is mediated at the poem's end by Jarrell's prayer for Goliath, which is in turn a prayer for all the "fallen":

> Blessed are those brought low,
> Blessed is defeat, sleep blessed, blessed death. (*CP* 275)

Goliath is no longer the specific focus of Jarrell's discourse; the art-work has been withdrawn from the poem as a correlative, and Jarrell ends it instead with an intertextual anthem. The reference to Christ's Sermon on the Mount – "Blessed are" – evokes a moment at which the Christian ethic – and implicitly modernity – was instigated, only to signify the failure of that ethic and the project of modernity. To be blessed is neither to be victorious nor to find salvation; nor is it to inherit the earth.

To be blessed is to imagine and die. Jarrell's analysis of history is not a tragic Eliotic one; it does not seek satisfaction in catharsis or consolation in faith. When Jarrell uses the language of prayer it is to indicate how compromised a vocabulary it contains, and how immediate but vapid its consolations are. If any spirit pervades the poem, it is that of criticism; no idea is taken for granted, no icon or image so stable it cannot be overturned.

Jarrell's habit in poetry was to metamorphose; in "The Bronze David of Donatello", he explores the art-work's resemblance rather than its essence, which has been relativized into obscurity by a combination of history and reproduction. This emerges necessarily from Jarrell's visual experience of the sculpture through a two-dimensional medium – photography – and his perception of the "whole" having evolved from his viewing of a series of fragmentary perspectives and distances in photographs. Ultimately, the apparently peripheral details of the photographs – the winged helmet, the face of Goliath – become loci of equivalent importance to the apparently dominant David. No single detail defines the whole, and the whole remains undefined; as such, Jarrell's David is as much of a chimera as his Devil.

Both Donatello's David – "The body mirrors itself" – and Dürer's Knight – "a man's look completes itself" – are introduced by Jarrell as art objects with an apparently redoubtable sense of their own perfection. For Jarrell the "metamorphic poet", it may appear bizarre that he should have turned to art-works with apparently finite and terminally allegorical meanings such as these. However, the very fact of their canonical status, and that they therefore belonged to an existent interpretative discourse, enabled Jarrell to enact a critique of the orthodoxies of modernist art interpretation within his own terms – the poetic text – whilst apparently acting in complicity with his art-objects by adopting their titles: "The Knight, Death and the Devil", "The Bronze David of Donatello".

III. "The Old and the New Masters"

"The Old and the New Masters" reads as a poem about artists rather than art-works; unlike "The Knight, Death and the Devil" and "The Bronze David of Donatello" it was not published in Art News with an accompanying reproduction of the relevant works on the facing page. Practitioners – the "masters" – are the subject. It seems that Jarrell has relinquished the problematic of conveying visual experience of art in thematic terms of language. However, the poem still contains a number of "descriptions" or "translations" of paintings: Georges de La Tour's St. Sebastian Mourned by St. Irene (the Louvre, Paris), Hugo van der Goes's Nativity (The Portinari Altarpiece, the Uffizi, Florence), and Veronese's Christ's Dinner in the House of Levi

(the Accademia, Venice). This series signifies Jarrell's recollection of his visits to Europe in 1958, 1960 and1963. Therefore, the poem reports on his experience of paintings in their "live" gallery environments, rather than a "reading" of them from a book of reproductions. Nevertheless, the effect of including a series of "written" paintings within the framework of a sixty-one line poem is to create the enclosures of a "written" gallery with its own institutional superstructure, codes and imperatives.

Behind this sense of a Malrauxesque "musée imaginaire" is the historical/temporal dynamic of the poem. Jarrell examines and identifies the relationship between "old" and "new": it is on one level a modernist history of painting from the Florentine Rennaissance – the "birth of modernity" – to the poet's American present, from Hugo van der Goes to a nameless Abstract Expressionist. The explicit continuity of the paintings is in their thematic content; the paintings specifically designated by their titles in the poem are all treatments of tragic Christian history and follow its representative pattern from nativity to martyrdom. Jarrell ironically contextualizes this apparently archetypal and eternal Christian narrative within its gradual peripheralization and obsolescence in terms of art history:

> After a while the masters show the crucifixion
> In one corner of the canvas: the men come to see
> What is important, see that it is not important. (*CP* 333)

Jarrell indicates the schism between subject and image as an inevitable product of the rationalizations of modernity, a victory of science over belief, knowledge over desire:

> The earth is a planet among galaxies.
> Later Christ disappears, the dogs disappear: in abstract
> Understanding, without adoration, the last master puts
> Colors on canvas, a picture of the universe
> In which a bright spot somewhere in the corner
> Is the small radioactive planet men called Earth. (*CP* 333)

However, Jarrell's poem begins not with reference to Christian myth or to paintings, but to a literary discourse about painting, W. H. Auden's opening lines to "Musée des Beaux Arts",

> About suffering they were never wrong,
> The Old Masters: how well they understood
> Its human position; how it takes place

While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along[14]

elicited the following response from Jarrell:

About suffering, about adoration, the old masters
Disagree. When someone suffers, no one else eats
Or walks or opens the window—no one breathes
As the sufferers watch the sufferer. (*CP* 332)

However, the argument with Auden proves only to be a point of departure for the poem's analysis. Jarrell is not taking issue with the judgement Auden derives from a single painting, – Breughel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus – but he is taking issue with the casual generalization and concept of consensus implicit in Auden's opening line. Breughel's painting explores the collision of myth with work. The fall of Icarus represents a bizarre moment of intrusion by an idealized, mythical character into a material world of commerce inhabited by sailors and ploughmen. Auden is not wrong about the absence of perceivable suffering; a boy made out of words such as Icarus does not suffer; those who eat, walk, and open their windows do. Auden's analysis of suffering does not directly reflect "suffering" as a thematic element explicit in Breughel's painting.

Jarrell, on the other hand, takes Georges de La Tour's St. Sebastian Mourned by St. Irene (Appendix Three) as an exemplary visual representation of suffering; martyrdom is an experience of human pain and suffering that is ideologized, and therefore mythologized. Ideology is mitigated through the suffering being recognizable, and thus enabling the beholder of the suffering to become a sufferer as well. Yet this surrogacy potential in de La Tour's painting is not proclaimed as universal truth, equally pertinent to both Jarrell and the painter's time; rather, he is referring to an apparency and expression of universality available to de La Tour's time, and only to the modern viewer through a historical appreciation of the painting.

Jarrell's "text" of St. Sebastian Mourned by St. Irene is a single passage in the present tense; he does not use language after the spacial and cumulative fashion of sections of "The Bronze David of Donatello" and "The Knight, Death and the Devil":

In *St. Sebastian Mourned by St. Irene*
The flame of one torch is the only light.
All the eyes except the maidservant's (she weeps

And covers them with a cloth) are fixed on the shaft
Set in his chest like a column; St. Irene's
Hands are spread in the gesture of the Madonna,
Revealing, accepting, what she does not understand.
Her hands say "Lo! Behold!"
Beside her a monk's hooded head is bowed, his hands
Are put together in the work of mourning.
It is as if they were still looking at the lance
Piercing the side of Christ, nailed on his cross.
The same nails pierce all their hands and feet, the same
Thin blood, mixed with water, trickles from their sides.
The taste of vinegar is on every tongue
That gasps, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"
They watch, they are, the one thing in the world. (*CP* 332)

Mimesis is not Jarrell's aim. The poem is one "seeing", emphasized by its present tense. The difference between the "telling" of the art-works in this poem and the"translations" of Donatello's David and Dürer's Knight are very apparent. Jarrell is not so much attempting to re-create the art-works in "The Old and the New Masters", rather he is self-consciously narrating his own understanding of them. He stresses the familiarity of the suffering depicted by evoking the community of the characters within the painting: the maidservant, St. Irene and the monk are all equally participant in "the work of mourning". Furthermore, the crucifixion is evoked as a recent memory, as a recognizable reality that has yet to be subsumed by myth or disregarded as fiction: "It is as if they were still looking at the lance/ Piercing the side of Christ, naked on his cross"(*CP* 332). They see and imagine what the twentieth century reader may not believe. On first appearances, Jarrell's point is deliberately simplistic, and his rendering of the art-work rudimentary and immediate; for example, no art historian I have read in my research claims the figure in the blue cowl to be male, yet Jarrell sees "him" as a "monk".[15] Jarrell also employs a grandiloquently melodramatic phrase to convey what appears to be an absolutely still and concentrated gesture by St. Irene: "Her hands say: 'Lo! Behold!'". However, it is immediacy of response that Jarrell is attempting to communicate, not accuracy. He admits the necessity of acknowledging a temporal/narrative dimension in his writing and therefore concedes the futility of pretending to extract "tense" from it. Jarrell is not striving after a Heideggerian sense of awe in the moment of "active nothingness" that is eternally within the painting; the present tense relates and shows the painting as Jarrell the viewer/speaker sees it.

It should be remarked that Jarrell had written about de La Tour's painting before in the polemical prose of "Against Abstract Expressionism" (1957), when he adopted a determinedly scientific language:

> In George de La Tour's *St. Sebastian Mourned by St. Irene* there is, in the middle of a dark passage, a light one; four parallel cylinders diagonally intersected by four parallel cylinders; they look like a certain sort of wooden fence, as a certain cubist painter would have painted it; there are hands, put together in prayer, of one of St. Irene's companions. As one looks at what has been put into – withheld from – the hands, one is conscious of a mixture of emotion and empathy and contemplation; one is moved, and is unmoved, and is something else one has no name for, that transcends either affect or affectlessness. The hands are truly like hands, yet they are almost more truly unlike hands; they resemble (as so much of art resembles) the symptomatic gestures of psychoanalysis, half the expression of a wish and half the defense against the wish. But these parallel cylinders of La Tour's – these hands at once oil-and-canvas and then flesh-and-blood; at once dynamic processes in the virtual space of the painting, and spiritual gestures in the "very world" in which men are martyred, are mourned, and paint them mourning and the martyrdom – these parallel cylinders are only, in an abstract expressionist painting, four parallel cylinders: they are what they are. (*KA&C* 286)

Jarrell's pseudo-scientific language essays the dynamic symbiosis of technique and theme he sees in de La Tour to rebuke the predominant art style of his own time, in which he regards technique as being the theme. The "science" of de La Tour is employed to direct the viewer to a comprehensible experience of human suffering, whereas in abstract expressionism it refers to nothing outside of his own language of visual composition.

"The Old and the New Masters" may be interpreted as a poetic statement of the arguments expressed in "Against Abstract Expressionism". However, it is more productive to remark the six years that elapsed between the publication of the article and the writing of the poem; the latter text exhibits little or no interest in evaluation. All the painters referred to are "masters", and the art of the present or future is not presented as being aesthetically or intellectually disadvantaged by comparison to the art of the past. Jarrell states the necessity of "disagreement" between the old masters at the poem's beginning; he identifies their "lack" of consensus. Therefore, the "old" masters do not reveal an aesthetic standard which exposes abstract expressionism as "degenerate"; rather they provide a resource for an understanding of how abstract

expessionism might have evolved and what it implies. The poem analyzes "disagreement" as a means of enabling the reader's historical understanding.

Jarrell provokes this sensibility in the reader further by not relating the paintings in chronological order; after the late Renaissance de La Tour, Jarrell moves back to the Nativity of Hugo van der Goes (Appendix Four):

> So, earlier, everything is pointed
> In van der Goes' *Nativity*, toward the naked
> Shining baby, like the needle of a compass. (*CP* 332)

This "return" to an earlier painting – and an earlier epoch – prompts the reader to attend to the poem's narrative hierarchy: the apparent privileging of one old master – de La Tour – by putting him "first" is challenged by the citing of an even older master, van der Goes. This "reversal" is not arbitrary; what is arbitrary is to regard painting as only painting, through a complacent disregard for the implications of historical processing. Jarrell reminds the reader of the importance of forming an understanding of those implications before the appreciation of technique in isolation. Therefore, the process by which Rennaissance art became "abstract" and "modern" is not explicable by an aristocratic belief in the methods of contemporary artists as bankrupt and degraded. Art-works and artists are what they are; they only relate to each other by a viewer's ability to look at them historically. The museum may be "imaginary" and "without walls", but it is still a museum.

The van der Goes is significantly "earlier", rather than better. What makes it recognizably "earlier" is its pre-Reformation confidence and oligarchical force. "Faith" is experienced in the painting as an affirmation of a feudal society; political and economic power – exemplified in the figure of the donor and his family – corresponds to the hierarchy of Holy Family, angels and attendants:

> The different orders and sizes of the world:
> The angels like Little People, perched in the rafters
> Or hovering in mid-air like hummingbirds;
> The shepherds, so big and crude, so plainly adoring;
> The medium-sized donor, his little family,
> And their patron saints; the Virgin who kneels
> Before her child in worship; the Magi out in the hills
> With their camels—they ask directions, and have pointed out
> By a man kneeling, the true way; the ox
> And the donkey, two heads in the manger

So much greater than a human head, who also adore;
Even the offerings, a sheaf of wheat,
A jar and a glass of flowers, are absolutely still
In natural concentration, as they take their part
In the salvation of the natural world. (*CP* 332-333)

The "salvation of the natural world" is achieved by the establishment of an order that is commensurate with a socially dominant mercantile class and the ideological hegemony of an undivided church. Jarrell's images reinforce these relationships: angels (the spiritual world) resemble "hummingbirds" (the natural) and "Little People" (the secular and folkloric of the peasant class). This harmonious expression in the painting of the nativity myth is possible because of the commissioning donor class, and its power to stipulate the state of belief. In van der Goes' painting, cognizant Christianity is the preserve of that class. Vitally participant in the myth, the shepherds in the painting become both servants to a Lord Messiah and the lord of the manor: they are "so big and crude" and "plainly adoring" that they are not afforded the privilege of "worship", nor do they have access to the "true way" that is pointed out to the aristocratic Magi.

Jarrell expresses such confidence as "concentration". All images, all figures converge on Christianity's Copernican *wunderkind*, "the naked/ Shining baby, like the needle of a compass" (*CP* 332):

The time of the world concentrates
On this one instant: far off in the rocks
You can see Mary and Joseph and their donkey
Coming to Bethlehem; on the grassy hillside
Where their flocks are grazing, the shepherds gesticulate
In wonder at the star; and so many hundreds
Of years in the future, the donor, his wife,
And their children are kneeling, looking: everything
That was or will be in the world is fixed
On its small, helpless, human center. (*CP* 333)

Jarrell is announcing more than the ability of art to provide a crystalline moment of a historical synthesis, the "active nothingness" of a still life; rather he is showing the paradox of advocating the ability to perceive of written myth as image without admitting that the character of the myth is changed by its translation between

different media, and furthermore denying the ability of visual images to admit separate historical moments to coalesce.

For all Jarrell's stress on "concentration" on the "one instant" and the "center", he has to acknowledge the chasm of history between the mythical-historical figures of the nativity and the political-historical figures of the Florentine family group at prayer: "so many hundreds/ Of years in the future, the donor, his wife, / And their children are kneeling". The painting is not atemporal or ahistorical, it is the opposite: "The time of the world concentrates/ On one instant". The "center" is only locatable through an understanding of its historical relationships; and once the "center" is fixed and conceptualized, the only movement possible in relationship to it is that of divergence, and the only images those of peripheralization or diffusion:

> After a while the masters show the crucifixion
> In one corner of the canvas: the men come to see
> What is important, see that it is not important. (*CP* 333)

The masters paint what men see, rather than what the patron class tells them to; furthermore, they paint the earth rather than the world. Art is working at the limits of knowledge rather than belief. The confidence that sustained a perception of the world as Christian allegory has atrophied; this is indicated by Jarrell in the temporal vagueness of the phrase "After a while". The masters no longer directly confirm the *weltanschauung* of the commissioning donor or church. "Disagreement" exists between those who practise art and those who administer it:

> The new masters paint a subject as they please,
> And Veronese is prosecuted by the Inquisition
> For the dogs playing at the feet of Christ,
> The earth is a planet among galaxies. (*CP* 333)

Veronese was incriminated for his use of realism and detail: a sense of simultaneity characterizes his art rather than "one instant". The painter's sense of relativism cannot confirm the absolute claims of a monotheist culture. The inability of art and culture to achieve symbiosis is inevitable, given the limitations of their contradictory political rationalizations. The code that enabled Hugo van der Goes is rejected by the "last master" to the extent that it has become impossible to depict the animate; art is in awe of the logic of modernity to the extent of obliterating humanity:

> Later Christ disappears, the dogs disappear: in abstract

Understanding, without adoration, the last master puts
Colors on canvas, a picture of the universe
In which a bright spot somewhere in the corner
Is the small radioactive planet men called Earth. (*CP* 333)

Having accepted the rationalizations of the project of modernity, the new masters are able only to express what constitutes their modernity; the poem plots an endgame. The new masters are the "last masters"; abstraction in painting makes distinction and differentation between its pratitioners obsolete. Their apparent lack of individuality is a consequence – not a cause – of the "radioactive" age's disregard for human life. Planet "Earth" is only an appellation, a designation; paintings are only "colors on canvas, a picture". The Star Trekesque "logicality" of the last two lines emphasizes the sense of fictionality that science engenders. The ability of "moderns" to oversee the earth as a particle on the periphery of the universe ironically echoes the old masters sense of a "center"; the new masters are still preoccupied with the concept of a "center", but in order to achieve "omniscience" of view they have to see as satellites, not humans. This in turn forces a belief in themselves as peripheral and irrelevant, a belief which is not misanthropic but fatalistic, characterized by self-loathing. The diminishing of identity, and the replacement of metaphor by semaphor, indicates the modern's inability to relate other than by stressing how relativistic – and self-defeating – it is to do so. The past tense of the final line reads as an epitaph; the poem traces the conversion of a humanist into an apocalyptic visionary.

It would be dangerous to presume that Jarrell is afflicted with the inferiority complex that I have just described; the intelligence of the poem is intentionally beyond the logic of modernity. Approaching Baudrillard, reader becomes viewer, painting and text become "screen", in the poem's final lines. His commitment to reading the art-works in vital historical contexts indicates his ability to theorize outside of the continuum of modernity's myth of progress, and to avoid eulogy in his representations of van der Goes or de La Tour.

Jarrell's 1953 review of Malraux's The Voices of Silence provides a vital resource for analysis of "The Old and the New Masters"; it informs a reading of the poem much more productively than the limited antagonism and set-piece activitism of "Against Abstract Expressionism", in which – as J. D. McClatchy wrote in Poets on Painters – "in order to play the devil's advocate he is uncharacteristically a literalist".[16]

In his Malraux review, Jarrell stresses the uniqueness of Malraux's achievement, but reserves praise for his choice of illustrations rather than his theories, which he distrusted as too "masterful" and "deterministic":

> The connections of European art with Christianity are more enlightening, if less surprising, than its connection with double-entry bookkeeping, so that Malraux's semi-religious determinism is a good deal better than the economic determinism which tells us that Masaccio's outlines are as firm as they are because the financial position of the rising middle class was as sound as it was. But both methods have the same fault: they are too powerful. By using either we can show just why everything necessarily was what we already know it to have been – and we can often, in the process, distort (or neglect to see closely enough or disinterestedly enough) what everything was. (*KA&C* 181)

In "The Old and the New Masters", Jarrell makes use of both these "determinisms" without ultimately endorsing either; Malraux represents the sensibilility that has evolved the imploded fatalism that is described at the poem's end: "the sciences for him are not much more than what has produced television sets and the atomic bomb". Malraux has produced a "Flea Market of the Absolute" rather than "A Museum Without Walls". However, Jarrell's strongest objection is to Malraux's militaristic and imperialistic style: "the root metaphor underlying Malraux's view of art is one of conquest, of victory, power, domination"(*KA&C* 179):

> his pages are full of speeches to the soldiers, of epigrams and aphorisms and passages of more-than-Tyrian purple, of *Te Deums*, of straw men with their bowels all over the countryside: it is if we are getting to see *A Massacre of the Innocents* begun by Uccello, concluded by Caravaggio, and preserved for us, I do not need to say miraculously, in an armory of the Knights of Malta. (*KA&C* 179)

"The Knight, Death and the Devil" and "The Bronze David of Donatello" both analyze the terror of the aestheticization of war in art within the context of the translation of a single art-work into poetry. "The Old and the New Masters" pursues the inexorable and destructive logic of Malraux's "battle" theory of art through history to the nuclear age. The accurate representation of the art-works is not Jarrell's aim, as it avowedly was in the earlier poems. Indeed in "The Old and the New Masters", he appears to concede the impossibility of the plastic, open forms of representation he had attempted, and instead indicates the importance of understanding the limitations of the theories of art and interpretation that inevitably influence the "reading" of an art-work. He does so by introducing a sense of anachronism into the poem, through

his development of the concept of "disagreement" and his non-chronological narrative arrangement of the paintings. He indicates without overt endorsement a deterministic view of the paintings and their interrelationships that amounts to an apocalyptic modernism. He does not explicitly posit an alternative path or theory, for his process is not particularly dialectical. However, the sense of anachronism and individual abstraction that pervades the voice of the poem does at least indicate a commitment to implicating more intimate, personal values in the reception of painting and sculpture than those of a bombastically public Malraux. A question remains, therefore, about the poem's relationship to modernity; under Malraux's terms, Jarrell would appear to be in retreat from it. I think it is rather a strategic refusal by Jarrell to participate in a myth of progress that he felt had brought about its own annihilation.

"The Old and the New Masters" is significantly cool in tone, as to an extent are all of Jarrell's poems on art. Art-works permitted him to move away from his habitual use of personae and psychologized characterization towards scrutiny of readers/beholders and the forces acting upon them. The interest of these poems is necessarily sub-textual, therefore; attempting to stimulate an understanding of how one type of visual activity – reading – can inform another: seeing. At the time of his death, Jarrell was planning to name his next book of poems Let's See; clearly, the scopophiliac in him had not been exhausted. Yet again, Jarrell's interest in "narrating" art-works indicates his commitment to the work of mediation between languages, genres, disciplines. More than that, it reveals Jarrell's reluctance to leave icons for what they were. Always disinclined to leave an image uninterpreted, Jarrell's drive towards symbolization led him to project meanings onto mythical figures beyond their apparently ambiguous symbolic content. In Pictures from an Institution, Jarrell had improvised a genre; in the visual arts, he concentrated on a series of subjects that had to bear the weight of history in addition to interpretation. Each art-work is radically altered by Jarrell's rendering; he makes them difficult, disturbing, implicating. Each art-work becomes in turn an examination of Jarrell's ability to make material his own; unable to originate a poem, the poet's next task was to reflect or illuminate, assuming the work of criticism. These poems commence in a state of imaginative impasse, and then present the poet's work as attempting to negotiate a way through it; as with the agitatory effects of Pictures, Jarrell's imagination is exerted to resist the moral and psychological horror of stalemate, to assert his presence by orbiting unpredictably the apparently "still" art-work at the poem's centre. Humanist heroics are represented by the energy created by the interpreter, rather than taken for granted in the art-object itself.

Chapter Five. The Uses of Disenchantment: Writing for Children

Jarrell's writing for children repeats on a reduced scale the incoherence of his writing in its totality; each of his four books for children presents a crisis of genre and self-presentation. As has been identified elsewhere in his canon, the problem appears to be to find an interpretative process to meet unique texts that is simultaneously relevant to Jarrell overall. This incoherence and disconnection exemplifies Jarrell's ability to produce apparently compatible texts that nevertheless undermine one another.

The Animal Family (1965) appears to be a usable text for reading Jarrell as having found in children's literature a medium for writing politically about achieving self-realization in a post-traumatic Cold War environment, as well as participating in traditional American discourses of reparenting and surrogacy. However, while The Animal Family is an eminently *scriptible* text that exemplifies Benjamin's understanding of storytelling as a mode of empowerment for the disenfranchised in a time of threat, Jarrell's other children's books do not bear such interpretation. The Gingerbread Rabbit (1964) has little pretension to such gravity, and in it Jarrell appears to lack faith in his own ability as a storyteller to enact transformation convincingly and challenge the limitations of his chosen genre. Fly by Night (1976) is a book that has become associated with the circumstances of Jarrell's death to the extent of obscuring whatever intrinsic effect it may exert. Its atmosphere of emotional and sensory deprivation approaches the visionary, but also approaches autism in its desired disconnection from the world, making the post-apocalyptic The Animal Family seem positively gregarious and worldly by comparison. As for The Bat-Poet (1964), the problem is with its obviousness as an allegory about poetic inspiration, ambition and reputation, and its obliviousness to other concerns.

Children's literature is in itself a problematic term, as it describes a huge area of writing; each of Jarrell's texts participate in widely diverse genres within that area. The Gingerbread Rabbit has intertexts in Beatrix Potter and Joel Chandler Harris, while The Animal Family relates to Kipling and in part to Crusoe; Fly by Night is a version of escape-fantasies such as Peter Pan and Bedknobs and Broomsticks with a sub-text of morbid romanticism; The Bat-Poet connects to the long history of animal allegory from Virgil's bees to Orwell's pigs.

Criticism of Jarrell's stories for children – with two significant exceptions – has represented them as a complimentary appendix to the poetry. The poet himself seemed to endorse this view by incorporating poems from his second children's book – The Bat-Poet – into The Lost World: "The Mockingbird", "The Bird of Night", and

"Bats". Robert Lowell expressed this at best measured regard for the stories with emphatic economy when he termed them "a nice idyllic thing to do".[1]

Yet whatever has been said about Jarrell's "real" work being poetry or criticism, the potential significance of the stories need not be diminished or obscured, particularly as analysis of his poetry has stagnated. After the publication in 1965 of The Lost World, Jarrell enjoyed the freedom of becoming a "storyteller" to the extent that his work for children became his only output. He was writing and "planning" poetry, but he was writing and *publishing* children's literature, and by doing so was achieving the audience – and mass sales – to which he had always aspired. In addition to the books for children, Jarrell's final poems such as "Gleaning", "Say Goodbye to Big Daddy", and "The Player Piano" have received minimal attention; even the most sympathetic critics of Jarrell's poetry have implicity accepted that his "adult" canon terminates with his last full volume, the last few lines of which have come to be regarded as his epitaph:

> I hold in my own hands, in happiness,
> Nothing: the nothing for which there's no reward. (*CP* 338)

Notably, two studies of Jarrell's writing for and about children were published at a time when the rest of his work was in a pre-Pritchard vacuum – The Children's Books of Randall Jarrell by Jerome Griswold (1988) and Randall Jarrell and the Lost World of Childhood by Richard Flynn (1990) – and both have placed the late poetry in the context of the children's books, which Griswold regards as "the final fruition of his life and of his career as a notable twentieth-century American writer".[2] This exemplifies the conventional logic of biographical continuity – "one life, one writing" – that is commonplace in Americanism from Whitman through Eliot to Lowell, and is endorsed by Jarrell himself in regard to the work of poets such as Stevens. Under these terms Jarrell's stories for children are a Whitmanesque declaration of "Goodbye my Fancy!", either a triumphal farewell to art and life, or a form of early retirement from the imperatives of heroic "ambition" to the "nice idyll" that Lowell implicitly made interpretable as poetic failure.

What these interpretations undermine is the radical potential of Jarrell choosing to become a storyteller (or indeed a child), and what that may represent or produce. Walter Benjamin's essay on Leskov, "The Storyteller" identifies "the first true storyteller" as "the teller of fairy tales"[3], and relates the popularity of those tales to the perceptible level of political crisis in a culture at a particular time. The power and currency of fairy tales depends on the historical moment at which a need for them becomes apparent:

> Whenever good counsel was at a premium, the fairy tale had it, and where the need was greatest, its aid was nearest. This need was the need created by the myth. The fairy tale tells us of the earliest arrangements that mankind made to shake off the nightmare which the myth had placed on its chest.[4]

Fairy tales are useful and enabling, rather than didactic representations of empirical truth; they show rather than tell, and offer strategies of escape from myth, not confirmations of it; the "fairy tale ... secretly lives on in the story":

> The liberating magic which the fairy tale has at its disposal does not bring nature into play in a mythical way, but points to its complicity with liberated man. A mature man feels this complicity only occasionally, that is the liberating magic which the fairy tale has at its disposal does not bring , when he is happy; but the child first meets it in fairy tales and it makes him happy.[5]

As will be explored in the next chapter, in The Lost World, Jarrell had attempted to find resolution and "happiness" in a Californian milieu of available and readymade myth, but its "magic" would prove to be *ersatz* and synthetic. The Californian version of happiness is all too comprehensible and compromised, and it "liberates" nothing. The books for children, and in particular The Animal Family, tell of an elemental fictive-world in its foundation; it makes the historical present tolerable by being significant for it rather than simulating or representing it. Furthermore, in manifesting himself as a storyteller, Jarrell could access collective and communal methods of approach that were impossible in other genres. The "world" of The Animal Family is natural, creative, and ungoverned. If the other "worlds" evoked by Jarrell – California, childhood, fairy tale, fine art – always seem vulnerable to imminent or latent catastrophe, then The Animal Family appears to postulate a recovered and recycled landscape, immune to war and dysfunction as their consequences have been learned.

The Animal Family was still being written after "The Player Piano" – Jarrell's last "completed" poem – was finished. This detail, added to Jarrell's marked change of thematic and stylistic emphasis in the book, indicates that it should be accorded at least as much significant attention as the supposedly "ultimate" The Lost World. Jarrell began The Animal Family in the spring of 1964, while he was being treated for depression. However, the book was finished several months before Jarrell's hospitalization in spring 1965. Nevertheless, a common critical perception of the book is that it acted as therapy for its author; indeed, Jerome Griswold's study of

Jarrell's children's books is prefaced by the critic's confessional expression of gratitude to The Animal Family for resolving his own neurosis in the past:

> I was a graduate student in Connecticut studying for my Ph.D. exams when I developed an *extreme* aversion to words and couldn't stand to have them anywhere around me (even going so far as to insist that breakfast cereals be kept in glass jars so I wouldn't have to face those loud and wordy boxes in the morning!). After several months, the longing to read (which had otherwise always been a part of my life) returned, but I knew that my next book (my first book after my Fall from alphabetical grace) had to be something special. I searched and searched until I discovered something just right, a children's book: Randall Jarrell's *The Animal Family*. It made me well, and the love of reading returned.
>
> With this study, then, this former Humpty Dumpty aims to repay his debt to Randall Jarrell.[6]

In his subsequent analysis of the book, Griswold stresses themes of fostering, adoption and tutelage, themes that implicitly contradict Benjamin's essential concepts of "counsel" and "liberation":

> The book is a Robinsonade that begins with the introduction of a self-sufficient but lonely hunter who misses his dead parents and longs for a companion. He gradually befriends a mermaid, and the story turns to consider her evolution as she comes to live with the hunter in his island cabin and learn the ways of the land. Despite his happiness, the hunter becomes troubled by dreams which the mermaid interprets as revealing his wish for a son, and his wish is soon answered: encountering a bear in the woods, the hunter is forced to defend himself and kills the bear and takes her cub home; seeing a lynx kitten that has strayed from its mother's cave, the hunter snatches it up and also brings it home; finally, a shipwrecked orphan is washed ashore in a boat along with the body of his dead mother and, in this way, the boy joins the other "sons" and the Animal Family is complete.[7]

Griswold interprets the book as creation myth and castaway tale, beginning with the hunter as an "emblematic, categorical, platonic. . . . Robinson Crusoe without a Friday, and Adam in Eden with no Eve and all his ribs intact".[8] The mermaid is read in terms of her "evolution" and she "serves as a foil and occasion for explaining the life of the land":

> She is a kind of child who requires explanations for the things adults take for granted: why we wear clothes, cook food, avoid getting too close to a fire. And, like a parent, the hunter patiently explains these things and teaches her nursery rhymes and tells her fairy tales.[9]

However, the text neither presents such a simplistic or primitive a paternalistic hierarchy of patronage nor as convenient an allegory as Griswold's synopsis asserts. In a letter to Harry Ford in August 1964, Jarrell himself indicated the potentially dynamic contradictions in the book:

> This Spring I wrote another half-for-children, half-for-grown-ups book named *The Animal Family*; it's much longer, less allegorical, and is all done except for a longish next-to-the-last chapter that I hope to finish this fall. (*Letters* 491)

In order to access the potential dynamism of the text, I will argue that The Animal Family requires analysis with a more radical and political emphasis than that of Griswold. My aim is to explore more fully the "freedom" of the text and to realize Benjamin's sense of the "liberating magic which the fairy tale has at its disposal".

The first problem with Griswold's approach is that in order to justify his version of the book as "Robinsonade" he has wilfully to alter Jarrell's setting for the story. The hunter is never referred to as living in an "island cabin", or on an island, for that matter. The only island referred to in the text is on the horizon:

> And when at evening, past the dark blue shape of a far-off island, the sun sank under the edge of the sea like a red world vanishing, the hunter saw it all, but there was no one to tell what he had seen. (*AF* 8)

Island landscape is easily codifiable into the tradition of Robinson, whether it be Crusoe or the Swiss Family; and by regarding Jarrell's book within the conventions of the castaway genre, Griswold inevitably views the relationship of mermaid and hunter as that of servant-master or pupil-teacher. However, Jarrell does not seek that geopolitical determinacy in his location for the story:

> Once upon a time, long, long ago, where the forest runs down to the ocean, a hunter lived all alone in a house made of logs he had chopped for himself and shingles he had split for himself. The house had one room, and at the end

> closest to the ocean there was a fireplace of pink and gray and green boulders – the hunter had carried them home in his arms from the cliff where the forest ended. On the crushed sea-shells of the floor there were deerskins and sealskins, and on the bed was the skin of a big black bear. Hanging on the wall over the bed were the hunter's bow and arrows. (*AF* 5-6)

The first thing that must be remarked in this description is the Americanness of its detail; the hunter's house is furnished with the skins of Northern Hemisphere mammals, and not sub-tropical trophies. The ocean is bordered by forest and not by jungle. The wilderness is familiar, rather than unknown. In addition, the hunter lives on the border between land and ocean, a predicament in which he is lord neither of the seas nor of the land, but rather an intermediary between them: hunter, fisherman, beachcomber. As such, the hunter primarily resembles Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo, the figure Leslie A. Fiedler identifies as an original American archetype, "neither a White Man nor a Red, but something new under the sun, the archetypal Westerner whose legend is the essential myth of America"[10]:

> Thinking of Natty Bumppo (that first not-quite-White Man of our literature, for all his boasts about having "no cross in my blood") and his descendants, we are tempted to say that it is the woodsman which the ex-European becomes beside his Red companion: the hunter, the trapper, the frontiersman, the pioneer, at last the cowboy – or maybe the next-to-last, for after him comes the beatnik, the hippie.....But even as he ceases to be beatnik and becomes fully hippie, the ultimate Westerner ceases to be White at all and turns back into the Indian....to declare that he has fallen not merely out of Europe, but out of the Europeanized West, into an aboriginal and archaic America.[11]

It is tempting to regard the hunter as directly belonging to this colonial and anthropological descendancy, and Jarrell's story as "Western". Indeed, Jarrell had considered using the Western photographs of Ansel Adams as decorations for his book. However, the vital difference lies in that while the archetypal hunter-cowboy-hippie seeks union with the Native American Male, Jarrell's hunter-"frontiersman" establishes a relationship with a mermaid, a peculiarly European archetype whose original bond is with the sea, not the land; and the apparent aim of the union is to establish a pragmatic and Platonic ideal of the Family, and not the psycho-sexual fulfilment of an individual (the mermaid remains marine from the waist down, so procreation is not an option). Realizing that the book is not an island-narrative takes

it out of a neurotic closure and places it in the contentious environment of politics; this realization is akin to the ultimate shock-horror image at the end of the film Planet of the Apes, when Charlton Heston (a perversely archetypal American) has to countenance that he has not been inhabiting a neurotic nightmare or traumatic island, but is standing on a post-apocalyptic American shore.

In her essay "The Poet, Truth and Other Fictions: Randall Jarrell as Storyteller", Kathe Davis Finney argues that the book is a study of "human fulfillment achieved finally through human love", and of "extreme differences in perception, the consequences of such differences in and for language"[12]; and in reading the relationship between "Mermaid" and "Hunter" the terms of this analysis are immediately more attractive than Griswold's automatic assumption of the hunter as the dominant "educating" figure in the book. The most obvious reason for this is that the hunter is as much of an archetype and "character" as the mermaid, something which Griswold himself acknowledges in his descriptions of the hunter as a Robinson or an Adam. Like the Mermaid, he is initially recognizable only in terms of literary experience, and as such has no experiential privilege. Suitably, the first moment of contact between these two characters is written in an overtly poetic language, acknowledging Eliot's Prufrock and Stevens' "The Idea of Order at Key West":

> Out at the seal rocks, hidden in their shadow, something was singing in a soft voice like a woman's. The song had words, but no words the hunter had ever heard before, and the song itself was different from any he had ever heard. He listened for a long time. The song ended on a long low note, and then everything was silent except the sea, whose shallow silver waves made a little hushing sound, and were silent for an instant, and then said *Hush!* again.
>
> The hunter called to the singer. From the rock's shadow he heard a quick scrambling noise, and then the sound of something diving into the water—the sound the seals always made. Shading his eyes with his hands, the hunter stared into the moonlight round the shadow of the rocks. But there was nothing to see and now, nothing to hear. After a while he went home. (*AF* 10-11)

The passage is instantaneously musical and erotic, establishing the hunter's desire for both communication and contact. At this point in the story, he is defined by what he sees and what he hears, and the only language offered to him is indecipherable. Primarily, then, the hunter has to discover an animistic instinct for orality so that he may respond, and become more than the beholder of an abstract song. His eventual response is to return to the shore and attempt his own song of enchantment:

He sang one by one, all the songs he knew, and between each song and the next he would sing what he remembered of the mermaid's song. He kept looking toward the seal rocks: there was nothing. But after a while he saw, out past the first white line of the waves, a wet head.

Slowly, so as not to frighten her, he turned away; he went on singing. When he had almost finished the song he turned his head a little, and then a little more, till out of the corner of his eye he could see that she had come closer—the moonlight glistened on her hair and on the wet curves of her shoulders. Staring at her sidewise, he sang her her own song. But when he was almost at the end, he stopped in the middle of a note. There was silence for a moment; then he heard a little soft laugh, the mermaid sang him the last notes of the song, and before he could speak or move she was gone—her head and shoulders slid under the water so smoothly that one minute she was there and the next she had vanished without a sound, almost without a ripple. (*AF* 13-14)

Communication is established through a music exterior to language despite the fact that the hunter's song is made out of words. Similarly, when the hunter and the mermaid eventually meet, their languages are gradually conveyed to each other through the mediation of extra-lingual significations and recognitions:

she talked to the hunter in a voice like the water. In a voice that made no more sense to the hunter than the water: no word of hers was like any word of his.

They began to teach each other words. The mermaid would touch her head and make the same sound over and over till the hunter had memorized it; then he would pat his leg and say "Leg! Leg!" and the mermaid, looking as if a leg were a very queer thing either to have or to have a word for, would repeat the word in her liquid voice. (*AF* 15-16)

This process implicitly involves an examination of "sense", and its arbitration in discourse. The mermaid's facility with the hunter's language, and the hunter's inability with hers, means "that before long the learning was all one way"(*AF* 16-17); but this does not necessarily instate the hunter in the teacher role that Griswold designs for him, nor does it make the mermaid an unproblematic muse. The story is about learning, but the mermaid appropriates oral English, and the land-world, on her own terms rather than by subjugating herself to a new regime. By that appropriation,

the dominance of the land and its language is dismantled: when the mermaid ultimately declares "The land's better!" (*AF* 171), it is a conscious expression of her own desire and lived experience rather than a submissive repetition of a human creed of superiority that has colonized her unconscious; the mermaid is not the other made the same.

The story's most fundamental concept is that of *difference*, and the understanding of its ability to enable communication and satisfaction. In the first prolonged "conversation" of the book – a mode which ironically dominates the "narrative" of the "story" – the mermaid identifies the prejudice of her own people and asserts against that her own confidence in difference:

> She said: "The sea—" then she stopped, at a loss for the next word, and said: "You are man. What is two? What is three?"
>
> "Men."
>
> "The sea men, like me—"
>
> "The sea people."
>
> "The sea peo-ple, like me, are afraid of land. Not me. Oh, not me! They think I—" here she hesitated, and then said triumphantly— "make mistakes. Make *bad* mistakes. They say, all good comes from the sea." She struck the water with a cheerful, scornful hand.
>
> "Why don't you think that?"
>
> The mermaid immediately told him, but in her language, not in his. He laughed, she laughed and wrinkled her nose and forehead, searching for the words, but they wouldn't come, so she said, "Oh well!" Whenever she didn't know exactly what to say or how to say it she would exclaim cheerfully, "Oh well!" The hunter couldn't remember ever teaching her to say it, but she had certainly learned.
>
> But the next night she had her answer. Her first words were: "The land is new." The hunter gave her a puzzled look. She said swiftly, "*They* say all good comes from the sea. But the land is new. The land is—" here she said one of her own words, and then asked impatiently: "You have legs, I have not legs. The moon is white, the sky is black. What is that?"
>
> "Different?"
>
> "Different! Different! The land is *different*." (*AF* 18-20)

As the story progresses, the mermaid dynamizes the narrative through her ability to express the novelty and potentiality of experience conventionally thought to be commonplace. She becomes the interpreter of the hunter's dreams- "I know what

your dream means. It means you want a boy to live with us" (*AF* 60) and provides an existential motto for the story: "Live and live let" (*AF* 155), a tellingly contrary variation on a cliché. She enables the hunter to realize the maturity necessary to form a family, and as such is the provider of the "good counsel" that Benjamin identifed as a necessary constituent of the "story". Indeed, by the end of the book she has assumed the role of storyteller to her adopted son:

> The boy laughed with joy—there was nothing he liked better than the mermaid's stories. She sat down by him on the bed, and he moved over against her.
>
> "Once upon a time," she began, "long, long ago, there was a mermaid." (*AF* 174-175)

In this moment, the mermaid has assumed both a dominant role in the family and in the story, which raises the question of the hunter's significance at the book's end. Most obviously, he is not as remarkable as the mermaid is simply because his character does not offer the same scope for conventional development; implicitly however, a miraculous enough alteration has taken place. The story's original archetype of an asocietal, apolitical hunter has become an effective and adept partner and parent, and thus fulfilling Benjamin's terms for the ideal male character in "stories", that of an "earthily powerful, maternal male figure", "the righteous man" with a "maternal touch".[13]

The Animal Family is a renovation of the concept of family and a statement of the ability of disparate individuals to commune in the most unlikely and apparently unpromising of circumstances; as such, it could be read as finding a use value for the family in the context of Cold War America where domestic values had been fetishized and parenthood had become a "Mythic Act".[14] Indeed, perhaps the ultimate significance of the story lies in those "circumstances", rather than the narration of the establishment of the family; as has already been suggested, the setting of the story is recognizably American to an extent, but it is familiar "wilderness" rather than civilization. The Animal Family lives in a place that has no coordinates, rather it is a world in itself that turns on no axis and exists only as far as it can be beheld: as such, it is non-global, and consists only of its own resources. There is no trade. The only challenge to this flat-earth scenario in the story is with the "arrival" of the boy; he is sitting in a "lifeboat", beside the corpse of a woman, presumably his mother. This detail suggests catastrophe elsewhere, and the circumstances of the woman's death but the child's survival are inexplicable; however, the hunter attempts understanding:

He reached down and touched the boy the way you touch something in a dream, to make sure it's real. Suddenly his eyes widened and he said: "The storm maybe. Maybe there're people on the beach. Maybe there're—"

He went over to the door and stared down at the sea; the mermaid sat passively by the boy. But in a minute he came back and said: "There's no one there." (*AF* 141-142)

The "otherness" of the Animal Family's predicament is doubly emphasized here; the hunter has no knowledge upon which to assess the orphan's predicament, other than what he can see, and so it appears as "something in a dream". It must be remarked here that these passages bear a considerable resemblance to much of Jarrell's writing about World War II and its aftermath. He represented the war as the ultimate defamiliarization and deconstruction of all human relationships, and the "State" – the prime promulgator of war – as the force that not only orphaned children, but women and servicemen. In Jarrell's most renowned poem, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner", the speaker experiences the state as a "dream of life", and is then aborted by the waking "nightmare" of war.

The "stateless" world of The Animal Family appears to offer a post-traumatic strategy of achieving relief from that catastrophe; the orphaned boy is re-born into a new world and a new consciousness, in which the dead may be remembered without any tragedy or elegiac trauma. Indeed, nothing "dies" in this story; the boy's mother is already dead when she is first described. This enables the boy instinctively to adopt the mermaid as his "Mama" (*AF* 143).

However, the resolution of this "clean" world is dependent on the sense of crisis having been elsewhere; it is implicitly *post*-apocalyptic and *post*-historical rather than primeval. Time and experience are latent rather than irrelevant. Life is improvisatory and anarchic, rather than a new order, and Jarrell's hunter is more New Man than Superman; in fact, he represents the end of the self-sufficiency of the human, requiring the agency of the inhuman and alien mermaid to survive and persist.

In a sense, then, the "magic" of Jarrell's world in the story is to an extent dependent on another world's collapse. This relates back again to Benjamin's remark that the need for fairy tales is greatest when the need for "counsel" is greatest, in times of political and cultural crisis. The Animal Family is dynamized by its implicit response to crisis. It was written in a particularly volatile and traumatic period of American history, and at a time when Jarrell had begun to engage himself with public politics for the first time since World War II due to his enthusiasm for John F.

Kennedy. In her edition of Jarrell's letters, Mary Jarrell recounts how Jarrell acquired a television set in 1960 for "Kennedy-watching" , and how he responded to the President's subsequent assasination in 1963:

> Throughout the weekend after the Kennedy assasination Jarrell sat before the television, crying openly at the portrayals of John F. Kennedy's life, death, and funeral. . . . To Jarrell, apolitical since the 1940s, Kennedy had brought wit, imagination and art to Washington and brought hope to politics. The shooting not only extinguished the life of Jarrell's favourite public persona but ended Jarrell's phase of happy expectancy about America. When The New York Times asked him to write a Kennedy poem, the only line he could manage was "The shining brown head", and he gave up. (*Letters* 486)

This period of "happy expectancy" was due not only to the allure of Kennedy, but also Jarrell's euphoria at having spent July to November 1963 in Europe and finding – significantly for such a supposedly devoted Europhile – that he ultimately preferred living in America: "How wonderful America and living in a house are going to be! I certainly feel sorry for expatriates" (*Letters* 484).

However, as we have seen in earlier chapters, Jarrell had also expressed previously a deeply pessimistic sense of the American future; in September 1945, he wrote to the then editor of The Nation, Margaret Marshall:

> I feel so rotten about the country's response to the bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki that I wish I could become a naturalized dog or cat. I believe our culture's chief characteristic, to a being from outside it, would be that we are *liars*. That all except a few never tell or feel anything near the truth about anything we do. Though even at that we're not bad enough to deserve the end we're going to get. (*Letters* 130)

In keeping with the sentiments expressed here, much of Jarrell's post-war writing is permeated with a consciousness of human and national values as being under threat, and how the pressure of that threat was expressed forcibly through the acute self-consciousness of individuals as being both scrutinized by institutions and engaged in auto-surveillance; this is particularly notable in Pictures from an Institution, his poems on fine art and in the recurring motif of "the mad scientist" out to destroy the world in The Lost World's Californian poems. This apparent paranoia can be seen as a logical development from the Marxist-influenced determinism of much of his earlier work, both before and during World War II, but it also gives an indication of

the challenge to conventional politics that he was attempting to present in The Animal Family. In his appropriation of Benjamin in Postmodernism, Jameson identifies that "for Americans at least, the 1950s remain the privileged lost object of desire"[15], and that is particularly relevant to the idealization of the nuclear family that was authorized in that period.

Myths are expected to be creative; politically they are coercive and inevitably destructive. The Animal Family is an attempt at an ultimately constructive and resolute anti-mythical fiction, resistant to the codifications of conventional ideologies or the facile closures of metamorphosis or supernatural deliverance. Writing a "children's book" enabled Jarrell to evoke the imaginative "magic" requisite to confirm and counter his political and cultural disillusionment, as well as relieving him from having to create a narrating "I", and the problematic of presenting a complex authorial "personality" with its related tropes of self-supervision. Similarly, Jarrell's familiar but deterritorialized landscape creates the distance necessary for a critique of American mores of social and sexual identifications. The attraction of Jarrell's "myth" – and the reason for the book's popularity – lies not in its dispensing with the real world but rather in its establishment of an alternative set of co-ordinates and rationales by which experience can be appreciated. Conventional concepts of authority, education and gender are reconstructed. The mermaid is not a refugee, rather she "defects" from the sea; and she does so not out of fear of repression or persecution, but out of curiosity and an instinct for liberation through difference. The hunter has to re-invent himself by placing his trust in the mermaid and in realizing animalistically and instinctively his ability to become a social being. The clarity of the book's realization comes through Jarrell's use of direct speech, which gives his "alternative" myth an authenticating orality. Reconstructing speech, culture and identity in The Animal Family, Jarrell projects an ecotopia rather than either a catastrophe or utopia for the aftermath of the total State.

As a footnote to this analysis, it ought to be remarked that The Animal Family is also a response to a story by Jarrell's favourite writer in English, Rudyard Kipling. "The Cat that Walked by Himself", from Just So Stories (1901), describes how a cat gradually wins his rights to share the comforts of domesticity in the cave of the Man, who "didn't even begin to be tame till he met the Woman".[16] The Dog, the Horse and the Cow have been admitted to the cave prior to the Cat, according to their submission to Man and the extent of their usefulness to him. The Cat refuses to enter the cave on any terms other than his own. The Man and Woman bar him from entry in return. The stand-off is resolved when the Cat proves his utility by killing mice and silencing the cries of Woman's new-born child through play; with this Kipling creates an exemplary prehistoric family, affirmed by the orderly establishing of a

hierarchy between ther characters through formal debate and the narrator's use of proverbial maxim and truism to stress the vernacular typicality of the tale: "...and from that day to this, Best Beloved, three proper men out of five will always throw things at a cat whenever they meet him, and all proper Dogs will chase him up a tree."

Kipling's illustrations to the story also find a remarkable echo in Maurice Sendak's decorations to The Animal Family; both of them used line-drawings in ink of cliffs, a dwelling, and a shore (Appendix Five), faintly suggesting a human presence, Kipling with footmarks, Sendak with a hut that has nearly merged with its natural background. However, for all their similarities in presentation, it is the difference in their representation that is of particular significance. "The Cat that Walked by Itself" evokes a prehistoric, foundational myth-world to justify the creation of the contemporary culture it was written as a contribution towards; it is social cement, a "modern stone-age family" like "The Flintstones". On the other hand The Animal Family deconstructs the elements of Kipling's myth; and by locating his fiction in a post-historical context, Jarrell undermines the hegemony of the mores that inform Kipling's work. However, this is not to be regarded as a dismissal of Kipling by Jarrell, but rather a critique: the sense of connection between the two stories only serves to emphasize the epic-historical character of both the stories and the ability of the two "storytellers" to create fictions appropriate to their cultural predicaments: in Benjamin's terms, they are both "secularized chroniclers".[17]

In his essay "On Preparing to Read Kipling", Jarrell remarked on how Kipling "praises man's old uses, home and all the ways of home: its Father and Mother, there to run to if you could only wake; and praises all our dreams of waking, our fantasies of return or revenge or insensate endurance" (*KA&C* 339):

> To Kipling the world was a dark forest full of families: so that when your father and mother leave you in the forest to die, the wolves that come to eat you are always Father Wolf and Mother Wolf, your real father and real mother, and you are – as not even the little wolves ever quite are – their real son. (*KA&C* 344)

It is not surprising that Jarrell pays particular attention to the themes of adoption and surrogacy in Kipling, given the prevalence of those themes in Jarrell's own work, particularly in the "autobiographical" poems of The Lost World. In his children's stories, they are considered explicitly; as has been seen, The Animal Family enacts a series of adoptions. Jarrell's first book for children, The Gingerbread Rabbit, describes the reparenting of the title character. He is fashioned by the mother in

order to surprise her little girl, Mary, upon her return from school. The rabbit comes to life when the mother goes out of the kitchen, only to be told by a very vocal cast of kitchen implements that he is about to be baked and eaten. The rabbit flees, seeks refuge with a squirrel to no avail, and only escapes the clutches of a fox when a "real" adult rabbit comes to his rescue. The adult rabbit and his mate are childless – "We have always wanted a little rabbit of our own" (*GR* 42-43) – and thus it follows that they adopt the gingerbread rabbit as their own. Meanwhile, the mother gives up the vain pursuit of her "creation", and after a brief comic dialogue with the fox, returns home to make an alternative rabbit, only out of cloth rather than dough.

To an extent, then Jarrell's tale enacts what he identified in Kipling: the "real" rabbit parents are appropriate and vital surrogates for the gingerbread rabbit's uncomprehending creator, the mother. Griswold's analysis of the story draws on its fixation with orality – particularly, the fear of being eaten – and its similarity to European fairy tales, particularly the Grimms' "Hansel and Gretel", Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood", and the old folk tale "The Gingerbread Boy". Under these terms, analysis can be broken down into reasonably convincing Freudian terms, similar to those outlined by Bettelheim in The Uses of Enchantment (1976), which assesses the meaning and importance of classic fairy tales in relation to child psychology.

However, in generic terms alone, Jarrell's story is significant for more than its efficacy as a retro-simulation of classic fairy tales, most evidently because it is set initially in a recognizably contemporary setting. The story begins in suburban America where the mother sees her only child "off to school", and ends in the old colonial settler's home of the "wild" rabbits, who have forged a home in the deep woods without society or community:

> You're the first rabbit we've seen for months and months, you know – the nearest family lives way over the other side of the forest. (*GR* 39)

In addition, the figure of the rabbit is a significant American fictional archetype, emerging from African-American folk tales and then being translated into white idioms: Bruh Rabbit became Doc Rabbit became Brer Rabbit became Thumper became Bugs Bunny.[18] The constant in the archetype is *savoir-faire*, and implicitly sexual maturity. Jarrell's rabbit is an orphaned *ingenue*, and not even a natural entity, but an unbaked confection: a "dough-boy" parody of his fictional predecessors. In some of the Bruh Rabbit tales, he has a form of malign counterpart in the Tar Baby, an inanimate simulation of a baby rabbit that Bruh Fox uses to trap Bruh Rabbit.

To an extent, therefore, The Gingerbread Rabbit is as much of an engagement with the American vernacular as it is a tribute to European traditions; and as such, it

may be profitable to look at how Jarrell's story may challenge conventional fairy-tales, rather than emulate them. Having said all that, the device of bestowing life upon an inanimate entity is taken directly from classic European folk tales such as "Beauty and the Beast", with its enchanted household objects; and when the metamorphosed and newly animate gingerbread rabbit "wakes up", he sees the world as a fairy tale. However, he has no Ugly-Duckling inferiority complex:

> he saw himself in the glass of the window – there was a shutter behind part of it, so that it reflected him just as if it were a mirror. "Why, I'm so beautiful," said the rabbit. (*GR* 8)

His self-delight immediately removes any pathos from his situation for the reader, and even when he expresses his fearful indignation upon learning that he is about to be cooked, his predicament has a comic aspect:

> "How brown I am!", he said to the others. "How round and red my mouth is, and how crinkly my eyes are, and what a slender delicate nose I have. You've got to admit it would be a terrible thing to eat a nose like that." (*GR* 10)

His incredulity is heightened when he beholds the mother that moulded him. As Kathe Davis Finney has remarked, the rabbit "encounters perceptual relativity" upon coming to life[19]:

> The door opened and in came a tremendous giant with her arms full of paper sacks, each of them so big she could have stuffed the rabbit inside. Her arms were four times the size of the rabbit's and her legs were eight times the size of the rabbit's, and instead of having a cherry for a mouth, there in the middle of her face were dozens of tremendous shiny white teeth the size of a grizzly bear's. That was how she looked to the rabbit. "I haven't got a *chance*," thought the rabbit. (*GR* 12)

This rude lesson in perspective is another awakening for the rabbit, this time into a Quixotic vision of himself as the victim of a terrible fable that will end with his consumption by the "Giant". As he flees, he looks for the fairy tale intervention of a rescuer, but his stock woodland cast lets him down: the supposedly agile and resourceful squirrel cannot raise him to his nest. In desperation, he looks to the fox, who in traditional fairy tales deals in disguise and strategem to ensnare his prey.

Fortunately for this rabbit, this fox – whie being erudite and opportunistic – is also part coward, part decadent cretin. He runs out of verbal arguments to cajole the rabbit into his lair, and fails to seize him physically, having had every chance. The myth of his intelligence and worldliness is finally demolished when he offers counsel to the mother, who seeks an alternative, compensatory surprise for her daughter after she has given up her pursuit of the rabbit. His first suggestion is apparently true to type, if somewhat burlesque:

> "Why don't you just hide behind the door and jump out and say *Boo!* at her when she comes in? That would be a real surprise." (*GR* 46)

His second is downright ignorant:

> The mother felt so discouraged that she gave a little sob, and said to the fox: "Please help me think of a surprise for my little girl. Everybody says foxes are so clever."
>
> "So they are," said the fox. "Well in *my* experience there's no surprise that children enjoy so much as a nice bone." And without so much as saying goodbye to the mother, he popped into his hole. (*GR* 47-48)

Bizarrely then, this apparent "folk tale" dismantles conventional folk wisdom and superstition: it is a fairy tale with the terror taken out: Who's afraid of a stupid fox? The adult rabbit does not help his adopted gingerbread son to elude the fox by any ruse; he is merely alert to danger, and he drags him away. They escape because they are quicker than the fox and the gingerbread rabbit is rested: Jarrell is re-affirming the physical order of the world against the edicts and superstitions of the mythical. This does not mean that he is foregoing Benjamin's "liberating magic"; rather, Jarrell insists upon agency being centred within the human (or the humanized) instead of emerging divinely from supernature. As such, we see Jarrell writing against the grain of his chosen genre, and yet again defying expectations and provoking disenchantment. This is asserted more forcibly at the end of the story when the gingerbread rabbit and his new family look upon the house of Mary and her mother:

> And at night when the little girl and her mother were fast asleep, sometimes the big brown rabbit and the silvery grey rabbit and the gingerbread rabbit would come to the edge of the forest on their way to some lovely lettuce patch or carrot patch or turnip patch, and they'd look at the house, all sleeping in the moonlight and the gingerbread rabbit would say:

"That's where the giant lives. Oh, those teeth! Did she almost cook me! Did she almost eat me!"

And the other two rabbits were too polite to tell him that it wasn't a giant at all, but just a mother and her little girl; they'd smile and part him, and all three of them would say : "Goodbye, old giant!" and run off into the forest. (*GR* 55)

This is the a final emphatic reminder to the reader of the alien status of the gingerbread rabbit, who remains isolated by his ignorance even at the story's conclusion. The reader is drawn into an ironically parental role in relation to the gingerbread rabbit, similar to the adult rabbits who tolerate knowingly his delusion and permit him to perpetuate his fantasy. This is the real curiosity of the tale in that the sense of the fantasy and the magic is entirely the protagonist's, and not the reader's, from the point when the gingerbread rabbit awakens into consciousness. The satisfaction of the story comes from seeing so vulnerable and potentially neurotic a character achieving sanctuary.

This apparent anti-climax of Jarrell's story has been remarked by even his most admiring critics: Griswold concludes that it "is the least satisfying of Jarrell's children's books"[20] principally because of its "inconsistencies" in presentation and the reader's consequent difficulty in "willingly suspending their disbelief". Griswold points out that only *some* inanimate things "talk" in the story:

> The gingerbread creature is able to talk, and so are the paring knife and the mixing bowl and the rolling pin who lectures him in the kitchen. Why, then, isn't everything later (the trees in the forest or the fox's cave, for example) equally animate and loquacious?[21]

Griswold finds difficulty in accepting the radical change of environment within the story, from the "enchanted" yet conventionally domestic kitchen to the "natural" forest that serves a role as background to the action rather than as one of its determinants. The story is a gradual disenchantment, to the extent that nothing undergoes a miraculous transformation at the story's end: The gingerbread rabbit does not develop flesh and blood, as does Pinnochio; this phenomenon is repeated in The Animal Family, as the mermaid is not Friday. The gingerbread rabbit has proceeded to a form of societal normality with the adult rabbits, without becoming mortal. The story has a certain morbid fascination as a consequence; the gingerbread rabbit is a freak who finds a home in what is a conventional – in fictional terms – world of talking rabbits, despite the fact that he defies convention: a dough-boy that

eats carrots. Griswold's objections to the story lie in what he perceives to be Jarrell's ignorance of genre:

> Much can be forgiven, however, since this was Jarrell's first children's book; he was still finding his way around an unfamiliar genre and would do better in his succeeding books.[22]

There is a good deal of wishful thinking in this patronizing dismissal of the book: he bemoans the story's "unresolved.... matters" and "motives"[23], such as how "any connection between the gingerbread rabbit and Mary is left unexplored", and terms it "regrettable" that "the gingerbread rabbit never, finally learns what the mother's intentions were". Griswold is not prepared to consider that children's literature is not necessarily subservient to the hierarchies of practical criticism and the adult canon. As Peter Hunt has written in Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature, "because there is no 'canon'....there is little time for 'standard' interpretations"[24]. The popularity of The Gingerbread Rabbit (over 145,000 copies in print) testifies to its appeal to children, whatever Griswold's caveats, and intimates that it is indeed a sufficiently "credible" tale, and this is due as much to its unorthodoxy as its conventionality.

The Gingerbread Rabbit appears to be the most superficially conventional of Jarrell's books for children, an impression that is conveyed through its illustrations by Garth Williams, illustrator of the classics Charlotte's Web and Little House on the Prairie. The narrative simplicity of William's drawings – particularly by comparison with Maurice Sendak's complex and enigmatic "decorations" for Jarrell's other books – to an extent undermines the potential complexity of Jarrell's text. What is remarkable in the book, however, is just how undeterministic and generally relaxed Jarrell's approach is. Rather like its eponymous hero, the story is an odd confection of folk-tale references and devices, and is particularly unorthodox in its use of time and space. Environmentally, the rabbit flees a contemporary domestic nightmare to a benign rural past; from a world where he is only fit to be consumed to a world in which he is fit to live. Writing children's literature gave Jarrell the freedom to reverse the horrors of the present without having to present the past as nostalgia; and so the story actually forgoes the psychologically-coherent shading that Griswold wishes to have imposed upon it; the rabbit does not have to relate *specifically* to anything. This in turn means that the story does not bear up to the moral and political implications of Benjamin's concept of storytelling; unlike The Animal Family, The Gingerbread Rabbit is more simply the expression of a psychological and cultural wish for reparenting, which is treated as a good thing in itself. The Animal Family is about the process of adoption and re-parenting as a method for the the human species

of coping with a post-traumatic and apocalyptic environment; none of Jarrell's other books for children presume to describe such implicating and urgent contexts for their narrative. Rather than the political and historicizing contextualization that The Animal Family demands, The Gingerbread Rabbit, Fly by Night and The Bat-Poet may be read as allegories for Jarrell's variously fantasized selves. The rabbit is unnatural, orphaned and deracinated, as keen to be adopted as Jarrell himself had been as a child.[25] The Bat-Poet is evidently Jarrell the poet, apparently in awe of his virtuoso contemporaries and hoping to have his own talent recognized and brought out of the darkness. David in Fly by Night is Jarrell the child prodigy, showing genius without gravity or even a consciousness of gravity.

For all the "freakishness" of The Gingerbread Rabbit, it is Fly by Night, the last of Jarrell's children's books to be published, which has received the least attention. This is undoubtedly due to its delayed publication, caused by Maurice Sendak's difficulty in illustrating it after the traumatic circumstances of Jarrell's death. Its posthumous publication has peripheralized it in the Jarrell canon and contributed to a prevailing sense of the book's "otherworldliness", with a concomitantly "clairvoyant" language being employed by its critics. This is exemplified by John Updike's reference to its "true forlornness" in his review for The New York Times, and Griswold's comment that "Fly by Night exists on some high haunted aerie".[26]

Certainly, there is an aura of morbidity around the text, emphasized by Sendak's illustrations: his drawings of the boy David in the book, purportedly showing him asleep, also make him resemble a corpse.[27] However, this is really a case of interpretation of the peritext – the circumstances of Jarrell's death and both Sendak's and critics' responses to them – dominating analysis of the text. Griswold has written of the book as "a paramount example of the synthesis of text and illustration, each amplifying and enriching the other".[28] However, it cannot be ignored that eleven years elapsed between Jarrell's completion of the text – just prior to his death in 1965 – and its eventual publication in 1976, with Sendak's illustrations finally complete. It is not surprising that the exact "synthesis" of text and illustration should be presumed by Griswold, as Jarrell himself had written of the book to Sendak in 1965:

> it's a sort of dream book.... Paragraph by paragraph it divides into pictures, and pictures thoroughly in your own style. (*Letters* 463)

This is both an acknowledgement of the importance and the power of illustration in children's books, but also a surrender of authorial responsibility, implying the subordination of text to image in the name of collaboration. The assumption of

synthesis by critics has inevitably led to a synthetic criticism, taking Sendak's other "decorations" (his term) as imperative and thereby making him the author of the text.

Sister Bernetta Quinn described Fly by Night as the last part of Jarrell's "spiritual autobiography"[29], a trilogy consisting of the three children's books decorated by Sendak; this combines the aspects of the book – visual and autobiographical – that have been treated with the most conviction. Under these terms, Quinn can account for any event in the text that is not amplified in the text by giving it an autobiographical referent: so "David's mother is Anna Campbell Jarrell Regan" and the poem at the conclusion of Fly by Night, "The Owl's Bedtime Story", is "a fantasy-autobiography of the author, based on the need for a mother".[30]

To an extent the story invites such an approach; its opening sentence gives directions to Jarrell's home address in Greensboro, North Carolina:

> If you turn right at the last stoplight on New Garden Road, and go north for a mile and a half, you come to a lake on a farm. (*FbN* 3)

Quinn can give us the privileged background information on that detail:

> The locale is Greensboro. . . . The Jarrells had lived on Spring Lake Drive, which does turn off the New Garden Road cutting through Greensboro.[31]

However interesting the explication of the details may be, no extant analysis of the book has been able to discuss it in terms other than those of its autobiographical aspects or the impact of its illustrations; this has produced an ultimately limited and unconvincing body of analysis, particularly with regard to the status of the book as a work for chidren. The "privileged" reading offered by Quinn and Griswold does not relate to its potential impact on an uncodified, "non-practitioner" child reader. Indeed, Griswold only addresses this issue in his final remarks on Fly by Night, when he states as confirmation of the book's merits that: "Personally, I have yet to encounter or hear of a child who has not liked Fly by Night".[32]

This rather frail piece of word-of-mouth market research is produced to address implicitly what Richard Flynn had pondered explicitly in Randall Jarrell and the Lost World of Childhood: "Ultimately, Fly by Night may disconcert by its apparent pessimism".[33] It is curious that a children's story that Jarrell begins so benignly and confidentially should provoke such ultimate uncertainty and irresolution of response, and from the critics who take its "success" most for granted. However, given the limited terms of their analysis it is not surprising; to look at the work as a proto-

autobiography inevitably involves regarding it in an elegiac and pathetic way. Similarly, Sendak's self-proclaimed difficulty in coming to terms with Jarrell's death led to a set of decorations that added to the sense of the work as both a memorial to Jarrell and his last personal testament in print. This adult sense of ultimacy and tragic determinism surrounding the work has effectively censored any consideration of the book as being for children, and this in turn has entailed the suppression of its textual potential. This is particularly frustrating when one sees the freedom from generic convention that Jarrell enjoyed in the writing of the book. Certainly, his references to Fly by Night in his letters indicate that its formation was based on the imperative of his desire, rather than on any sense of conventionality; indeed, Jarrell's comments to his publisher, Michael di Capua, reveal anxiety about how the book might be received when compared to his other books:

> I've had. . . . great luck in re-doing Fly by Night, now that that great big thing in the sky, The Bat-Poet, isn't overshadowing it. I believe I've got it all smooth now, and what you learn in the beginning about David awake makes David's dream what it is. I'm pretty sure that Fly by Night ought to be my next children's book. The Animal Family is so long and different that Fly by Night, coming after it, would suffer terribly. Coming after Bat-Poet, Fly by Night suffers a little by not being an allegory or a parable, but it's similar in length, has poems in it, too (poems which are a continuation of prose more than those in the Bat-Poet), has the same talking-animal world etc., etc. Animal Family is realistic, the lynx and the bear never say a word. I think readers of The Bat-Poet who like the poems will be quite fond of having a *big poem* like "The Owl's Bedtime Story" the climax of the book. (*Letters* 496)

Jarrell's instincts were fundamentally correct; the very atypicality of Fly by Night has led to critics being largely unable to find a place for it in the Jarrell canon other than as a coda-like *memento mori*. The book is slight and undefinable, and even Jarrell could only describe it in terms of what it was not: neither parable nor allegory, nor large-scale myth. The plot can be recounted in a sentence: a boy David leads a comfortable but friendless and banal existence, and his relief from it comes at night when he dreams he can fly.

As prose fiction, the story unwrites itself, never resting in a particular narrative mode for any duration; it progesses from its recognizably vernacular opening – "If you turn right..." – to the dream narrative of David's flight, and then mutates into the narrative lyric poem, "The Owl's Bedtime Story". After the insubordinancy and licence of the dream flight, the story ends with David's awakening and reversion to a

bathetic, if not detestable, reality. The languid fluency of his dream state is replaced by his frustrated inarticulacy when he attempts to explain his dream to his mother:

> then all at once he opens his eyes and the sunlight blinds him – he tries to shut them, and they shut, and he can hear birds in the yard and his mother in the kitchen. He jumps up and runs to the kitchen, and his mother swings him up into her arms and kisses him and says, "Little sleepyhead, it's almost nine!" He says "I slept so late because I—because I—"
>
> His mother says, "Because you what?"
>
> David says, "Because I—there was something I—"
>
> "Here's something for you to drink, and in two shakes of a lamb's tail I'll have some pancakes ready for you to eat," his mother says, and she looks at him like—
>
> "Like—" thinks David, "like—"
>
> He can remember, he can almost remember; but the sunlight streams in through the windows, he holds his hands out for the orange juice, and his mother looks at him like his mother. (*FbN* 30)

David's hesitant speech is reminiscent of the stuttering voice of Jarrell as poet:

> Yet...Yet...
> to have one's life add up to *yet!* (*CP* 18)
>
> I love you—and yet—and yet I love you. (*CP* 18)
>
> This spoonful of chocolate tapioca
> Tastes like—like peanut butter, like the vanilla
> Extract Mama told me not to drink. (*CP* 336)

However, in his poems Jarrell's speakers eventually find words or a referent to overcome their hesitancy, while David reverts to silence. Flynn has remarked how David "seems very close to the speaker of Jarrell's best poems about lonely children such as "A Sick Child", "A Story", or "The Elementary Scene"[34], and the comparison is valid. However, it is another early poem by Jarrell, "90 North", that most resembles Fly by Night in its particulars. The child in "90 North" dreams of being an arctic explorer, a sleeping voyager like David:

> At home, in my flannel nightgown, like a bear to its floe,

with the pillow, so that the feathers the pillow is stuffed with float through her dream like snowflakes. (*FbN* 6)

Fly by Night is the only one of Jarrell's books for children that has a human child as its central character and the locus of power in the story. His closest relative in children's literature is the boy in Raymond Briggs's The Snowman. In his dream, he is invulnerable; but when his flight coincides with that of the potentially threatening owl – "Something is coming to David through the air" – he becomes its companion rather than its prey:

> The owl floats along by David, and says to him in such a low voice it is almost like hearing it inside his head:
>
> My nest is the hollow tree,
> My hungry nestling waits for me,
> I've finished all night along the lake,
> And for all my white nestling's sake.
> Come, little nestling, you shall be
> An owl till morning – you shall see
> The owl's white world, till you awake
> All warm in your warm bread, at daybreak
>
> And David floats after the owl. Whenever the owl gets too far ahead it flies back and glides around and around him. As it looks at him its eyes glow; the fish in its claws shines in the moonlight like a spoon. (*FbN* 18)

Vitally, David's dream – and his view of the dreams of his pets and parents – is without conscious understanding or rationalization; he is therefore a visionary rather than a prototypical psychoanalyst. Jarrell maintains the integrity of the vision by not projecting an adult consciousness onto it. Fly by Night presents text as a dream, rather than the dream as text, conveniently interpretable or codifiable.

In his poetry, Jarrell's children are Rilkean: characteristically problematic and quasi-archetypal, connoting a contemporary child with a fairy tale *kind*. In David, however, he located a figure appropriate to his desires; and in Fly by Night, childhood is not a predicament or a tragic myth but an alterable subjectivity in which the imaginative ability to change is indicated as liberating fantasy rather than night-terror.

From the point of view of the "adult" canon, therefore, Fly by Night is the least "significant" and most "disconcerting" of Jarrell's children's books: from this it could

be construed that it is the most radical of them all in its resistance to orthodoxies of interpretation. When Jarrell worried about how it would be received, it was a concern based on how it related to the two stories – The Animal Family and The Bat-Poet – that by his own definition were "half-for-children, half-for-grown-ups"(*Letters* 491). Fly by Night invites the kind of uncodified response that is available to the child reader; Peter Hunt stresses that children's literature is necessarily "self-defining":

> Children are developing readers; their approach to life and text stems from a different set of cultural standards from those of adult readers, one that may be in opposition, or perhaps based in orality. Hence they do "possess" texts, in the sense that their meanings are their own and private, even more than adults.[35]

A self-defining text for self-defining readers implies a non-canonical text and approach, and the potential dynamism and distinction of Fly by Night for an adult reader resides in an awareness of its difference from the Jarrell canon.

Ironically then, Fly by Night can be regarded as the most complex of Jarrell's children's books, principally because it is written for children without an adult prerogative; consequently, it is more difficult to locate an "ideal" reader within the text, and more difficult to construct a conventional analysis. The Gingerbread Rabbit may appear to be Jarrell's most simple and "childlike" story, but as it is for younger children it assumes to an extent that it is a book to be read to children, rather than *by* them; this in turn enables the adult critic to apply to it a number of suppositions about narrative and reader-response. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the most confident criticism of Jarrell's stories is that of The Animal Family and The Bat-Poet, as both are intermediary texts, "half-for-children, half-for-grown-ups".

As has already been shown, The Animal Family has been given considerable interpretation, but its analysis has been limited by the cultural assumptions of its adult readers about its "straightforwardly" mythical and allegorical character. The Bat-Poet, on the other hand, has received a wide-ranging and challenging collection of readings, both by authorities on Jarrell and by specialists in children's literature. Jarrellians have stressed the allegorical and overtly autobiographical aspects of the book, giving emphasis to the bat-poet's search for an audience and an ideal form. In addition, Jarrell's inclusion of the poems from the book in The Lost World conferred upon them an adult status and re-affirmed the mutual identity of the "bat-poet" and Jarrell himself. Regarding the text from a specialist children's writing perspective, Lissa Paul's essay "Intimations of Imitations: Mimesis, Fractal Geometry and

Children's Literature" considers The Bat-Poet – along with Ted Hughes's What is Truth? – as the type of book which uses text and illustration to "demonstrate that repetition of self-similar strucures can make the world recognizable, memorable, that it keeps us from letting the world pass us by in a daydream":

> In The Bat-Poet the insomniac bat longs to imitate the mockingbird's capacity to imitate (fittingly the mockingbird is the poet laureate of the forest). Jarrell even sets up an ideal mimetic listener for the bat's poem, a chipmunk, who shivers when he hears the bat's poem about a narrow escape from the owl. Unlike those of us trained to maintain the polite, critical distance of a literate audience, the illiterate chipmunk listens like a member of an ideal pre-literate culure. He identifies personally with the narrow escape described in the poem. The chipmunk exhibits what Eric Havelock, in *Preface to Plato*, calls identification, for the re-enactment of "polymorphic vivid narrative situations".[36]

As Paul pays tribute to the exactness of Jarrell's allegorical construction by explicating the mimetic dynamics of the story, it is worth noting that mimesis is reliant on consensus and confidence about what is being represented, and "on the continuation of a commonly held cultural code".[37] The Bat-Poet ultimately re-affirms that code, which implies that it is a book designed for interpretation by the practitioners of that code, rather than the instinctual and personal responses of children: it is a text-book not a "tale". Paul implictly acknowledges this with the statement that Jarrell's questions "about how to make words like things are among those questions long abandoned by children".[38] Unlike The Animal Family, Jarrell's other "half-for-adults" text, The Bat-Poet offers no sense of simultaneity or potential for "deviant" reading. The poems from the book such as "The Mockingbird" became much more problematic and dynamic as texts when Jarrell took them out of their fabulistic context in The Bat-Poet and placed them in The Lost World. Ironically, the "uncodified" children's book proved to be a much more repressive reading environment than that of the canonical poetry volume.

More than anything else, however, the questionable status of The Bat-Poet as a book *written for children* creates an awareness of just how radical Jarrell's other experiments in the field were: each of the texts demands a different approach from the reader and indicates Jarrell's virtuosity with various forms of storytelling. I return to Benjamin's terminology to re-affirm the freedom and energetic originality that Jarrell frequently enjoyed as storyteller, and the dynamic potential of the texts for the

reader if he or she is prepared to recognize that analysis should be based on a sense of their variance *from* Jarrell's other work rather than a resemblance *to* it.

There is some pertinence in the idea that Jarrell sought to obliterate his own personality in his writing for children, and so evade conventional criticism. In The New York Times Book Review of 24 July, 1955, he wrote:

> there's no children's book so bad that I mind your having liked it: about the tastes of dead children there is no disputing.
>
> The live grown ups are different. Readers, real readers are always telling other readers what to read, and according to what it is, they use a different tone – they know that they are about to be judged. (*KA&C* 219)

Here is an obvious reluctance to be judged, and so Jarrell's writing for children may be regarded – and has been – as an exercise in denial, an escape from the world of "authors" into that of "just writing". Professionally, working on titles like The Gingerbread Rabbit could be interpreted as wilfully suicidal, a flagrant denial of prevailing canons of literary decorum and taste; politically, it might be argued that Jarrell designed himself a role as a children's author in order to evade scrutiny of his contentious writing in other guises. However, such escapes and evasions must be incomplete, particularly as Jarrell's work is so analysable and available for the conventional critic. If his aim was to "die" as an author, it is particularly ironic that his work for children has provoked some very detailed analysis, while much of his other work still wants such attention. It is dangerous to presume that Jarrell was pursuing a simple agenda of anonymity in writing children's literature, particularly as each of the works is so distinct in its stylization and representation. To regard them as innovatively and deliberately unorthodox and "degenerate" is surely preferable to regarding them as derivative yet typical, which implies the same determinism that Jarrell's stories undermine. Aside from risking the scorn of his contemporaries and canonical marginalization, Jarrell's writing for children defies overall definition; in its separate parts, it indicates Jarrell's preparedness to project his imagination onto competing and distinct allegories of the self and fascinated and urgent explorations of the human. They also indicate that Jarrell was committed to productivity above all, as if it was the writer's responsibility to perform in whatever mode was available. Children's writing provided him with a possibility of engaging with unexplored imaginative areas; the following chapter will look at another imaginative option Jarrell took towards the end of his life and contemporaneously with his writing for children. Having attempted to "find" an alternative genre or mode in children's fiction, he would re-orientate his writing to a particular geopolitical site, California.

Chapter Six. Jarrellassic Park: Becoming Californian

Jarrell's The Complete Poems contains the seven poems that he had set aside for inclusion in Let's See, the proposed follow-up to The Lost World. According to their arrangement in the complete volume, the first of these poems is "Gleaning". Curiously, despite its prominence in that volume, it has received the least attention of all the poems that were uncollected at Jarrell's death. It is neither analysed nor acknowledged by Pritchard, Ferguson or Quinn in their book-length studies of Jarrell. This is a puzzling omission, not only for the literary merit of the poem but for its significance in relationship to a number of issues and debates implicit in the entire Jarrell canon.

"Gleaning" is particularly remarkable in that it represents an exceptional instance of Jarrell acknowledging the direct influence of another poet on his own writing. In April 1963, he wrote to Adrienne Rich:

> I'll send you a poem I got from your "Roofwalker". After I'd read that, early in the morning, it somehow made me think of gleaning. As a child in California, the families coming back from their Sunday picnics would stop in the already harvested lima beans, and my poem has a woman remembering this. (*Letters* 465)

Jarrell's citation of Rich as ghost-writer of the poem, and its significance with regard to the surrogate feminism that is vital to his poetry, makes an understanding of "Gleaning" not only desirable, but vital.

In "Gleaning", Jarrell – following Rich – rejects a conventional formalist structure, and creates a problematic subject speaker. One of the few critics to attempt a comment on the poem, J. A. Bryant, provides this confident resumé in Understanding Randall Jarrell :

> "Gleaning" is a brief monologue by a poor black woman, who recalls, with side glances at the story of Ruth in the Bible, a lifetime of gleaning in South California bean fields and her experience with men there.[1]

Bryant's aside undermines the poem's complexity by over-estimating its specificity and objective clarity. It is not a conventionally elegiac or wistful piece of venerable recollection; Jarrell plays with conflicting habits and effects of recall, and explores more than just one or two conventions of the expression of memory. The consistency

and credibility of the speaker are of less importance than her ability to express the divergent impulses that the poem contains.

However, the poem does begin as simple conversation and reminiscence, and is a typically straightforward situating of the speaker by Jarrell:

> When I was a girl in Los Angeles we'd go gleaning.
> Coming home from Sunday picnics in the canyons,
> Driving through orange groves, we would stop at fields
> Of lima beans, already harvested, and glean.
> We children would pick a few lima beans in play,
> But the old ones, bending to them, gleaned seriously
> Like a picture in my Bible story book. (*CP* 343)

This opening section has all the objective confidentiality of conventional myth: it is memory as memoir. The ease of the blank verse and the facility of the speaker's language do not demand an overly critical or questioning response from a reader; but after the myth comes the argument. The fractiously subjective and self-conscious text of the second section confounds the langour of the first:

> So, now, I glean seriously,
> Bending to pick the beans that are left.
> I am resigned to gleaning. If my heart is heavy,
> It is with the weight of all it's held.
> How many times I've lain
> At midnight with the young men in the field!
> At noon the lord of the field has spread his skirt
> over me, his handmaid. "What else do you want?"
> I ask myself, exasperated at myself.
> But inside me something hopeful and insatiable—
> A girl, a grown-up, giggling, gray-haired girl—
> Gasps: "More, more!" I can't help hoping,
> I can't help *expecting*
> A last man, black, gleaning,
> To come to me, at sunset, in the field.
> In the last light we lie there alone:
> My hands spill the last things they hold,
> The days are crushed beneath my dying body
> By the body crushing me. As I bend

To my soup spoon, here at the fireside, I can feel
And not feel the body crushing me, as I go gleaning. (*CP* 343)

"Gleaning" implies not only the sifting through of memory and recollection, but also curiosity, desire and annihilation. The poem pivots on the reader's appreciation of the fluctuations in meaning of that dominant image, and the speaker's simultaneous sensibility that continually relates mortality and memory. Ironically, as the speaker's language and images become more apparently generalized, her experiences are communicated more personally and subjectively.

The conventionally personal and nostalgic language of the first section, syntactically correct and fluent, presents a designedly pictorial, two-dimensional past. Meaning is not sought, it is accepted as established in fact; however, the second section – and it is here where the influence of Adrienne Rich is vital – essays meaning in language that is all action and activity, trying the limits of convention to find adequate expression. Jarrell is questioning the sufficiency of American English, enabled by Rich and the voices that implicitly inform and influence her work. This is particularly remarkable, as resemblance to other poets is not usually an issue in discussion of Jarrell's work (apart from his early deference to Auden and Rilke). The choice, or "gleaning", of Rich as an informing voice by Jarrell is particularly interesting, in that "The Roofwalker" and many of her other poems from that time deliberately resemble – or re-assemble – those of Emily Dickinson. The erotically ambiguous figure in "Gleaning" of "the lord of the field" "At noon" spreading his "skirt" refers back to the shrouded lovers that inhabit Dickinson's poetry. Furthermore, the term "noon" is of particular significance in Dickinson's work; as in her "A Clock stopped – / Not the Mantel's", where the moment of "degreeless noon" is evoked as symbiotic with the absence of time and the obliteration of gender and constructs of identity: from "noon" to "no-one".[2] "Noon" is an ultimate image of immateriality, blankness, threat and erasure; it represents both the fulfilment and obliteration of desire.

Jarrell's use of Dickinson's imagery and language echoes Rich's; and the poem by Rich that enabled Jarrell, "The Roofwalker", is particularly indebted to Dickinson:

I'm naked, ignorant,
a naked man fleeing
across the roofs
who could with a shade of difference
be sitting in the lamplight
against the cream wallpaper

reading – not with indifference -
about a naked man
fleeing across the roofs.[3]

Rich and Dickinson bridge material and immaterial space; however, Jarrell explores two disparate views of material life without the liberating access to the "meta-material" that his poetic "teachers" enjoy. His speaker examines life as you have experienced it, but also how you wished it to be. Jarrell does not seek actively to relate or reconcile these views; rather, he admits the reader to the space between them and relies on the precarious elasticity of his language to narrate both views with an adequate sense of simultaneity. Therefore, the poem dismantles the concept of the monologist being permitted only a single persona or identifying voice; a monologue in dialogic language.

However, the aspect of "Gleaning" that I want to isolate particularly and develop in this chapter is its referral to a specific location – Los Angeles – and the significance of locality and California in Jarrell's poetry. Up until the Californian poems of The Lost World, Jarrell had never consciously sought identification with any particular place, and the extent of his poetic geography appeared to reflect a conservative but instinctively irresolute sensibility. Sister Bernetta Quinn has said that "Jarrell's published life is almost as small a map of his pilgrimage as that of a medieval song-maker", and that "it has about it a spatial form which lends itself to an analogy with landscape".[4] Quinn's metaphors are useful in that they stress the irony implicit in defining Jarrell by association with a particular epoch or cultural movement; his life lends itself to a geographical analogy yet for most of his career he resisted the narrative influence of nativity or autobiography as informing concepts on his work.

So Jarrell repressed what Robert Lowell would found an entire poetic upon; that is, his origins. Lowell always has Boston with its attendant literary and cultural history, but where does Jarrell belong? Despite his being born in Nashville, and spending his undergraduate years at Vanderbilt under the influence of John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate, Jarrell's work can in no way be read satisfactorily as definitively "southern"; furthermore, his indifference to the political and cultural agendas of his Agrarian and Fugitive tutors does not even have the character of prodigal insurgence. He never situated himself – or his work – within their debates, and consequently never saw the necessity of engaging in an argument with them. Jarrell's unorthodoxy is abstracted, rather than politically pragmatic and strategic, and his "originality" is based on resistance to (rather than accommodation of) such

identification. This is evidenced by Allen Tate's cursory reminiscence of Jarrell in the essay "Young Randall" for Randall Jarrell: 1914-65:

> But he would have none of the Fugitive tradition: from the beginning he was his own man. Nor would he allow himself to be a Southerner. He was of Tennessee parentage, brought up, I believe, in California. If he ever looked at the writings of the Agrarians, he would have thought it all nonsense, or at any rate an irrelevant excursion into history without value to a poet.[5]

In White Paper, J. D. McClatchy has written that the concept of a "national" American poetry is illusory, and that the vitality of American poetry only comes from its being a "patchwork of regionalisms, a country of one-eyed kings".[6] In this regard again, Jarrell is very much distinct from his contemporaries. Whereas Lowell conveyed the sense that his self-consciousness was precariously repesentative of the nation, particularly after Life Studies, Jarrell created a range of self-conscious speakers in his poems that represent only the extent of their own traumas. These individuals do not cohere to form any societal group or model; Jarrell does not permit them the presumption of being "representative". His commitment is to "nationally" marginalized but intelligent and percipient scrutineers of their own psychological and emotional predicaments. The reader can inform their understanding of the "nation" or state by allegorizing Jarrell's speakers, but not conclusively or unironically: there is nothing to ideologize or encapsulate in any obvious, given sense. In turn this contributes to Jarrell's own marginalization.

By rejecting the visceral appeal of referring directly to political or historical events, particularly in his later poems, Jarrell would appear to be advocating a dangerously apathetic political nihilism. However, to hold that opinion would be to underestimate the extent and implications of his commitment to those inhabitants of the periphery that populate his work. For Jarrell, the ultimate margin or periphery – in terms of American political culture – was the West coast, not only in terms of its geography, but also in terms of its significance in American myth as an image of both nostalgia and possibility which further removes it from the *realpolitik* of the East Coast that Lowell details and dominates. As Deleuze and Parnet put it, America "has put its Orient in the West, as if there the earth came exactly full circle; its West is the very fringe of the East".[7] Jarrell's California is made up of images, information, and impulses rather than institutions; surfaces and lateral alliances rather than deep roots and filiation.

In his book on Californian landscapes in literature, The Fall into Eden, David Wyatt refers to their necessary transparency and transience:

> The space we call "landscape" is, from the fully human standpoint, an illusion of the given world on which we depend, but an illusion in which we cannot finally dwell.[8]

Jarrell's California is immersed in this impermanence and indeterminacy:

> Back in Los Angeles, we missed
> Los Angeles. The sunshine of the Land
> Of Sunshine is a gray mist now, the atmosphere
> Of some factory planet: when you stand and look
> You see a block or two, and your eyes water. (*CP* 336)

Jarrell's Californian poems in The Lost World are commonly read as autobiographical, even confessional; and undeniably, Jarrell's personal stake in them is considerable. Yet the poems demand to be read with a critical intelligence prepared to consider them as more than pieces of cathartically-charged personal material; this is partly due to the complexity of Jarrell's family background, and consequently the difficulty he found in identifying himself as being native to anywhere until his discovery of a Californian past, which gave him both a personal and cultural context that was adequate to his desires. Furthermore, as "Gleaning" showed, Californian memory is duplicitous.

William. H. Pritchard's list of Jarrell's addresses – with which he opens the first chapter of his biography – is followed by a very significant detail:

> In the fifty-one years of his life, he lived for extended periods in Ohio, Texas, Illinois, Arizona, New York, North Carolina, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia, in addition to Tennessee and California, while spending briefer periods at work or on holiday in Massachusetts, Indiana, Colorado, Austria, Italy, Germany, and England. His speech did not sound particularly Southern, and when asked why he didn't share his parents' Tennessee accent, he would reply that he was born there but learned to talk in California.[9]

It is vital to remark that Jarrell *chose* to cite California as the place where his cognitive and creative self emerged. I wish now to consider and analyze the implications of that choice.

Jarrell's childhood was mostly spent in Tennessee, but the period Jarrell focuses on in The Lost World takes in the years 1926-27, which he spent in Hollywood with

his great-grandmother ("Dandeen") and his grandparents ("Mom" and "Pop") on their farm. His parents had divorced by 1924, when Jarrell was ten, and while staying with his grandparents he would also visit his father regularly in Long Beach. Jarrell had been living with his mother in Nashville, and it was her discovery in 1962 of the letters he wrote back to her from California that stimulated both the "autobiographical" poems of The Lost World and the other late poems which make California their setting, such as "Gleaning" and "In Montecito".

If "Gleaning" repays analysis because of an absence of comment upon it, "Thinking of the Lost World" – the final poem in The Lost World – requires consideration because it is one of the few poems by Jarrell that has produced a considerable discourse; a popular anthology piece and a perceivedly confessional text, it has been vital in locating Jarrell as part of his generation. Analysis of it can be based on dialectic, rather than improvisation.

Much has been made of the importance of the rediscovered letters as an authenticating documentary resource for The Lost World poems; they may be regarded as the catharsis that freed Jarrell from poetic silence into an emotionally frank and uncompromised "confessionalism". However, there is little evidence in this poem that Jarrell is being determinedly candid in order to enforce an adult coherence onto childhood experience. Jarrell is less interested in himself as a child than the way in which the world manifested itself to him in language: he *reads* his childhood experiences. Furthermore, the loss is not of a direct past but a moment of past possibility. The "personally" emotional content of the poem is psychologically latent, but textually overt; if anything, Jarrell's use of a written resource makes his subsequent poem far more problematic, yet superficially more facile, than a conventional piece of poetic recall in the Wordsworthian sense. Consequently, The Lost World poems have attracted their fair share of abuse, particularly in the reviews that greeted their original publication. Joseph Bennett wrote: "His work is trashy. . . its overriding feature is doddering infantilism"[10], and Paul Fussell spoke of The Lost World as a volume being "obvious and dull, full of slick ironies and pulled punches".[11] Defenders of Jarrell's poems have tended to adopt directly adverse positions to those of Bennett and Fussell, dealing exclusively with protecting Jarrell against charges of sentimentalism and nostalgia:

> Jarrell's last poetry, autobiographical without being confessional, technically superb without calling undue attention to its formal inventiveness, is neither sentimental nor nostalgic.[12]

William. H. Pritchard says that rather than being sentimental, "Jarrell succeeds in clarifying something felt, rather than reveling in its simplicity"[13]:

> Mawkishness is of course risked, even courted, by a lyric voice that speaks so affectingly about itself, its memories and desires, with no protective armor beyond the extravagances of improvisation played over a language Jarrell trusts will yield to his charms.[14]

Protecting Jarrell against charges of mawkishness, Pritchard acknowledges the qualities in Jarrell's late poems which make them particularly complex: he has to stress the self-conscious artificiality of Jarrell's poesis to authenticate its personal integrity. Authority – as expressed through linguistic trope – confirms "truth". Truth, however, is not the main concern of these poems; for Jarrell, the discovery of a documentary resource – his letters to his mother – had resolved that problem. Jarrell had written in the guise of a child, or about children, throughout his life; the documentary resource freed him from waiting for an unrepressed childhood memory to emerge upon which he could act. The letters had already written his childhood for him; now he had to write about what the literature of his own letters implied to him. Having said that, writing himself into a Californian childhood as the "son" of his grandparents further implies that Jarrell was inhabiting the childhood of his father rather than his own, opting for a childhood environment in which his mother could be emasculated and replaced with benign simulations. The main discrepancy of The Lost World's Californian poems is not that they are all fictive or that "Mom" and "Pop" are not Mom and Pop, rather it is that Jarrell has become his father, the professional photographer who had been marginalized by Jarrell's Nashville relatives.

Autobiographical truth is only a concern when it merges – or collides – with what constitutes an aesthetic or political demand. In Hollywood, he found a childhood where artifice – and implicitly, aesthesis – was continually complicit with reality. Jarrell's California is endlessly translatable and mutable.

"Thinking of the Lost World" is a series of transformations, some desired and some enforced. Jarrell makes artifice necessary to effect desire, relying on images of magic and Proustian transubstantiation:

> This spoonful of chocolate tapioca
> Tastes like—like peanut butter, like the vanilla
> Extract Mama told me not to drink.
> Swallowing the spoonful, I have already traveled
> Through time to my childhood. It puzzles me

That age is like it. (*CP* 336)

Chocolate tapioca, peanut butter and vanilla extract are deliberately narcotic images; these opiates enact conventions of romantic literary memory. However, the "puzzlement" is not Jarrell's; the naive plainness of the speaker enables Jarrell to write in a mock-lyric voice that could be cruder and less literary than the aristocratic imperatives of modernism allowed. The easy magic of the poem's narrative surface is not set out to codify or suppress the suggestibility of the poem's images or its latent anxieties and debates. The poem pits surface *kitsch* with sub-textual *angst*. *Kitsch* manifests itself in the deliberate folksiness of Jarrell's appeal to the reader:

Come back to that calm country
Through which the stream of life first meandered,
My wife, our cat, and I sit here and see
Squirrels quarreling in the feeder, a mockingbird
Copying our chipmunk, as our end copies
Its beginning. (*CP* 336)

The paradisal "calm country" is analogous to Californian myths of the West Coast as an untutored last frontier and chaste idyll; yet this notionally Edenesque fecundity is undetermined by the image of the speaker's childless family – "My wife, our cat, and I" – who may only re-experience childhood through the duplications of memory and simulations of literature: "as our end copies its beginning". The concept of reproduction carries an artistic irony that is emphasized by an existential one. Yet again emphasizing his "inbetween-ness", Jarrell is drawn to the energy of representation and repetition evoked by the mockingbird rather than actual ends or beginnings.

It must be stressed that Jarrell both venerated and feared childhood, as his writing for children demonstrates. Hence, the facility of his writing has to be seen as compensation for his incredulity at his personal dissatisfaction. The childless couple have to re-invent themselves as a prelapsarian Adam and Eve, living among a harmonious menagerie, as if chidren do not exist (except, perhaps, in the frail memories of adults). The present is written as a deconstruction of childhood; rationalized, barren and dysfunctional:

The orange groves are all cut down . . . My bow
Is lost, all my arrows are lost or broken,
My knife is sunk in the eucalyptus tree

Too far for even Pop to get it out,
And the tree's sawed down. It and the stair-sticks
And the planks of the tree houses are all firewood
Burned long ago; its gray smoke smells of Vicks. (*CP* 336)

The landscape is ash, and scattered with the child's useless armoury; in a characteristically Jarrellian gesture, loss of innocence takes the form of the aftermath of battle. His sense of idyll is related directly to his horror of consequences. David Thomson has indicated how such horror is implicit within the alterity of the Los Angeles environment:

> Los Angeles was a factory city that manufactured lifelike fantasies in which our relationship to reality was drastically altered. It may be a more potent invention than any Bomb.[15]

The fake dinosaurs of the movie-set are also signifiers of historical anxiety, as identifed by Adorno:

> the repulsive humoristic craze for the Loch Ness Monster and the King Kong film, are collective projections of the monstrous total State. People prepare themselves for its terrors by familiarizing themselves with gigantic images. In its absurd readiness to accept these, impotently prostrate humanity tries desperately to assimilate to experience what defies all experience. But the imagining of primeval animals still living or only extinct for a few million years is not explained solely by these attempts. The desire for the presence of the most ancient is a hope that animal creation might survive the wrong that man has done it, if not man himself, and give rise to a better species, one that finally makes a success of life.[16]

Hollywood's recreations of the dinosaurs indicate its ambivalence as dream-factory and trauma-machine; furthermore, they connote Jarrell's consciousness of living in an era when the world might be bombed back to the Stone Age. Underlying the Oedipal jouissance of "The Lost World" series is a profound distrust of all authority, all identity, all experience.[17] As in so many of Jarrell's texts, there is a pervasive sense of injury and damage, a humanist discourse that is attempting to rationalize the battering it has inflicted upon its own integrity. The series is a romance, a fantasy of a past when happiness still appeared personally and politically achievable, but the romance is a self-conscious contrivance to insert meaning into a past that barely

existed. To make his year-long Californian past meaningful, Jarrell has to invent a life that effectively obliterates his real childhood history, the main part of which was spent in Tennessee with a mother he resented. "The mad scientist out to destroy the world" who appears in the Californian poems is a paradoxical version of Jarrell himself, inventing to destroy. In this way, the spectre of personal apocalypse hangs over all of Jarrell's Californian writing, just as the spectre of global apocalypse dominates all of his writing after the war, from the Los Angeles poems to "The Old and the New Masters" and The Animal Family.

The narcotic sweetness of "Thinking of the Lost World"s first section has been replaced with the emphysematic intoxications of smoke and Vicks, a manufactured commodity with a signifying brand name. The adult mind refers, deciphers codes, and reads critically without credulity:

> *Twenty Years After*, thirty-five years after,
> Is as good as ever—better than ever
> Now that D'Artagnan is no longer old—
> Except that it is unbelievable.
> I say to my old self: "I believe. Help thou
> Mine unbelief." (*CP* 336-337)

The proclamation "I believe" licenses an attempt at fantasy:

> I believe the dinosaur
> Or pterodactyl's married the pink sphinx
> And lives with those Indians in the undiscovered
> Country between California and Arizona
> That the mad girl told me she was the princess of—
> Looking at me with the eyes of a lion,
> Big, golden, without human understanding,
> As she threw paper-wads from the back seat
> Of the car in which I drove her with her mother
> From the jail in Waycross to the hospital
> In Daytona. If I took my eyes from the road
> And looked back into her eyes, the car would—I'd be— (*CP* 337)

This is fantasy as an attempt at the literary logic of dream, merging the fictional dinosaurs from the movie set of The Lost World – detailed by Jarrell in "A Children's Arms", the first poem in "The Lost World" triptych – with the "real", recalled

experience of the "mad girl". The world breaks down into the mythicized "undiscovered/ Country between California and Arizona" and the geographically and historically specific journey "From the jail in Waycross to the hospital/ In Daytona". Characteristically, California – and particularly Los Angeles – has to be apprehended from an automobile. As Thomson has written:

> Try to imagine a travelling enquiry in which the view changes according to what may be our most commonplace magic, driving in the city, handling the wheel and being rewarded with a stream of effortless, unexpected sights.[18]

Jarrell's connoisseurship of sports cars and his magazine articles on car-racing indicated his desire to exert a human dimension of control over them, yet the automobile in Los Angeles is a presence that supersedes and dominates both humans and the environment. In this sense, car travel is a living death. The vague desert location mentioned by Jarrell also connotes Los Alamos, and the secrecy of experiments with apocalypse; furthermore, it also refers implicitly to the massive displacement of "those Indians" by white technology. At moments like these, Jarrell's California anticipates the techno-fear of William Gibson:

> Los Angeles was a bad idea, and I spent two weeks there. It was pure Downes country: too much of the Dream there, and too many fragments of the Dream waiting to snare me. I nearly wrecked the car on a stretch of overpass near Disneyland, when the road fanned out like an origami trick and left me swerving through a dozen minilanes of whizzing chrome teardrops with shark fins.[19]

In Jarrell and Gibson, topography forbids a Coleridgean disappearance of the self; the dream vision may not sustain, as the speaker cannot avoid referring himself to the chartered, conscious world.

In the next section Jarrell looks to the potentiality of technology as a means of apprehending the past:

> Or if only I could find a crystal set
> Sometimes, surely, I could still hear their chief
> Reading to them from Dumas or *Amazing Stories*;
> If I could find in some Museum of Cars
> Mama's dark blue Buick, Lucky's electric,
> Couldn't I be driven there? Hold out to them,

The paraffin half picked out, Tawny's dewclaw—
And have walk to me from among their wigwams
My tall brown aunt, to whisper to me: "Dead?
They told you I was dead?" (*CP* 337)

However there is no such thing as a time-machine. The fetishistic machines of his desires – a crystal set, an old Buick – are obsolete and irretrievable through the same logic of materiality and consumption that made them vital and dynamic thirty-five years earlier. The speaker stresses the impossibility and undesirability of easily or mechanically accessing memory; it is as vital to acknowledge the wish to forget as it is to demand a truthful recollection. Jarrell's speaker wants to introduce a sense of alterability – and alterity – to what he perceives to be the generally recognizable "reality" of memory. The fact of death forces him to confront the fallibility of his wishes; however this enables a reconciliation to the concept of memory as being intermittently illuminating yet duplicitous, secretive yet transparent:

As if you could die!
If I never saw you, never again
Wrote to to you, even, after a few years,
How often you've visited me, having put on,
As a mermaid puts on her sealskin, another face
And voice, that don't fool me for a minute—
That are yours for good . . . All of them are gone
Except for me; and for me nothing is gone—
The chicken's body is still going round
And round in widening circles, a satellite
From which, as the sun sets, the scientist bends
A look of evil on the unsuspecting earth. (*CP* 337)

The past is realized in the speaker as uncodified image, rather than symbol; the meaning of the visualizations – "realizations" – of memory does not derive from a calculable system. The headless chicken – which represents a moment of absolute crisis in part three of "The Lost World" triptych ("A Street off Sunset") – evokes in "Thinking of the Lost World" a sense of relativity and the absurd; the *terza rima* employed at times in "The Lost World" poems further develops this sense of Dantesque nausea, both purgatorial and infernal. The melodrama of the evil scientist mimics the chicken for hysteria; farce is employed to make the apprehension of the past bearable. However, the equivalence of the bearable and the farcical is that the

more whimsicality the speaker employs, the more apparent is his desire to escape the circularity of memory and its "widening circles". The atomic hysteria of this verse paragraph's movement refigures the scientist as an Oppenheimeresque lord of misrule, and the indeterminacy and comedy are the symptoms of his science.

The consequent "statement" – "Mama and Pop and Dandeen are still there / In the Gay Twenties" (*CP* 338) – attempts to arrest the frenzied imaginative play of the preceding lines. Mama, Pop, and Dandeen are apparently encapsulated in their epoch; however, just as technology failed to provide a mechanism of safely and satisfyingly apprehending the past, so the periodization of time is not immune from the speaker's instinct for association and digression:

> The Gay Twenties! You say
> The Gay Nineties . . . But it's all right: they *were* gay,
> O so gay! A certain number of years after,
> Any time is Gay, to the new ones who ask:
> "Was that the first World War or the second?" (*CP* 338)

The speaker instinctively deconstructs and dissimulates; tolerant mockery of his own adoption of a cliché – "the Gay Nineties" – leads into a shrewd remark on the vagueness of historical memory for those who have not lived through "significant" events, and are offered only the codifications of periods, decades, or titles to voice their knowledge of history. In personal and political terms, the speaker enacts the dilemma of the desire to forget vying with the responsibilities implied by knowledge. The poem is structured around wishes and their rebuttal; the childhood past is identifiable with pleasurable innocence, the adult present with deadly self-awareness. The final section of the poem attempts a resolution of the disparate "worlds":

> Moving between the first world and the second,
> I hear a boy call, now that my beard's gray:
> "Santa Claus! Hi, Santa Claus!" It *is* miraculous
> To have the children call you Santa Claus. (*CP* 338)

The surface confidentiality and apparent candour of the poem's end is indicated by tone rather than substance; authorship rather than authority. The action of the narrator's imagination has no foundation in "belief"; the miraculous is not created by the poet's "authorial" imagination but what the "real" reveals. It is "miraculous" to be called a fictive thing: to resemble. The poem consists of one perception of resemblance after another in a Californian landscape that offers itself to simulation.

The speaker's attempts to connect the contemporary "simulated" world with the one he is textually resembling – "The Lost World" – are grounded by his self's freedom is consciousness as a fiction-maker. The worlds cannot merge, and the speaker's bipolar awareness that his consciousness will not reconcile memory with perception demands an ultimate response. He self-dramatizes in order to provide the sense of an ending to an existential dynamic that is beyond his ability to resolve:

> I wave back. When my hand drops to the wheel,
> It is brown and spotted, and its nails are ridged
> Like Mama's. Where's my own hand? My smooth
> White bitten-fingernailed one? I seem to see
> A shape in tennis shoes and khaki riding-pants
> Standing there empty-handed; I reach out to it
> Empty-handed, my hand comes back empty,
> And yet my emptiness is traded for its emptiness,
> I have found that Lost World in the Lost and Found
> Columns whose gray illegible advertisements
> My soul has memorized world after world:
> LOST—NOTHING. STRAYED FROM NOWHERE.
> NO REWARD.
> I hold in my own hands, in happiness,
> Nothing: the nothing for which there's no reward. (*CP* 338)

Behind the casuistry of the ambiguous ending, with its play on "reward" and empty-handedness, and the apparently definite "happiness", the poem is also interpretable as an admission of failure: the speaker's inability to be Proust. Yet the crucial terms "inability" and "resemble" do not necessarily relate to either our sense of the speaker's failure or his own, but rather to the world he inhabits and has to mediate. Suzanne Ferguson has written of "The Lost World" poems that "they were the poems he [Jarrell] needed most to write for himself, because in them at last his own life and art coalesce".[20] Yet "Thinking of the Lost World" refutes that notion of coalescence, and settles for a resigned sense of *coexistence* and simultaneity. Longenbach has provided a more convincing analysis of the poem:

> "Thinking of the Lost World" may in this sense be the logical conclusion of Jarrell's lifelong act of impersonation, since its effort of self-definition is no less dependent on masquerade – on the necessity of dramatizing an identity, rather than taking it for granted.[21]

Imagined objects are only images; there is no synaesthesia. The speaker's freedom is to *choose* his illusions, but not to actualize them.

Landscape, and particularly Californian landscape, is particularly vulnerable to illusion and manipulation. A reader's sense of the irreal is confirmed by the "falseness" of the family myth exemplified in "Thinking of the Lost World": the fictional Mama and Pop are the historical Grandma and Grandpa Jarrell. The Californian holiday-home represents a conventional bourgeois milieu within which Jarrell attempts to effect biographical memory, yet the family home is on a street off Sunset Boulevard, shadowed by Hollywood stage-sets. The opening stanza of part one of The Lost World's title-poem opens with a description of that stage-set:

> On my way home I pass a cameraman
> On a platform on the bumper of a car
> Inside which, rolling and plunging, a comedian
> Is working; on one white lot I see a star
> Stumble to her igloo through the howling gale
> Of the wind machines. On Melrose a dinosaur
> And pterodactyl, with their immense pale
> Papier-mâche smiles, look over the fence
> Of *The Lost World.*
> Whispering to myself the tale
> These shout—done with my schoolwork, I commence
> My real life: my arsenal, my workshop
> Opens, and in impotent omnipotence
> I put on the helmet and the breastplate Pop
> Cut out and soldered for me. (*CP* 283)

The "I" of this poem is uncritical and unreflecting by comparison to the speaker of "Thinking of the Lost World". However, the phrase "impotent omnipotence" is a preparation for the "unbelief" of the volume's final poem, with its dismantled arsenal and dinosaurs vanished to "the undiscovered/ Country between California and Arizona". The reality of the childhood myth expounded in "Children's Arms" is asserted by the faith of the speaker in scrupulous detail as a means of expressing truth:

> The bow that only Odysseus can wield
> And eleven vermilion-ringed, goose-feathered arrows.

(The twelfth was broken on the battlefield
When, searching among snap beans and potatoes,
I stepped on it.) (*CP* 283)

The child has a sure sense of place and permanence, but the speaker's voice is not unmodulated within the poem. The mock-heroic listing of the child's arsenal is followed in the poem by a mock-epic hymn:

O dead list, that misunderstands
And laughs at and lies about the new live wild
Loves it lists! that sets upright, in the sands
Of age in which nothing grows, where all our friends are old,
A few dried leaves marked THIS IS THE GREENWOOD—
O arms that arm, for a child's wars, the child! (*CP* 284)

Even this pure myth of childhood is ironized, but at the expense of the mature heroic language the poem utilizes rather than the ideal it represents; therefore, the reality of the child's world is not compromised. The child is heroic, not a mockery. On the other hand, the speaker of "Thinking of the Lost World" is ennervated by a sense of mockery, and heroism is not only impossible but inconceivable. The California of "Children's Arms" is the reservoir of the possibility that it traditionally represents in American literature, a literature that is referred to habitually as what Karl Shapiro termed "a child literature". Shapiro observed that for Jarrell "the child becomes the critic and center of value"[22]; as such, the child is the author but not the poet. The poet in Jarrell's work speaks with knowledge but also from a position of authoritative collapse.

The California of American literature is venerated for its distance from the institutions and governance of the East; it pretends to escape the hypocrisies and confines of democracy and bureaucracy. It lends itself to fantasy and the aggrandisement of individuals. It reflects not only the extent of a subject's aspirations but promotes their political ability to realize them. California is ultimate. In The Fall Into Eden, David Wyatt remarks that in Californian literature, "the space we call landscape is from the fully human standpoint, an illusion of the given world on which we depend, but an illusion in which we cannot finally dwell. . . . its peculiar fate is therefore to arouse our longing for all in human life that is or can be absent or lost".[23] He concludes that the "mythology of this region takes as its underlying premise the apotheosis of the Pathetic Fallacy".[24] Jarrell appears to comprehend the frailty of that

premise. His vision of a childhood California is of a paradisal and heroic idyll that does not depend on a sense of specific locality for its reality:

> Across the seas
> At the bottom of the world, where Childhood
> Sits on its desert island with Achilles
> And Pitmakan, the White Blackfoot: (*CP* 284)

Landscape exists to represent the desires of adults who seek to recall as incorruptible the geography they have inhabited, and furthermore to satisfy the romantic masochism that demands they regard themselves as corrupted.

Children as castaways are self-governing. Jarrell's speaker recollects a high-school production of The Admirable Crichton:

> I watch the furred castaways (the seniors put
> A play on every spring) tame their wild beasts,
> Erect their tree house. Chatting over their fruit,
> Their coconuts, they relish their stately feasts. (*CP* 284)

However, the child's sense of magic and enfranchising theatricality is "Undone":

> When an English sail is sighted, the prisoners
> Escape from their Eden to the world: the real one
> Where servants are servants, masters masters,
> And no one's magnanimous. The lights go on
> And we go off, robbed of our fruit, our furs—
> The island that the children ran is gone. (*CP* 284)

The "world" is perceived as hostile to the child's Californian "island", which is as attractive as Disney's Never-never-land: ageless, classless, unEnglish, and above all, elsewhere. The pathetic facility of California as a concept enables the speaker to encounter one imaginary world after another. "The Lost World" poems postulate a series of "other" places, all of them California: "There was nothing there for me to disbelieve".

Belief and disbelief are irrelevances in a world where reality and simulacra are perpetually merging. The child in this poem feels no terror at living in such a vaccuum, unlike the speaker in "Thinking of the Lost World" who says to his "old self": "I believe. Help thou/ Mine unbelief". The one environment in which the

child is portrayed as alien is the "Echoing cavern where Pop, a worker,/ Works for our living" (*CP* 285):

> I make some remark
> He doesn't hear. In that hard maze—in that land
> That grown men live in—in the world of work,
> He measures, shears, solders; and I stand
> Empty-handed, watching him. (*CP* 285)

Simultaneously, however, the workers are transformed from seven dwarves to Nibelungen, as the foundry becomes a Stygian nightworld; the obverse of the world where "the Sunset bus" is "lit by the lavender/ And rose of sunrise" (*CP* 285): "Past their time clock, their pay window, is the blue/ And gold and white of noon" (*CP* 285).

Gold is the colour of money, but the speaker renders it as black and contaminatedly nightworldish:

> The sooty thread
> Up which the laborers feel their way into
> Their wives and houses, is money; the fact of life,
> The secret the grown-ups share, is what to do
> To make money. The husband Adam, Eve his wife
> Have learned how not to have to do without
> Till Santa Claus brings them their Boy Scout knife— (*CP* 285-286)

Through a process of association, images combine in a wild hybrid to form a collage of discourse rather than a single myth and argument. From Wagnerian fantasy to an Audenesque Achilles to Smoketown industrialism to a simultaneously Marxist and consumerist Fall, Jarrell modulates away from the child speaker to the extent that his subjective voice has been obscured and suppressed by an objective and digressionary one; indeed, that voice appears to have come from Jarrell's "radical youth".

As if conceding the impending obscurity of the poem, Jarrell re-adopts the child's voice: "Pop tells me what I love to hear about,/His boyhood in Shelbyville" (*CP* 286), and the poem runs benignly to an apparently serene and confident end, as the grandfather's autobiographical narrative justifies Jarrell's fiction. The discomfort of the previous section lay with the speaker's inability to control the images and symbols that demanded communication. Comedy comes with confidence:

A prelude
By Chopin, hammered note by note, like alphabet
Blocks, comes from next door. It's played with real feeling,
The feeling of being indoors practicing. (*CP* 286)

The poem begins and ends with play, as the child is being lifted to the library with Mrs. Mercer and "my own friend Lucky,/ Half wolf, half police dog" (*CP* 287):

So now, Lucky and I sit in our row,
Mrs. Mercer in hers. I take for granted
The tiller by which she steers, the yellow roses
In the bud vases, the whole enchanted
Drawing room of our progress. The glass encloses
As glass does, a womanish and childish
And doggish universe. We press our noses
To the glass and wish: the angel- and devilfish
Floating by on Vine, on Sunset, shut their eyes
And press their noses to their glass and wish. (*CP* 287)

A fantasy of coherence has been reinforced; the car is an "enchanted/ Drawing room", a portable salon from which to imagine – and transform – the world. The homely images represent the limitations of the speaker's aspirations; to create something "whole" and satisfactory, rather than diverse or tangential. The streetscape of Los Angeles is encapsulated in the finite and definable boundaries of an aquarium; the "wish" creates a dream in which everything colludes to make sense: the poem's final image is a wilfully obverse reading of Lowell's "For the Union Dead".[25] To achieve this, however, the figures of Mama and Pop have been relinquished; the bourgeois myth of "our progress" that Jarrell erects has had to be removed from the family "history" that occupies the majority of the poem. The moments in the poem when the child connects with a particularly "real" predicament – such as Pop's work – represent confusion and darkness; the apparent clarity of the poem's end comes from a willed and self-aware isolation. Paradoxically, for all his stress on "belief", Jarrell has to rely on knowledge and its denial.

The second poem of "The Lost World" triptych, "A Night with Lions", avoids the complexity of attempting to create the persona of the child in the present tense; it is presented as retrospective anecdote, to the extent that at first it seems to offer itself as little other than an establishment of Jarrell's Hollywood credentials. The first three lines are a casual, gossipy brag:

When I was twelve we'd visit my aunt's friend
Who owned a lion, the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
Lion. (*CP* 288)

As if it was not enough to know anyone who owned a lion, but the M-G-M lion at that! As if to counter any suggestion of braggartism, Jarrell's speaker adopts an unremarkable view of his "friendship" with the lion:

I'd play with him, and he'd pretend
To play with me. I was the real player
But he'd trot back and forth inside his cage
Till he got bored. (*CP* 288)

The problem of confronting a icon of fantasy in the real context of its captivity is the unignorable banality of that real caged environment; the twelve year-old's projected boredom signals the end of play and the emergence of the serious material stuff of adolescent sexuality. In that context, "Tawny" the lion is no more exceptional than "Lucky", the "half wolf, half police dog" of "A Children's Arms". In order to recover fantasy, the speaker has to forget that predicament and re-direct fantasy onto a more immediate object of desire:

Now the lion roars
His slow comfortable roars; I lie beside
My young, tall, brown aunt, out there in the past
Or future, and I sleepily confide
My dream-discovery: my breath comes fast
Whenever I see someone with your skin,
Hear someone with your voice. The lion's steadfast
Roar goes on in the darkness. I have been
Asleep a while when I remember: you
Are—you, and Tawny was the lion in—
In *Tarzan*. In *Tarzan!* (*CP* 288)

The "Now" of the speaker's moment of recollection has the lion as the movie lion again, roaring its introduction to every M-G-M picture as an inducement to the willing suspension of disbelief. The adult speaker's fantasy is – logically enough – adult; the lion permits him to relate his desire for his aunt – "my breath comes fast" –

who is eroticised as an Amazonian Jane: "young, tall, brown". This is endorsed by the full rehabilitation of the domesticized "Tawny" to the movie-star beast "In *Tarzan.* In *Tarzan*!". The speaker's exclamation is with the rapture of a male fantasy recaptured and a taboo desire expressed: "dream-discovery". What is surprising is the unironical obliviousness of the poem's end:

> Just as we used to,
> I talk to you, you talk to me or pretend
> To talk to me as grown-up people do,
> Of *Jürgen* and Rupert Hughes, till in the end
> I think as a child thinks: "You're my real friend." (*CP* 288)

Just as Mom and Pop are surrogate parents of one kind in "A Children's Arms", so the aunt in "A Night with Lions" provides an outlet for the speaker's sexual and intellectual curiosity. The absence of a "real" mother or family in "The Lost World" poems necessitates fantasy. In order to fulfil what he regards as psycho-sexually "normal" processes, such as the Oedipus complex, Jarrell has to co-opt a cast of surrogates. However, the Oedipal knot is in part unravelled by its masturbatory displacement onto the aunt, with her apparently knowing induction of the child into the Gothic and transgressive erotics of texts such as Jürgen (James Branch Cabell's novel of 1919 had gained notoriety because of its publisher's prosecution under the state of New York's antipornography laws; after two years, the publisher was exonerated, but the novel's reputation was secure as a dirty book). In one sense, what coheres the Californian poems is the absence of his mother and the unacknowledged presence of his father; but what distinguishes them is how these absences and presences are reduced to the level of signification through dislocation and mediation.

In the last poem of "The Lost World" triptych, "A Street off Sunset", Jarrell eliminates the distance between himself and the child narrator by relating a pet name to a biographical fact: that Dandeen is his great-grandmother. However, this apparent authentication is belied by the simultaneous presentation of Mama and Pop as mother and father; sub-textually, the child is still "lost". "A Street off Sunset" attempts to make him a prodigal:

> Sometimes as I drive by the factory
> That manufactures, after so long, Vicks
> VapoRub Ointment, there rises over me
> A eucalyptus tree. I feel its stair-sticks
> Impressed on my palms, my insteps, as I climb

To my tree house. The gray leaves make me mix
My coughing chest, anointed at bedtime,
With the smell of the sap trickling from the tan
Trunk, where the nails go in. (*CP* 289)

The eucalyptus becomes a Calvary, and the child a stigmata-bearing icon. "Pop" is absent from the poem until the resurrectional last section:

Into the blue wonderland
Of Hollywood, the sun sinks, past the eucalyptus,
The sphinx, the windmill, and I watch and read and
Hold my story tight. And when the bus
Stops at the corner and Pop—Pop!—steps down
And I run out to meet him, a blurred nimbus,
Half-red, half-gold, enchants his sober brown
Face, his stooped shoulders, into the All-Father's. (*CP* 292)

If "A Children's Arms" incorporates the world of work and myth, and "A Night with Lions" that of sex and fantasy, "A Street off Sunset" interprets the world within Christianity's terms of contrition and redemption. Actions become rituals, events miracles, and doubts trials. Similarly, the intelligence of the poem is directed towards judgement, and most overtly when Jarrell voices his guilt over not corresponding with his grandparents after he left California to return to his mother in Nashville:

As I run by the chicken coops
With lettuce for my rabbit, real remorse
Hurts me, here, now: the little girl is crying
Because I didn't write. Because—
of course,
I *was* a child, I missed them so. But justifying
Hurts too: if only I could play you one more game,
See you all one more time! I think of you dying
Forgiving me—or not, it is all the same
To the forgiven . . . (*CP* 291)

This is when Jarrell might be called confessional. Yet the confession is conditional because of its inadequacy and retrospective contrivance. Jarrell has had to invent his

own absolution, to depict Mama and Pop as the Holy Family – part of the Supreme Fiction of Christianity itself – to justify their representation as real parents. "A Street off Sunset" bridges the gap between art and autobiography, but Jarrell has to borrow an entire mythology to do so; such is his trouble in paradise. The child is traumatized by the image of "a scientist . . . getting ready to destroy the world" and of Mama wringing the neck of a chicken. Consolation is sought through the rationalization – rather than the realization – of fear and distrust:

> "Mama, you won't kill Reddy ever,
> You won't ever, will you? " The farm woman tries to persuade
> The little boy, her grandson, that she'd never
> Kill the boy's rabbit, never even think of it.
> He would like to believe her . . . And whenever
> I see her, there in that dark infinite,
> Standing like Judith, with the hen's head in her hand,
> I explain it away, in vain—a hypocrite,
> Like all who love. (*CP* 292)[26]

It is frustrating that Jarrell takes the autobiographical background of the poem for granted; for the only time in "The Lost World" poems, Mama is referred to as his grandmother. However, the reader is led to infer what has since emerged in biographies; that Jarrell's grandparents did indeed kill and eat his pet rabbit after his return to Nashville, an action which Flynn proposes as explanation for Jarrell's subsequent refusal to correspond with them.[27] Yet that is a detail that cannot be established from a reading of the poem itself. On an autobiographical level, the poem is more of a coy defence mechanism than a confession. Any sense of revelation is very implicit, especially as the surface of the text is so busily and noisily recording the simultaneous impressions of Jarrell the speaker and Jarrell the grandson, alias Jarrell the "son", alias the father. Compensation for the irresolution of the poem's arguments rests in the minute satisfactions of the everyday miraculous:

> Then we three
> Sit down, and one says grace; and then, by rule,
> By that habit that moves the stars, some coffee—
> One spoonful—is poured out into my milk
> And the milk, transubstantiated, is coffee. (*CP* 290)

The "rule" and "that habit" make life tolerable, but not comprehensible or satisfactory. The purpose of the Christian framework is not to be exegetic, but to provide a frame of reference; to be useful or playful rather than believable. The lost world is not recoverable through convention, but through invention, and then only momentarily.

In "The Obscurity of the Poet", Jarrell had stated that the "writer's real dishonesty is to give an easy paraphrase of the hard truth" (*PA* 28). In "The Lost World" poems, truth is not paraphraseable but elusively diverse and contradictory, and California is so phrasable, so open to interpretation and response, that the poetry is enacted through diffuse images and sensations rather than a logic of argument and causality. The poems are most effective as play. "A Street off Sunset" ultimately evokes the Stevensesque awareness that myths and fictions are only made desirable when they are known to be fiction, and not the empirical "truth":

> We sit there on the steps. My universe
> Mended almost, I tell him about the scientist. I say
> "He couldn't really, could he, Pop? " My comforter's
> Eyes light up, and he laughs. "No, that's just play,
> Just make-believe", he says. The sky is gray.
> We sit there, at the end of our good day. (*CP* 292-293)

The "blue wonderland / Of Hollywood" is a multiverse that offers "make-believe" as normality; one version of the world is as real or valid as another, and no code is predominant other than that of play. California is constituted of means and not ends; and "The Lost World" poems are versions and re-versions of repeatable images and subjects rather than variations on a theme. What is recollectable in Jarrell's California is a variety of stimulae: objects, names, messages. His Los Angeles, like Charles Venturi's Las Vegas, is a "message city", a montage of pet-names and billboards.[28] Jarrell scripts his city around the signifiers of Mama, Pop, Dandeen, Lucky, Tawny, Vicks, Allbran, The Lost World.

California is writable as paradise and inferno. The third poem in The Lost World, "In Montecito", depicts it as limbo. John Fuller describes it as "a semi-anecdotal mystery with a Chandleresque setting"[29]; it is not only the setting that is reminiscent of Chandler, but the cool tone:

> In a fashionable suburb of Santa Barbara,
> Montecito, there visited me one night at midnight
> A scream with breasts. As it hung there in the sweet air

That was always the right temperature, the contractors
Who had undertaken to dismantle it, stripped off
The lips, let the air out of the breasts.
People disappear
Even in Montecito. Greenie Taliaferro,
In her white maillot, her good figure almost firm,
Her old pepper-and-salt hair stripped by the hairdresser
To nothing and dyed platinum—Greenie has left her Bentley.
They have thrown away her electric toothbrush, someone else slips
The key into the lock of her safety-deposit box
At the Crocker-Anglo Bank; her seat at the cricket matches
Is warmed by buttocks less delectable than hers.
Greenie's girdle is empty.
A scream hangs there in the night:
They strip off the lips, let the air out of the breasts,
And Greenie has gone into the Greater Montecito
That surrounds Montecito like the echo of a scream. (*CP* 282)

The narrator – like Chandler's Marlowe – is both sardonic voyeur and self-disgusted fetishist, yet his sympathy for the victim is intact. His tone implies a criticism of the world; the objectification of the dead Greenie Taliaferro by the narrator mimics the commodity fetishism and moneticized values of the society she inhabited. Her death is presented as muted reportage, and her personality through inventory. What would have been immediately apparent to the narrator during Greenie's life – her figure and hairstyle – are what is estimable after her demise. Greenie is obituarized by reference to her sex appeal ("her good figure almost trim"), her possessions ("her electric toothbrush", "her safety-deposit box"), her social status ("her seat at the cricket matches"), and her property value ("In a fashionable suburb"). "In Montecito" shows a life turned into a dispersal sale, the human subject has disappeared in a cultural context where space only is coneivable when it is occupiable.

Another poem in The Lost World, "Hope" satirizes the economic colonization of individuals in a consumerist and connoisseurist culture:

That? That is Pennysylvania Dutch, a bear
Used to mark butter. As for this,
It is sheer alchemy:
The only example of an atomic bomb
Earlier than the eleventh century.

It is attributed to the atelier
Of an Albigensian,
Who, fortunately, was unable to explode it.
We use it as a planter.

We feel that it is so American. (*CP* 307)

California's susceptibility to parody is revealed; a paradisal culture promoting possibility and the fulfilment of desire is also excremental, promoting only the random use and inevitable waste of what it acquires. Death offers no transcendence but surreal bathos and deflation, as "They strip off the lips, let the air out of the breasts".

The Lost World poems do not deal only with childhood; Jarrell's California is equally associated with old age and death. The first poem in the volume, "Next Day", is a monologue spoken by a woman after the funeral of a friend. She is able to quote philosophy ("Wisdom, said William James, /Is learning what to overlook. And I am wise/ If that is wisdom" ([*CP* 289]), and acknowledges the irony (beyond any parody of the Puritan fixation with naming) of soap powders bearing the names "Cheer", "Joy" and "All", but is unable to fathom her own life beyond the most immediate desires, which are frustrated with equal immediacy:

Now that I'm old, my wish
Is womanish:
That the boy putting groceries in my car

Sees me. It bewilders me he doesn't see me. (*CP* 279)

Perception, insight and particularly knowledge are sources of anxiety; both children and adults are "bewildered" by the fundamental and institutional artificiality of California, which renders emotion as kitsch, retrospection as nostalgia and sexuality as camp. The Lost World poems explore that artificiality, and define the limits of that nostalgia, which yearns – in a Lyotardian sense – for a transcendent sublime. However, California is so mutable and translatable into the language of your choice that the whole concept of location and identity depends on the reader's sense of perspective. As such, such mappings of the self are only temporarily formable, or performable. California has no cohering grand theme or idea, so lives are seen in text rather than context. It is paradise without governance, desirable but uninhabitable.

As Thomson says: "L.A. could be anything, because L.A. was not quite a solid 'here' or 'there', not quite an item in geography".[30]

Jarrell's Californian poems are his most fundamental; they are his most "autobiographical" yet simultaneously his most problematizing and experimental in fictive terms. Their difficulty lies in the effort required to locate centrality or an ethical structure within the poems so as to achieve a conventional narrative sense of the book's development and "heroic" presence of the poet. However, what is found is mediation, oscillation, indeterminacy.

Mazzaro has written that "Jarrell's world remains disparate; and he must rely on language as his major means for keeping it together".[31] Every poet relies on language; the fascination of the Californian poems mainly lies in the disparateness of Jarrell's world, rather than what contrives its coherence.

One poem – intended like "Gleaning" for publication in Let's See – that attempts to "resolve" Jarrell's Californian experiences is "The Player Piano". However, the narration of the poem is set in "the first Pancake House/ East of the Mississippi", and not in California. The woman speaker and the owner of the restaurant exchange recollections of Pasadena:

> I ate pancakes one night in a Pancake House
> Run by a lady my age. She was gay.
> When I told her that I came from Pasadena
> She laughed and said, "I lived in Pasadena
> When Fatty Arbuckle drove the El Molino bus."
>
> I felt that I had met someone from home.
> No, not Pasadena, Fatty Arbuckle.
> Who's that? Oh, something that we had in common
> Like—like—the false armistice. (*CP* 354)

The details of "The Lost World" poems are here: the film-star name-checking, the anecdotal and reminiscent tone, the motor vehicles. What is significantly different is that the speaker is a grandmother – "I showed her a picture of my grandson" (*CP* 354) – and that the California evoked is all paradisal and unproblematic. Unlike Berryman's Dream Song 222, the Fatty Arbuckle evoked here does not bear any trace of a scandal or carry sexually sinister connotations. Given that a later poem such as "Say Goodbye to Big Daddy" would actually be about tabloid scandal, Jarrell's omission of any such detail in relation to Fatty Arbuckle indicates here his desire to recall a deliberatedly prelapsarian version of history. The frustrations of reconciling

California past and contemporary are evaded by narrating the poem from the old south (Jarrell's actual birthplace) and through a feminine persona. The relative ironic stability of the fictional present enables the contrition and reconciliation that was unsustainable in "The Lost World" poems:

> Here are Mother and Father in a photograph,
> Father's holding me. . . . They both look so *young*.
> I'm so much older than they are. Look at them,
> Two babies with their baby. I don't blame you,
> You weren't old enough to know any better;
>
> If I could go back, sit down by you both,
> And sign our true armistice: you weren't to blame. (*CP* 354-355)

In "The Player Piano", Jarrell has found a fictional hypothesis adequate for the childhood trauma that demanded resolution. The poem's harmonious ending indicates (unusually for Jarrell) no guilt in having to adopt a disguise; "The Player Piano" is a necessary fiction:

> I shut my eyes and there's our living room.
> The piano's playing something by Chopin,
> And Mother and Father and their little girl
>
> Listen. Look, the keys go down by themselves!
> I go over, hold my hands out, play I play—
> If only, somehow, I had learned to live!
> The three of us sit watching, as my waltz
> Plays itself out a half-inch from my fingers. (*CP* 355)

Significantly, the music is inhuman, or rather it is harmonious action that is independent of individual action. Resolution and reconciliation are mechanical, rather than psychic. California's fictive machinery offers no human perspective, and voids the self of responsibility; there is no closure to "play" and the avoidance of the real, no meaning to games. It is an endless vacation. Jarrell finally achieves a sense of distinction between irreal and real, artifice and practice, by absenting himself from its *jouissance*. Jarrell records the thrill of the Californian moment, then lets the novelty wear off; what remains is cultural exhaustion.

The Californian poems of Jarrell are not only remarkable for the personal and emotional apex they are presumed to represent, but also for their profound and ironic treatment of American myths of natural innocence and limitless prosperity. California is not a myth to live by, but a Romance made of print and pulp; if Jarrell may be perceived as having attempted to exploit it as an idyll, it also must be recognized that he understood California's potential for apocalypse. Contrary to the perception that The Lost World is effectively a confessional book in which Jarrell finally "came home", and may therefore be regarded as providing closure on his claim to canonicity, California was a new space in which Jarrell could problematize his writing (and his status as a writer). Ultimately, the inhumanity of California was its allure, as it continually put Jarrell's humanity to the test. Confessionalism represented a relatively comfortable aesthetic, a coming-to-terms with the self; Jarrell never reached such an accommodation, nor had he any interest in doing so. In all the facets of his writing that have been assessed, Jarrell has been seen as resisting conventional contextualization and traditional assimilation; his discovery of California was vital because it was an environment in which humanity was both at its lowest ebb ("In Montecito") and its state of greatest inventive possibility ("The Lost World" poems). Becoming Californian was Jarrell's ultimate unmaking of himself; his literary peers had got used to the idea of him as a Southerner and dissident disciple of Ransom and Tate, while others saw him as an aspirant European or Texan. The last thing they were prepared for was Jarrell the Californian. Rather than a conclusion to a life-text, moving imaginatively to California meant that Jarrell had utilized a site founded upon the machinic proliferation of characters, selves and genres that he had always been moving towards. Retrospectively, even Pictures from an Institution appears as an appropriate preparation for Jarrell's California; Benton College has the same atmosphere as a closed set, the semester is like a three-month shoot. The image of the Californian child Jarrell standing "empty-handed" is, of course, duplicitous; at once a clearly contrived and clichéd figure of Chaplinesque pathos, the image is nevertheless as convincing a representation of the elusive Child Randall as any other.

In this sense, perhaps the most revealing Jarrellian text is another poem in The Lost World, "The Mockingbird", which was originally published in The Bat-Poet. The mockingbird is a self-assured and assertive poetic talent:

> To make the world his own, he swooped
> On thrushes, thrashers, jays and chickadees—
> At noon he drove away a big black cat. (*CP* 281)

Typically, the reported inspiration for the mockingbird was not Jarrell himself but Lowell, with his almost martial dominance of his poetic competitors[32]; however, in describing the mockingbird's radical appropriation of other voices to the extent that the very concept of his own monologic voice is destroyed, Jarrell approximates his own creative process:

> Now, in the moonlight, he sits here and sings.
> A thrush is singing, then a thrasher, then a jay—
> Then, all at once, a cat begins meowing.
> A mockingbird can sound like anything.
> He imitates the world he drove away
> So well that for a minute, in the moonlight,
> Which one's the mockingbird? which one's the world? (*CP* 281)

The mockingbird's vicarious genius implies the erasure of himself as he projects himself out into the world and onto others. That erasure is not traumatic, but productive; the questions posed at the poem's end demand no final response, but maintain the interrogative energy that Jarrell rated above everything else. In California, he found a geography within which he could continue complicating rather than unravelling his knot of representations, challenging the reader to read life-story and fiction as linked through indeterminacy, and to intervene and investigate the space evoked by his questions. The unanswered question for Jarrell is a statement of necessary survival, of the persistence of the human. What is enigmatic, eccentric and evasive about Jarrell turns out to be definitive.

Conclusion. Jarrell's Legacy: Human, Schumann

The double aim of this thesis has been to insist upon the necessary incoherence of Randall Jarrell's writing and to demonstrate the incompatability of that disparate and discrete writing with the canons of taste and presence necessary to a sure place in American literary history. Having explored particular sections of that diverse writing in detail, the time has come to propose some comparability (if not necessarily continuity) between those parts. Refusing to accept the analysis that Jarrell produced aberration after aberration, the compelling question arises of why Jarrell *chose* to devolve his writing, and consequently dissipate the canonical impact of his writing. If much of Robert Lowell's writing appears determined upon the inscription of Robert Lowell into literary history, Jarrell's writing seems set upon an exactly contrary course; one might except Jarrell's criticism, but then one also must admit that Jarrell employed his criticism increasingly towards describing the erasure of the poet as his career progressed. The end logic of that criticism is that the disappearance of the poet becomes the legacy of the poet; to remain alive, he had to become something else.

In the final pages of her edition of her husband's letters, Mary Jarrell introduces an anecdote that she offers as a definitive moment of Jarrell's accommodation to his minor role in American Poetry Incorporated:

> Shortly after Jarrell wrote Sendak, he and Mary went to a party at Frank Laine's log cabin in the woods. Other guests included colleagues from the humanities departments and selected Greek students. The occasion was Laine's purchase of an antique, square, rosewood piano, where occasionally during the evening George Kiopes of the music faculty played Laine's favourite Chopin. In a dim corner, apart from the others, Laine wanted to discuss with Jarrell Lowell's <u>For the Union Dead</u> and Jarrell's <u>The Lost World</u>. Before long, Laine said, with the kind of cheek born of bourbon over ice, "Well, Cal is a Beethoven of sorts, Randall. And you . . . You are a . . . a Robert Schumann." Jarrell, unperturbed and looking lofty, replied, "That's a clever remark," as if his recent misery had taught him at last that who ranked with whom was truly on the surface of art and that, as he had written Sendak, the surface "doesn't matter compared to our real life and real self" (*Letters* 515).

Rather than regarding Jarrell's response to Laine's remark as gesture of relaxed dismissal of issues of status, and therefore a sublime moment of closure for his prolific projection

of objectified writing selves, the "cleverness" of the remark can be taken literally, and with that, Jarrell may be read as resembling an appropriate cultural subject in Schumann who can only be represented problematically. Guattari's "Becoming a Woman" identifies Schumann as a "becomer":

> becoming a woman provides a point of reference, or possibly a projection screen, for other forms of becoming (for instance, becoming a child as with Schumann, becoming an animal as with Kafka, becoming a vegetable as with Novalis, becoming a mineral as with Beckett).[1]

Like Schumann, Jarrell could adopt multiple identities of woman, child and animal in his writing; the psychological, artistic and canonical implications of that writing are all comparable. Jarrell's ability to become has been persistently manifest throughout this thesis; finding or mapping him in a specific cultural locus has been thoroughly rejected, and instead an attempt has been made to recognize Jarrell as discretely and weakly imprinted in an array of sites. Furthermore, instead of making Jarrell's separate selves cohere to a plausible and monotonous identity, they have been read as retaining their individuality and therefore connected through intersubjectivity. This reads as though Jarrell had created a "no man's land", a space to move through rather than reside within. This also implies that there is nowhere to put him canonically.

In "Robert Schumann: The Romantic Anti-Humanist", Žižek sees the mobility of the composer's self-projections as refusing the recognition of a foundational self, in that his "radical reduction to subjectivity comes much closer to expressing the deadlock of the individual's objective social position"[2]:

> this split in Schumann, this radical oscillation between attraction and repulsion, between longing for the distant beloved and feeling estranged and repelled by her proximity, by no means exposes a "pathological" imbalance within his psyche: such an oscillation is constitutive of human desire, so that the true enigma is, rather, how a "normal" subject succeeds in covering it up and negotiating a fragile balance between the sublime image of the beloved and her real presence, so that the flesh-and-blood person can continue to occupy the sublime place and avoid the sad fate of turning into a repulsive excrement[3]

In Schumann's Carnaval, therefore, "we encounter a multitude of masks whose Beneath is uncertain, oscillating between mechanical dolls and the horrifying substance of undead

Life (ghosts)", and when the "everyday 'firm reality'" is approached the piece comes "dangerously close to musical kitsch"[4]; the work of the artist does not simply fantasize a path of escape from the banal Real, rather it manifests through fantasy the multiplicity of options the artist's imagination provides as resistance to the Real (which encourages the aesthetic disaster of kitsch). In this way, Jarrell – for whom Schumann's piano concerto was "the national anthem of my own particular war" (*Letters* 105) – might be understood as not ignoring the real but signalling its traumatic and explicit effects; yet in recognizing the inhumanity of his environment, Jarrell's multiplicity is not the expression of a simply anti-humanist position.

Eagleton has argued that despite the claims of postmodernity as to its obsolescence, humanism is still possible, controversial and critical,

> whether one is a humanist in the sense that one believes in a human essence or common nature, in the sense of certain properties which human beings importantly share simply by virtue of their humanity, and which have ethical and political implications.[5]

"Belief" is always a problematic term in Jarrell's writing, in that he admits its objective impossibility while radically insisting on its subjective reality. In his refusal of monologic language and a stable writing self, Jarrell appears to resemble an Adornoesque "last" humanist:

> Freedom has contracted to pure negativity, and what in the days of *art nouveau* was known as a beautiful death has shrunk to the wish to curtail the infinite abasement of living and the infinite torment of dying, in a world where there are far worse things to fear than death. – The objective end of humanism is only another expression for the same thing. It signifies that the individual as individual, in representing the species of man, has lost the autonomy through which he might realize the species.[6]

Jarrell's response to this crisis of the individual's objective autonomy is to collapse the individual into subjective individualities which express dissidence from the identifications of non-human institutions that they recognize as enveloping them: Army, Asylum, Library, Academy, Museum, Zoo. He takes apparently resolute humanist icons such as Dürer's Knight or Donatello's David and exposes them as individuals not idols, and their weakening (rather than their worship) represents Jarrell's relativistic re-

definition of the human and rejection of anthropomorphism. In "The Old and New Masters", Jarrell describes the figure of Christ in van der Goes's Nativity as "the small, helpless, human center"; Jarrell's response to that "helplessness" was to re-make humanism as an eccentric philosophy, not denying but multiplying meta-narratives. Eagleton provides a context for this activity: "for humanism the subject is always that which is radically irreducible, that which will seep through the cracks of your categories and play havoc with your structures".[7] In other words, Jarrell spreads himself thin, prioritizing becoming over being. The recently published fragment, "The Pound Affair", indicates how at the end of the 1940s Jarrell had come to ally humanism with irrelevance, impossibility and extravagance, anything that escaped the urgency of necessity or the correctives of functionalism:

> One goes from this Manhattan Island of the present, everything carried to an extreme, lifeless extravagance never extravagance of leaves and flowers or unconsidered joy, with hysterical fanaticism – one goes back to the continents of the past not for the saints and the castles, but for the generosity and humanity that can flower from the common assumption that there are certain things which no one would ever find it possible not to do[.] Their poets often supported their feelings, and were disregarded when they did not; these people had not found, as we have, that all these beliefs are superfluities which a functional society or art or thought (will/can) eliminate; that the world can go on – or, at least, end – perfectly well without them.[8]

Nostalgic for the continental past in preference to the newly Superpowered present, Jarrell may be identified as belonging to the space between the end of modernism and the realization of the consequential era of late capitalism. His writing is pessimistic and resigned, yet simultaneously exploits the atmosphere of cultural exhaustion by refusing to be politically futile. Even while admitting despair and cultural failure, Jarrell persists in attempting to affirm or partially define the human. He displays how a humanist can turn into an apocalyptic pessimist, but he also converts that pessimism into critical urgency in his engagement with his contemporary culture and his role within it. In the midst of all the indeterminacy and discreteness that have been described in his work, there are still moments at which Jarrell attempts to assert epigrammatically the necessary essence of the human, however weakly: the "very human" girl in the library, the "helpless, human center" of a Renaissance Nativity, the Animal Family attempting reconstruction in the aftermath of catastrophe. Jarrell's version of humanism asserts the practice of criticism,

interrogation and resistance. He admits the failure of the abiding meta-narratives of modernity and the Enlightenment as ideology, declaring his "unbelief"; nevertheless, he commits himself again to humanism as practice and process. Jarrell idolized Freud, but as "the poet Sigmund Freud" (*KA&C* 249) not "the father of psychoanalysis". Edward Said has recently re-interpreted Freud in a similar way. In his Presidential Address to the Modern Language Association in 1999, Said adopts Freud the writer as a heroic figure of humanism who followed

> a heroic ideal that is rationally willing to venture beyond what Freud called the upper floors of the house of human existence and to unsettle and rediscover what lies hidden or forgotten beneath them[9]

Said and Jarrell's celebration of Freud sets them apart from others who have claimed to represent the continuity of humanism; in Harold Bloom's Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human, Freud is dismissed as "the belated rhetorician" to Shakespeare "the original psychologist".[10] Allan Bloom's interest in Freud was in how he was "not a convinced advocate of democracy or equality" and "very dubious about the future of civilization and the role of reason in the life of man".[11] For Jarrell, contextualizing Freud in a complex of abstractions and ideological abstractions was irrelevant, as it meant ignoring his vital energy and humanity:

> any essay on love and marriage and poetry might well ask for itself the blessing of one of the most loving and most married of mortals, a husband and father who would describe with lyric humour the very tables and chairs, keys and sewing baskets of a household, and finish by calling it "little world of happiness, not silent friends and emblems of honourable humanity" (*KA&C* 250).

Jarrell may have given up believing in progress, but he never became inactive and never gave up the work of recovery and discovery. Said says that "Humanism is disclosure; it is agency; it is immersing oneself in the element of history"[12]; Jarrell's willingness to attempt such disclosure effectively took over his writing as his life went on; it is the will towards such disclosure that leads to his endless multiplications and divisions of himself, as if more Randall Jarrells could find more, show more. Vital also to this process was Jarrell's ability to pretend, to project himself onto David or Greenie Taliaferro. Even when apparently adopting a confessional mode in The Lost World, he

places that apparently unproblematic self-unburdening poetic voice within a Californian context that is offering a further disclosure: that the confession is a fiction within a fiction. Looking at Jarrell in this way, we can also make sense of Arendt's analysis of him as refusing to evade the world; this was not a belligerent or obdurate machismo. Rather Jarrell persisted in asserting human values by assuming that they still had use and were continually under duress. A human under threat and a human being compromised are still nevertheless human; Jarrell attempted to present the human as in a state of emergency, a Benjaminesque "moment of danger" that nevertheless can be turned into poteniality.

The relationships between Jarrell and Benjamin that have been persisted with throughout this thesis may be related in turn to what Adorno observed of the latter, who:

> conceived the downfall of the subject and the salvation of man as inseparable. That defines the macrocosmic arc, the microcosmic figures of which drew his devoted concern.[13]

If the legacy of this is that you may only gesture towards a masterwork because you know it to be impossible, then this deadlock is precisely what Jarrell continually raises as a spectre in his writing: alluding to decisive projects (such as his aspiration to produce a definitive book on Eliot or his Benjamin-like aspiration to produce a book collating aphorisms and epigrams, begun but never completed) but being intent upon dispelling them, and failing to provide a continuous narrative that might give his writing a continuous and assimilable logic. From an Americanist, presence-centred point of view this is profligacy, baffling and laughable. There is no single book such as Leaves of Grass to define Randall Jarrell; the theory that the American writer produces "one life, one writing" is fatally undermined and exploded by Jarrell.

Appropriately, Jarrell's legacy – that there is no "reason" for his writing – is a joke of which he is the subject and object, when "you even said to yourself, like a Greek philosopher having a nervous breakdown: 'Is it right to be good?'" (*Pictures* 37). Elsewhere, the "thinness" of Jarrell's writing has permitted his appropriation by variously activist readers who extract a monologic essence from one of the multiple narratives throughout the work and insist on that single aspect as definitive; whether this is done to indict Jarrell as a failure, or to provide him with an apologia, or indeed to re-cast him as an embryonic Allan Bloom or a child prodigy manqué, it is futile to complain. It is the product of Jarrell's multiplicity and duplicity, his collapse of the categorizable writer into categories, his ability to reproduce himself into barely reconcilable individualities; yet

that "promiscuity" also allows Jarrell to manifest the machinery of American culture before, during and after the war without the intervention of a heroic writerly presence, instead making himself a series of fantasy objects in whom "Randall Jarrell" was at most a vestigial presence. This is the vitality and necessary energy of his writing, and demands that it be read as problematically as the social and cultural contexts that produced it; but inevitably and idiotically, it has done no favours for his reputation.

Notes

Introduction

1. Mary von Schrader Jarrell, Randall Jarrell's Letters: A Literary and Biographical Selection (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985).
2. William H. Pritchard, Randall Jarrell: A Literary Life (New York: Noonday, 1991).
3. Mary von Schrader Jarrell, Remembering Randall (New York: Harper Collins, 1999).
4. Thomas Travisano, Midcentury Quartet: Bishop, Lowell, Jarrell, Berryman and the Making of a Postmodern Aesthetic (Charlottesville VA: University of Virginia Press, 1999).
5. Randall Jarrell, No Other Book: Selected Essays ed. Brad Leithauser (New York: Harper Collins, 1999).
6. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Rhizome", On The Line (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983) 64n.
7. Deleuze and Guattarri, "Rhizome", On The Line 58.

Chapter One

1. Frank Kermode, An Appetite for Poetry: Essays in Literary Interpretation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) 10.
2. Renato Poggioli, The Theory of the Avant-Garde (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1968) 4.
3. Peter Jones, ed., Imagist Poetry (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).
4. Robert von Hallberg, ed., Canons (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) 27.
5. Frank Kermode, History and Value: the Clarendon Lectures and the Northcliffe Lectures (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988) 125.
6. Edna Longley, The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1994) 263.
7. Al Alvarez, ed., The New Poetry (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962).
8. Blake Morrison, The Movement:English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s (London: Macmillan, 1986).
9. G. S. Fraser, The Modern Writer and his World, 2nd ed., (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).

10. Ian Hamilton, "The Making of the Movement", A Poetry Chronicle (London: Faber and Faber, 1973) 129.
11. Hamilton 133.
12. Graham Hough, "The Modernist Lyric", Modernism: 1890-1930, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James Macfarlane (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1976) 316.
13. Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) 6.
14. Hans Robert Jauss, Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, trans. Timothy Bahti (Brighton: Harvester, 1982) 20.
15. Seamus Deane, ed., The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing (Derry: Field Day, 1991).
16. Alan G. Golding, "A History of American Poetry Anthologies", Canons, ed. von Hallberg 283.
17. Vikram Seth, The Golden Gate (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).
18. Paul Muldoon, Madoc (London: Faber and Faber, 1990).
19. James Merrill, The Changing Light at Sandover (New York: Atheneum/Simon and Schuster, 1983.
20. Golding, Canons, ed. von Hallberg 303.
21. Golding, Canons, ed. von Hallberg 303.
22. Malcolm Bradbury and James Macfarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism", Modernism: 1890-1930, ed. Bradbury and Macfarlane 21.
23. Vladimir Nabokov, "Introduction to *Eugene Onegin*", The Portable Nabokov (New York: Viking, 1971) 281-282.
24. Charles Bernstein, A Poetics (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) 90.
25. William Meredith, "The Art of Poetry", Poems Are Hard to Read (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991) 221.
26. Bruce Bawer, The Middle Generation: The Lives and Poetry of Delmore Schwartz, Randall Jarrell, John Berryman, and Robert Lowell (Hamden CT: Archon Books, 1986).
27. Travisano 7.
28. Travisano 9.
29. Travisano 14.
30. Travisano 25.
31. Travisano 261-262.
32. Travisano 259.
33. Travisano 287.
34. Travisano 175.

35. Robert Lowell, "Last Night", History (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973) 204.
36. Robert Lowell, "John Berryman", Day by Day (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977) 27.
37. Eileen Simpson, Poets in Their Youth, 1982 (London: Picador, 1984).
38. John Berryman, "Op. Posth. 13", The Dream Songs (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965) 105.
39. Marjorie Perloff, "Introduction", Postmodern Genres, ed. Marjorie Perloff (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1988) 7.
40. Robert Lowell, "Review of *The Seven-League Crutches*", Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965, ed. Robert Lowell, Peter Taylor and Robert Penn Warren (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967) 115.
41. John Berryman, "Randall Jarrell", Randall Jarrell: 1914-1965, ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 17.
42. Berryman, Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965, ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 15.
43. Robert von Hallberg American Poetry and Culture 1945-1980 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1985) 3.
44. Harry Levin, "Randall Jarrell's *Faust*", Memories of the Moderns (London: Faber and Faber, 1981) 166.
45. Edward B. Germain's English and American Surrealist Poetry (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) includes Jarrell's "The Islands".
46. Paul Mariani, Dream Song: The Life of John Berryman (New York: Norton, 1990) 173.
47. Roy P. Basler, "A Letter to Ali Baba", The Muse and the Librarian (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1974) 146.
48. John Berryman, "From the Middle and Senior Generations", The Freedom of the Poet (London: Faber and Faber, 1974) 311.
49. Berryman, The Freedom of the Poet 312.
50. Letter to John Ciardi, quoted in Stuart Wright, Randall Jarrell: A Descriptive Bibliography 1929-1983 (Charlottesville VA: University Press of Virginia, 1986) 189.
51. Ezra Pound, "The Renaissance" 1914, The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound (London: Faber, 1985) 218.
52. John Berryman, "Poetry Chronicle, 1948: Waiting for the End, Boys", The Freedom of the Poet 299. The manifest urge for re-parenting or adoption shown by Jarrell in

his writing for children and later poems signifies the counter-instinct to the urge for belonging to a generation.

53. Jeffrey Meyers, "Robert Lowell and Randall Jarrell", Manic Power: Robert Lowell and his Circle (London: Macmillan, 1987) 31.
54. Helen Vendler, "The Complete Poems", Part of Nature, Part of Us (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980) 111.
55. Pritchard 308.
56. Travisano 49.
57. Robert Humphrey, "Randall Jarrell's Poetry", Themes and Directions in American Literature: Essays in Honor of Leon Howard, ed. Ray P. Browne and Donald B. Prier (Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1972) 220.
58. Wendy Lesser, "Randall Jarrell's Sinister Beings", His Other Half: Men Looking at Women Through Art (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) 145-163. James Longenbach, "Randall Jarrell's Semifeminine Mind", Modern Poetry After Modernism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 49-64.
59. Timothy Morris, Becoming Canonical in American Poetry (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995) ix.
60. Jerome Griswold, The Children's Books of Randall Jarrell (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998).
61. Laura Jensen, "Potential for Whole Totem", Field: Contemporary Poetry and Politics 35 (1986): 13.
62. Perhaps the best example of this is a piece by Rhoda Koenig for The Independent newspaper on Wednesday 25th January, 1995. The brief article was entitled "Life is a failed blind date" (after Jarrell's "A Girl in a Library"), and was part of a series entitled "UNDERRATED: The case for. . . .".
63. Hannah Arendt, Men in Dark Times 1970 (Harmondsworth: Penguin,1973) 167.
64. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 64.
65. Donald Davie, "Common Mannerism", The Poet in the Imaginary Museum: Essays of Two Decades (Manchester: Carcanet, 1977) 43. A curiosity of Davie's review is that he refers in error to Jarrell's Selected Poems (1957) as his Collected Poems.
66. Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka 47.
67. Marjorie Perloff, Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 41.
68. Robert Lowell, "An Interview with Frederick Seidel", Collected Prose (London: Faber and Faber, 1987) 259.

69. Langdon Hammer, "Who Was Randall Jarrell?", Yale Review 79 (1990): 389-405.

Chapter Two

1. Pritchard 185.
2. The difference is that Pound and Eliot's prose was an intrinsic part of their programme, an overtly cultural and political dimension to the poetry.
3. Berryman, Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 12.
4. René Wellek, Discriminations: Further Concepts of Criticism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) 262.
5. Vendler, Part of Nature 115.
6. Delmore Schwartz, "On Poetry and the Age", Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 190.
7. Leslie A. Fiedler, "Jarrell's Criticism: A Footnote", Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Warren and Taylor 64.
8. Fiedler, Randall Jarrell: 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 75.
9. Jerome Mazzaro, Postmodern American Poetry (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1980) 54. Mazzaro might have added that Jarrell was a snappy dresser, a good dancer, and gridiron fan who gave a Gucci handbag to the wife of the Russian pianist Sviatoslv Richter after a recital in Rome.
10. Kirby Farrell, Post-Traumatic Culture: Injury and Interpretation in the Nineties (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998) 133.
11. Michael Hoffman, "The World He Was", Times Literary Supplement July 11th, 1986: 759a.
12. Bruce Michelson, "Randall Jarrell and Robert Lowell: The Making of Lord Weary's Castle", Robert Lowell ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1987) 140.
13. Michelson, Robert Lowell ed. Bloom 161.
14. Helen Vendler, "The Inconsolable", The New Republic July 23, 1990: 36-37.
15. Vendler, "The Inconsolable" 37.
16. Davie 43.
17. Lesser 145.
18. Longenbach 63.
19. Pritchard 133.
20. J. A. Bryant, Understanding Randall Jarrell (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1986) 4.

21. Pritchard 185.
22. Suzanne Ferguson, The Poetry of Randall Jarrell (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971) 234.
23. Hammer 392-393.
24. Perloff, Radical Artifice 41.
25. Vendler, "The Inconsolable" 37.
26. Lesser 145.
27. Vendler, "The Inconsolable" 34.
28. Lesser 147.
29. Hammer 390.
30. Hammer 403.
31. Randall Jarrell, "Levels and Opposites: Structure in Poetry", Georgia Review 50 (1996): 698.
32. Jarrell, "Levels and Opposites" 697.
33. Jarrell, "Levels and Opposites" 697.
34. Mutlu Konuk Blasing, Politics and Form in Postmodern Poetry: O'Hara, Bishop, Ashbery, and Merrill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 14.
35. Jarrell, "Levels and Opposites" 703.
36. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Illuminations, trans. Harry Zohn, introd. Hannah Arendt (London: Fontana, 1992) 247.
37. Travisano's astonishment that the poem's narrator is dead indicates how the poem's "conventionality" does not prevent critics from making a discovery out of the blindingly obvious:

> "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" derives much of its power from the fact that the dead ball turret gunner is the speaker of the poem, a fact not fully disclosed until the poem's final line. This disclosure, built into the poem from its beginning, reveals at last that the gunner is speaking his own elegy. Here, as so often in Jarrell's work, art conceals itself. Experienced readers who assume they know this oft-anthologized poem have confessed surprise when they are brought to recognize that the poem's speaker is dead. (Travisano 242)

38. Lesser 154.
39. Lesser (157-158) quotes a letter from Jarrell to Allen Tate in which he describes Bette Davis as the ideal speaker of "The Christmas Roses".
40. David Young, "Nestus Gurley", Field 35 (1986): 47.

41. Jonathan Holden, Style and Authenticity in Postmodern Poetry (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986) 11.
42. Hammer 403.
43. Hammer 404.
44. Lesser 150.
45. Lesser 150.
46. Ferguson The Poetry of Randall Jarrell 5.
47. Longenbach i.
48. Longenbach 11.
49. Longenbach 11.
50. Mazzaro 33.
51. Pritchard 117.
52. Pritchard 258.
53. Hammer 396.
54. Mary Kinzie, [From "The Man Who Painted Bulls"], Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell ed. Suzanne Ferguson (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983) 228-237.
55. Stuart Wright's bibliography is a vital resource for following Jarrell's alterations of texts, in particular those of the early poems.
56. Hank Lazer, "Reading and Writing Ron Silliman's *Demo to Ink*", Opposing Poetries Volume Two: Readings (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996) 169-170.
57. Ferguson, The Poetry of Randall Jarrell 157.
58. Anthony Hecht, The Hidden Law: The Poetry of W. H. Auden (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) 8
59. Alfred Kazin, "Randall: His Kingdom", Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 95.
60. C. D. Wright, "Mission of the Surviving Gunner", Field 35 (1986): 19.
61. Karl Shapiro, "The Death of Randall Jarrell", Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 195.
62. Arendt 30.
63. Arendt 261.
64. J. A. Bryant, Twentieth Century Southern Literature (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1997).
65. Hammer 398.
66. Vendler, "The Inconsolable" 35.

67. Ron Silliman, quoted in Hank Lazer's Opposing Poetries Volume One: Issues and Institutions (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996) 79.
68. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Illimuinations 247.
69. Hammer 399-400.
70. In an article for The Nation after Ernie Pyle's death in 1945, Jarrell described Pyle as uniquely and courageously writing about "the real war: that is, the people in it, all those private wars the imaginary sum of which is the public war" (*KA&C* 112); Jarrell's regard for Pyle's writing was founded in its "precious and 'human' qualities", and most pointedly in how "this use of *human* seems an inexorable rationalization, a part of the permanent false consciousness of humanity" (*KA&C* 119).
71. Hammer 400.
72. Bawer 80.
73. Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) 58.
74. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" Illuminations 248.
75. Frederic Jameson, Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991) 5.
76. It is worth pointing out here that Auden's exuberance as a reviewer might also be recognized as a critical attitude typical of Jarrell; furthermore, "the prudent progressives" were given central casting as enemies by Jarrell when he came to wriite Pictures from an Institution.
77. Pritchard 263-264. Jarrell would have been aware of how an FBI-inspired institutional fudge prevented William Carlos Williams from assuming the post at the Library of Congress from September 1952 to September 1953; the bureaucratic impasse was motivated by allegations about the radical past of Williams. See Paul Mariani, William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981) 651-657.
78. Hammer 392.
79. Lesser 153.
80. Lesser 154.
81. Alan Nadel, Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995) 88.
82. Nadel 294.
83. Michael Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture (New York: Random House, 1993) 549.

84. Letter to Charlotte Kohler (editor of Virgina Quarterly Review), 23 January 1957, excerpted in Wright 302.
85. Leslie A. Fiedler, The Return of the Vanishing American 1968. (London: Paladin, 1972) 121-122.
86. Pritchard 290.
87. Charles Altieri, Painterly Abstraction in Modernist Poetry: The Contemporaneity of Modernism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 318.
88. Richard Rorty, "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism" 1983, Postmodernism: A Reader ed. Thomas Docherty (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) 323.
89. Gilles Deleuze and Clair Parnet, "Politics", On the Line 100.
90. Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka 35.
91. Arendt 262.

Chapter Three

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Sketch for a Foreword", Culture and Value trans. Peter Finch, ed. G. H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) 6e.
2. Shapiro, Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 204.
3. Lowell, Randall Jarrell: 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 106-107.
4. Peter Taylor, "Randall Jarrell", Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 205.
5. Sylvia Angus, "Randall Jarrell, Novelist: A Reconsideration", Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell ed. Ferguson 266.
6. Angus, Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell ed. Ferguson 268.
7. Suzanne Ferguson, "To Benton, with Love and Judgement: Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution*",Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell ed. Ferguson 272.
8. Ferguson quotes these remarks from Jarrell's notes in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library.
9. Pritchard 244.
10. Pritchard 246.
11. Kathe Davis Finney, "The Poet, Truth, and other Fictions: Randall Jarrell as Storyteller", Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell ed. Ferguson 291.
12. Finney, Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell ed. Ferguson 286.
13. Lesser 160.
14. Shapiro, Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 205.
15. Shapiro 204.

16. Shapiro 206.
17. John Crowe Ransom, "The Rugged Way of Genius", Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 165.
18. Ransom, Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 168.
19. Denis Donoghue, "The Lost World", Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 53.
20. Marianne Moore's jacket blurb for Pictures from an Institution is on page 633 of The Complete Prose of Marianne Moore (London: Faber and Faber, 1987).
21. Mazzaro 56.
22. Brian Vickers, "Rhetoric in the Modern Novel", In Defence of Rhetoric (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988) 417.
23. Vickers 415.
24. Flannery O'Connor, Letter to Robert and Sally Fitzgerald, The Library of America Collected Works of Flannery O'Connor (New York: Literary Classics of America, 1988) 906.
25. Slavoj Žižek, The Plague of Fantasies (London: Verso, 1997) 40.
26. Ferguson, Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell ed. Ferguson 275.
27. Žižek 40.
28. Angus, Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell ed. Ferguson 270.
29. Jacques Attali, Noise: The Political Economy of Music, trans. Brian Massimi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985) 83.
30. Attali 12.
31. Richard A. Flynn, Randall Jarrell and the Lost World of Childhood (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990) 68. The total institution of the university is wholly identifiable with the total institution of the nuclear family in the novel, not opposite to it.
32. Flynn 65.
33. Flynn 66.
34. Sister Bernetta Quinn, Randall Jarrell (Boston: Twayne, 1981) 118.
35. Mary Jarrell, "The Group of Two", Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 289-290.
36. Robert Watson, "Randall Jarrell: The Last Years", Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 261-262.
37. Meyers 4.
38. Ferguson, Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell ed. Ferguson 276.

39. John O. Lyons, The College Novel in America (Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962) 159.
40. Leo Brandy, "Realists, Naturalists, and Novelists of Manners", Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing ed. Daniel Hoffman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979) 131.

Chapter Four

1. James A. W. Heffernan, Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) 135.
2. M. L. Rosenthal, Randall Jarrell, University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1972) 103.
3. Pritchard 11.
4. Von Hallberg American Poetry and Culture 3.
5. Heffernan 138-139.
6. W. J. T. Mitchell, Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 154.
7. Karl Malkoff, Escape from the Self: A Study in Conemporary American Poetry and Poetics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977) 151.
8. Suzanne Ferguson, The Poetry of Randall Jarrell 115.
9. Deleuze and Parnet, On the Line 75-76.
10. Howard Nemerov, "On Poetry and Painting", Poets on Painters: Essays on the Art of Painting by Twentieth Century Poets ed. J. D. McClatchy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) 180.
11. Adrienne Rich, "The Knight" 1957, Collected Early Poems 1950-1970 (New York: Norton, 1993) 138.
12. "The Bronze David of Donatello" was first published in Art News 56 (Oct. 1957): 36-37. Donatello had become the rather trendy artist of choice among American intellectuals after the publication in 1956 of Mary McCarthy's The Stones of Florence had given him currency with cultural snobs anxious to avoid crossing paths with the *hoi polloi*:

> The masses rush in where the selective tourist has fled. Almost nobody comes to see Donatello's 'David' in the Bargento, the first nude statue of the Renaissance, or San Giorgio or San Giovannino, Donatello's also, or the *Cantorias* of dancing children in the Museum of the Works of the Duomo, but Michelangelo and

Cellini, partly, no doubt, because of vaguely sensed 'off-colour' associations, draw crowds and curiosity-seekers. Florence is scraping the bottom of the tourist barrel (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) 11.

13. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Illuminations 215.
14. W. H. Auden, "Musée des Beaux Arts", Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957 1966 (London: Faber and Faber, 1988) 123. "The Old and the New Masters" and the intertextual references to Auden's "The Shield of Achilles" prove that Jarrell's agonistic relationship to Auden persisted throughout his writing. This counters Bawer's analysis that Auden's influence was more or less limited to the early poems.
15. The correctness of Jarrell's reading may depend upon which version of de La Tour's St. Sebastian Mourned by Irene that he was describing. In the better-known version of the painting found in the Louvre (Appendix III.i), the mourners have always been regarded as female; as Malraux referred to this version in The Voices of Silence, it seems likely that Jarrell was also referring to it (although in error, with relation to the "monk"). However, if Jarrell had seen the version of de La Tour's painting in Berlin (Appendix III.ii), the hooded figure there certainly appears to be more masculine than feminine. There is also the intriguing possibility that Jarrell was aware of both versions, and alluded implicitly to the discrepancy between them to add subtextual substance to his overt themes of anachronism and disagreement in the poem. Furthermore, the painting is frequently referred to as St. Sebastian Tended by Irene.
16. J. D. McClatchy, Poets on Painters 185.

Chapter Five

1. Quoted in Pritchard 314.
2. Griswold xii.
3. Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov", Illuminations 101.
4. Benjamin, "The Storyteller", Illuminations 101.
5. Benjamin, "The Storyteller", Illuminations 101.
6. Griswold xv-xvi.
7. Griswold 96.
8. Griswold 100.
9. Griswold 100-101.

10. Fiedler, The Return of the Vanishing American 119.
11. Fiedler 23.
12. Finney, Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell ed. Suzanne Ferguson 289.
13. Benjamin, "The Storyteller", Illuminations 103.
14. Nadel 105.
15. Jameson 19.
16. Rudyard Kipling, Just So Stories 1901, ed. and introd. Peter Levi (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) 150.
17. Benjamin, "The Storyteller", Illuminations 95.
18. Virginia Hilton The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales (New York: Knopf, 1985).
19. Finney, Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell ed. Suzanne Ferguson 287.
20. Griswold 41.
21. Griswold 42.
22. Griswold 44-45.
23. Griswold 44.
24. Peter Hunt, Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1991) 12-13.
25. "The importance of reading, of 'art', was established early in his life, so there was symbolic appropriateness when two sculptors engaged in making Olympian statues for the concrete replica of the Parthenon that adorns Nashville's Centennial Park invited him to pose for Ganymede, cupbearer of the gods. The boy's familiarity with myths and legends had charmed the sculptors (Belle Kinney and Leopold Scholz) to the extent that they not only immortalized him on the Parthenon (Nashville was proud to be known as the 'Athens of the South') but even expressed interest in adopting him. Anna Jarrell refrained at the time from telling her son of their interest; when Jarrell found out later he said, 'She was right. I'd have gone with them like *that*'" (Pritchard 16).
26. Griswold 75.
27. It is worth remarking that this is Jarrell's second boy David, after that of his Donatello poem.
28. Griswold 75.
29. Quinn 106.
30. Quinn 108.
31. Quinn 106.
32. Griswold 71.

33. Flynn 106.
34. Flynn 105.
35. Hunt 87.
36. Lissa Paul, "Intimations of Imitations: Mimesis, Fractal Geometry and Children's Literature", Literature for Children ed. Peter Hunt (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1992) 68-69.
37. Paul, Literature for Children ed. Hunt 73.
38. Paul, ed. Hunt 76.

Chapter Six

1. Bryant, Understanding Randall Jarrell 172.
2. Emily Dickinson, "A Clock stopped -", The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson ed. Thomas H. Johnson 1970 (London: Faber and Faber, 1975) 132-133.
3. Adrienne Rich, "The Roofwalker", Collected Early Poems 1950-1970 193-194.
4. Quinn 21.
5. Allen Tate, "Young Randall", Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 231.
6. J. D. McClatchy, White Paper: On Contemporary American Poetry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) 7.
7. Deleuze and Parnet, On the Line 43.
8. David Wyatt, The Fall into Eden: Landscape and Imagination in California (Cambridge: Cambridge Univerity Press, 1986) 210.
9. Pritchard 11.
10. Joseph Bennett, "Utterances, Entertainment and Symbols", New York Times Book Review, 18 April 1965: 24.
11. Paul Fussell, "How to Sing of a Diminished Thing", Saturday Review 48 (3 July 1965): 30-32.
12. Flynn 139.
13. Pritchard 303.
14. Pritchard 312.
15. David Thomson, "Driving in a Back Projection", West of the West ed. Leonard Michaels, David Reid, Rachel Scherr (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) 25.
16. Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso,1974) 115.

17. I understand "The Lost World" series as including both "The Lost World" triptych and "Thinking of the Lost World".
18. Thomson, West of the West ed. Michaels, Reid and Scherr 23.
19. William Gibson, "The Gernsback Continuum", Burning Chrome (New York: Arbor Books, 1986) 34.
20. Ferguson, Poetry of Randall Jarrell 212.
21. Longenbach Modern Poetry After Modernism 64.
22. Shapiro, Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 223.
23. Wyatt 210.
24. Wyatt xvi.
25. Lowell uses images of bubbles and aquariums in "For the Union Dead" to remake Boston as a goldfish bowl on the verge of bursting. Jarrell uses the image of the fish-tank to insist upon the separateness of the universes of the past and the present, the child and the adult; Los Angeles in turn becomes a place where the violent energies of society are encapsulated and contained by the imperative drives of wish-making and dream factories.
26. Jarrell's reference to Judith and Holofernes represents an Americanized (and domesticated) version of the simultaneously exultant and horrified description of Donatello's Judith with the Head of Holofernes in Lowell's "Florence".
27. Flynn 128.
28. Charles Venturi, "The Duck and the Decorated Shed" 1972, Postmodernism: A Reader ed. Docherty 295-307.
29. John Fuller, "Randall Jarrell", The Modern Poet: Essays from *The Review* ed. Ian Hamilton (London: Macdonald, 1968) 154.
30. Thomson, West of the West ed. Michaels, Reid and Scherr 24.
31. Mazzaro 56.
32. "In Life, Frost and Cal were Mockingbirds; Michael di Capua and I were Chipmunks, of sorts; and Bob Watson and Randall were Bats", Mary Jarrell, Randall Jarrell: 1914-1965 ed. Lowell, Taylor and Warren 290. Jarrell's aptitude for impersonation, shape-changing and mockery of all kinds have to qualify him for the role of mockingbird at least as much as Lowell.

Conclusion

1. Félix Guattari, "Becoming a Woman", Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics trans. Rosemary Sheed (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1984) 234.

2. Žižek 197.
3. Žižek 67.
4. Žižek 208-209.
5. Terry Eagleton, The Illusions of Postmodernism (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) 130.
6. Adorno, Minima Moralia 38.
7. Eagleton 131.
8. Randall Jarrell, "The Pound Affair", introd. and ed. Stephen Burt, Thumbscrew 14 (1999): 13.
9. Edward Said, "Presidential Address 1999: Humanism and Heroism", Publications of the Modern Language Association 115. 3 (May 2000): 290.
10. Harold Bloom, Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human (New York: Riverhead, 1998). Oddly enough (yet similarly), in his introduction to American Poetry 1946 to 1965 Bloom compares Jarrell unfavourably to Weldon Kees on the basis that the latter was a better psychologist (New York: Chelsea House, 1987) xi.
11. Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) 150.
12. Said, PMLA 115.3 (May 2000): 290.
13. Theodor Adorno, "A Portrait of Walter Benjamin", Prisms trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982) 231.

APPENDIX I

Albrecht Dürer — The Knight, Death and the Devil

1513
AD

APPENDIX II

Donatello — Bronze David

Photographs from Bennett, Bonnie A., and David G. Wilkins. Donatello. London: Phaidon, 1984

APPENDIX III

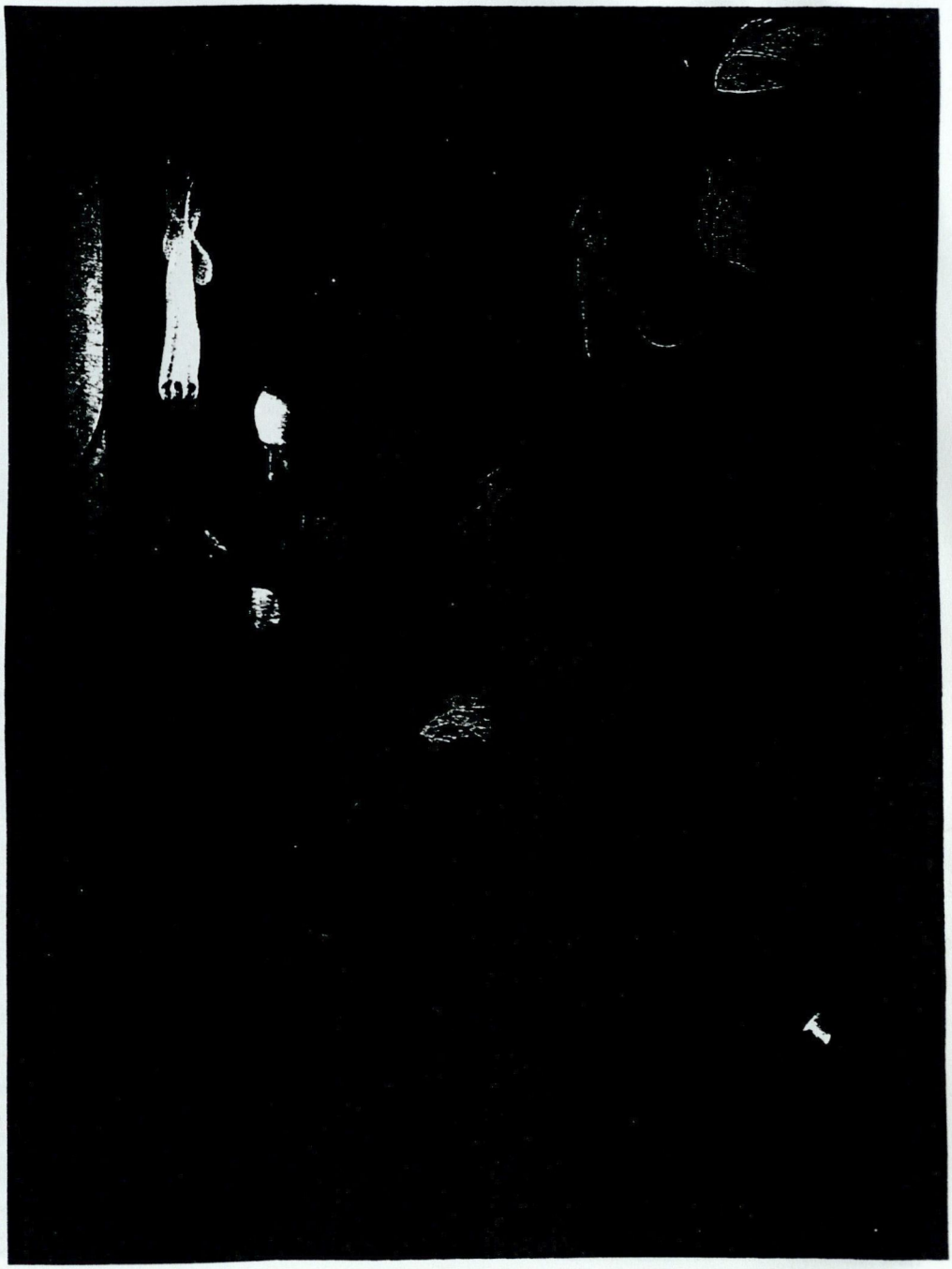
APPENDIX III

(i)

Georges de La Tour St. Sebastian Mourned by Irene
Louvre, Paris

(ii)

Georges de La Tour St. Sebastian Mourned by Irene
Staatliche Musem zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie



APPENDIX IV

Hugo van der Goes "Nativity", The Portinari Altarpiece (detail)
Uffizi Gallery, Florence

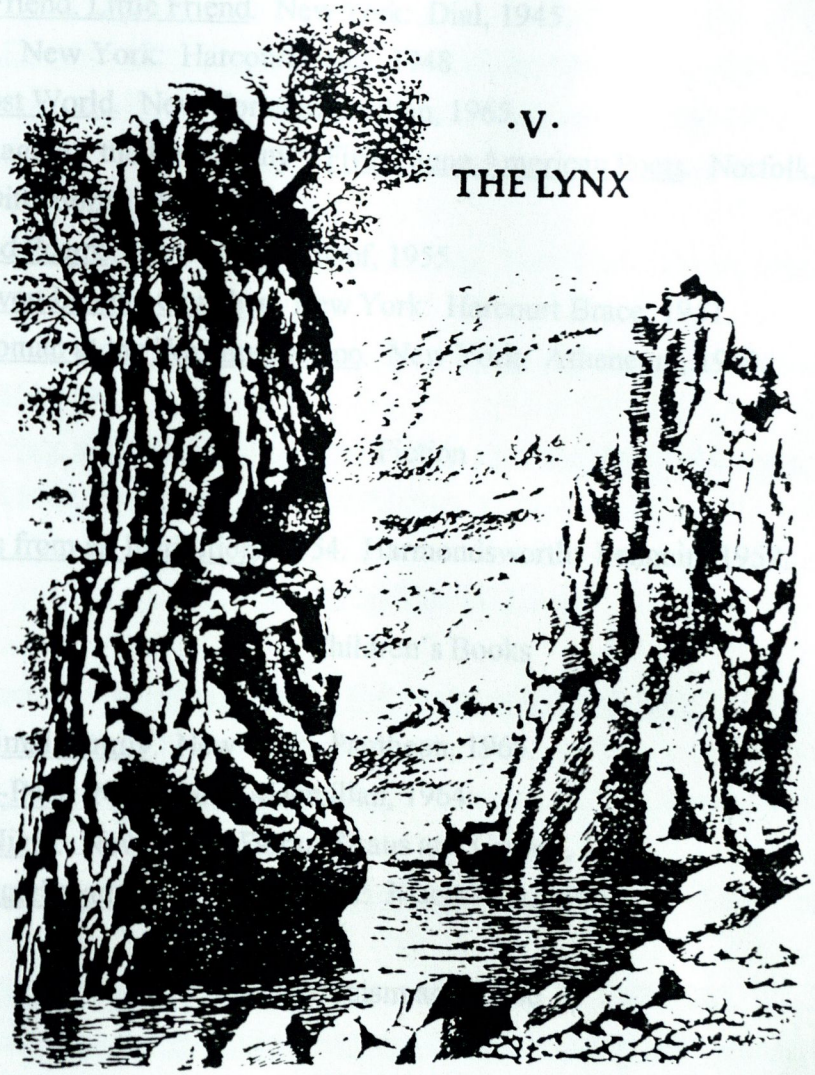
APPENDIX V

(i)

Rudyard Kipling — Illustration for "The Cat that Walked by Itself", Just So Stories

(ii)

Maurice Sendak — Decorations for Randall Jarrell's The Animal Family



·V·

THE LYNX

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Works by Randall Jarrell

Poetry

Jarrell, Randall. Blood for a Stranger. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1942.

---. The Complete Poems. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969.

---. Jerome: The Biography of a Poem. New York: Grossman, 1971.

---. Little Friend, Little Friend. New York: Dial, 1945.

---. Losses. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1948.

---. The Lost World. New York: Macmillan, 1965.

---. "The Rage for the Lost Penny". Five Young American Poets. Norfolk, CT.: New Directions, 1940.

---. Selected Poems. New York: Knopf, 1955.

---. The Seven-League Crutches. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951.

---. The Woman at the Washington Zoo. New York: Atheneum, 1960.

Fiction

---. Pictures from an Institution. 1954. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959.

Children's Books

---. The Animal Family. New York: Pantheon, 1965.

---. The Bat-Poet. New York: Macmillan, 1964.

---. Fly by Night. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976.

---. The Gingerbread Rabbit. New York: Macmillan, 1964.

Criticism and Prose

---. Kipling, Auden & Co: Essays and Reviews 1935-64. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980.

---. "Levels and Opposites: Structure in Poetry", Georgia Review 50 (1996): 697-713.

---. No Other Book: Selected Essays ed. Brad Leithauser. New York: Harper Collins, 1999.
---. Poetry and the Age. 1953. London: Faber and Faber, 1955.
---. A Sad Heart at the Supermarket: Essays and Fables. 1962. London: Eyre and Spottiswode, 1965.
---. "Sayings of the Bloksberg *Post*", "The Pound Affair", introd. and ed. Stephen Burt. Thumbscrew 14 (1999): 2-15.
---. The Third Book of Criticism. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969.

Translations

---. Anton Chekhov: The Three Sisters. New York: Macmillan, 1969.
---. Goethe's Faust: Part 1. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976.
---. The Golden Bird and Other Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm. New York: Macmillan, 1962.
---. Grimm's The Juniper Tree and Other Stories. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973.
---. The Rabbit Catcher and Other Fairy Tales of Ludwig Bechstein. New York: Macmillan, 1962.
---. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs: A Tale from the Brothers Grimm. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1972.

Books on Randall Jarrell

Beck, Charlotte K. World and Lives: The Poetry of Randall Jarrell. Port Washington: New York Associated Faculty Press, 1983.
Bryant, J. A. Understanding Randall Jarrell. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1986.
Ferguson, Suzanne. The Poetry of Randall Jarrell. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971.
---, ed. Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983.
Flynn, Richard. Randall Jarrell and the Lost World of Childhood. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990.
Griswold, Jerome. The Children's Books of Randall Jarrell. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988.
Jarrell, Mary von Schrader, ed. Randall Jarrell's Letters: AnAutobiographical and

Literary Selection. 1985. London: Faber and Faber, 1986.

---. Remembering Randall: A Memoir of Poet, Critic, and Teacher. New York: Harper Collins, 1999.

Lowell, Robert, Peter Taylor, and Robert Penn Warren, eds. Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967.

Pritchard, William. H. Randall Jarrell: A Literary Life. New York: Noonday, 1990.

---, ed. Randall Jarrell: Selected Poems. New York: Noonday, 1990.

Quinn, M. Bernetta. Randall Jarrell. Twayne's United States Authors Series. Boston: Twayne, 1981.

Rosenthal, M. L. Randall Jarrell. University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers 103. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972.

Wright, Stuart. Randall Jarrell: A Descriptive Bibliography, 1929-1983. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1986.

Articles, Parts of Books, Reviews

Allen, Brooke. "Criticism and the Age". New York Times Book Review. 1 August 1999: 4.

Angus, Sylvia. "Randall Jarrell, Novelist: A Reconsideration". Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell. Ed. Suzanne Ferguson. Boston: Twayne, 1983: 266-271.

Arendt, Hannah. Men In Dark Times. 1970. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

Basler, Roy P. "A Letter to Ali Baba", The Muse and the Librarian. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974.

Bawer, Bruce. The Middle Generation: The Lives and Poetry of Delmore Schwartz, Randall Jarrell, John Berryman, and Robert Lowell. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1986.

Beck, Charlotte H. "Randall Jarrell's Modernism: The Sweet Uses of Persona". South Atlantic Quarterly 50 (1985): 67-75.

---. "Randall Jarrell and Robert Penn Warren: Fugitive Fugitives". Southern Literary Journal 17, no. 1 (1984): 82-91.

Bedient, Calvin. "The Critics Who Made Us: Randall Jarrell and Poetry and the Age". Sewanee Review 93 (1985): 128-135.

Beer, Patricia. "Randall Jarrell's Cruelty - Randall Jarrell's Letters". Listener 13 February, 1986: 25-26.

Berryman, John. "Op. posth. no. 13". The Dream Songs. New York: Farrar, Straus and

Giroux, 1969: 105.

---. "Randall Jarrell". Randall Jarrell: 1914-1965. Ed. Lowell, Taylor, and Warren. New York: Farrar, 1967: 14-17.

Black, Patricia Rodger. "The Atom Bomb: Jarrell's Dream World and The Lost World". Mississippi Quarterly 39 (1986): 31-40.

Brandy, Leo. "Realists, Naturalists, and Novelists of Manners". Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing. Ed. Daniel Hoffman. Cambridge, MA: Bellknap, 1979: 131-132.

Bryant, J. A. Twentieth Century Southern Literature. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1997.

Burt, Stephen. Letter. London Review of Books 16 March 2000: 4.

---. "The Wrong End of the Rainbow". Poetry Review. 89.2 (1999): 54-56.

Ciardi, John, ed. Mid-Century American Poets. Boston: Twayne, 1950. 182-200.

Cross, Richard K. "Jarrell's Translations: The Poet as Elective Middle European". Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell. Ed. Suzanne Ferguson. Boston: Twayne, 1983: 310-320.

Davie, Donald. "Common-Mannerism". The Poet in the Imaginary Museum: Essays of Two Decades. Ed. Barry Alpert. Manchester: Carcanet, 1977: 42-44.

Ferguson, Suzanne. "To Benton, with Love and Judgement: Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution*". Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell. Ed. Suzanne Ferguson. Boston: Twayne, 1983: 272-283.

Fiedler, Leslie A. "Jarrell's Criticism: A Footnote". Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965. Ed. Lowell, Taylor, and Warren. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967: 63-69.

---. "The War Against the Academy". Waiting for the End. 1964. Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1967: 152-170.

Finney, Kathe Davis. "The Poet, Truth, and Other Fictions: Randall Jarrell as Storyteller". Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell. Ed. Suzanne Ferguson. Boston: Twayne, 1983: 284-297.

Fitzgerald, Robert. "A Place of Refreshment". Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965. Ed. Lowell, Taylor, and Warren. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967: 70-75.

Fuller, John. "Randall Jarrell". The Modern Poet: Essays from The Review. Ed. Ian Hamilton. London: Macdonald, 1968.

Hamilton, Ian. "Ashamed of the Planet", London Review of Books 2 March 2000: 16-17.

Hammer, Langdon. "Who Was Randall Jarrell?" Yale Review 79 (1990): 389-405.

Hassan, Ihab. "Critical Scene: Issues in Postmodern American Criticism". 1987. Postmodernism: Critical Concepts. 3 vols. Ed. Victor E. Taylor, Charles E. Winquist. London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1998.

Hecht, Anthony. The Hidden Law: The Poetry of W.H. Auden. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993: 1-9, 41-42.

Hoffman, Michael. "The World He Was". Times Literary Supplement, 11 July 1986: 759a.

Humphrey, Robert. "Randall Jarrell's Poetry". Themes and Directions in American Literature: Essays in Honour of Leon Howard. Ed. Ray. P. Browne and Donald B. Prier. Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1972: 20-32.

Jarrell, Mary von Schrader. "Afterword: Faust and Randall Jarrell". Goethe's Faust part 1: An English Translation by Randall Jarrell. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976.

---. "The Group of Two". Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965. Ed. Lowell, Taylor, and Warren. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967:274-298.

Jensen, Laura. "Potential for Whole Totem". "Randall Jarrell: A Symposium", Field: Contemporary Poetry and Politics 35 (1986). Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College Press, 1986: 8-13.

Kazin, Alfred. "Randall: His Kingdom". Randall Jarrell 1914-1965. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 86-98.

Kinzie, Mary. [From "The Man Who Painted Bulls"]. Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell. Ed. Suzanne Ferguson. Boston: Twayne, 1983: 228-237.

Kirsch, Adam. "The insects of a day". Times Literary Supplement 6 August 1999: 24.

Koenig, Rhoda. "Life is a failed blind date". The Independent 25 Jan 1992.

Lazer, Hank. "Criticism and the Crisis in American Poetry". Opposing Poetries Volume One: Issues and Institutions. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996: 6-36.

---. "Reading and Writing Ron Silliman's *Demo to Ink*". Opposing Poetries Volume Two: Readings. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996: 169-170.

Lesser, Wendy. "Randall Jarrell's Sinister Beings". His Other Half: Men Looking At Women through Art. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991: 145-163.

Levin, Harry. "Randall Jarrell's Faust". 1976. Memories of the Moderns. London: Faber and Faber, 1981: 166-175.

Longenbach, James. "Randall Jarrell's Semifeminine Mind". Modern Poetry After Modernism. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997: 49-64.

Lowell, Robert. "An Interview with Frederick Seidel". Collected Prose. London: Faber and Faber, 1987: 235-266.

---. "For John Berryman". Day By Day. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977: 27.

---. "Last Night". History. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973: 204.

Lyons, John. O. The College Novel in America. Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962: 157-159.

Malkoff, Karl. Escape from the Self: A Study in Contemporary American Poetry and Poetics. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977: 149-151.

Mariani, Paul. Dream Song: The Life of John Berryman. New York: Norton, 1990.

---. Lost Puritan: A Life of Robert Lowell. New York: Norton, 1994.

Mazzaro, Jerome. "Between Two Worlds: The Post-Modernism of Randall Jarrell". Postmodern American Poetry. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1980: 32-58

Meredith, William. "The Art of Poetry". Poems are Hard to Read. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991: 221-222.

Meyers, Jeffrey. "The Death of Randall Jarrell". The Virginia Quarterly Review. Summer 1982: 450-467.

---. Manic Power: Robert Lowell and his Circle. London: Macmillan, 1987.

---. "The Paintings in the Poems". Southern Review 20 (1984): 300-315.

Michelson, Bruce. "Randall Jarrell and Robert Lowell". Robert Lowell. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1987: 139-161.

Moore, Marianne. Jacket blurb for Pictures from an Institution. The Complete Prose of Marianne Moore. Ed. Patricia C. Willis. London: Faber and Faber, 1987: 633.

Neigebauer, A. "Poetry 1945-60: SELF versus CULTURE". Sphere History of English Language Vol.9: American Literature since 1900. Ed. Marcus Cunliffe. New York: Sphere, 1975: 144-183.

Nemerov, Howard. "On Poetry and Painting". Poets on Painters: Essays on the Art of Painting by Twentieth-Century Poets. Ed. J. D. McClatchy. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990: 178-181.

---. "Randall Jarrell: A Myth About Poetry". Reflexions on Poetry and Politics. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972: 96-99.

Nielsen, Aldon Lynn. Reading Race: White American Poets and the Racial Discourse in the Twentieth Century. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988: 124-126.

Paul, Lissa. "Intimations of Imitations: Mimesis, Fractal Geometry and Children's Literature". Literature for Children. Ed. Peter Hunt. London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1992: 68-76.

Pratt, William. "Jarrell as Critic". The Mississippi Quarterly 34 (1981): 477-484.

Quinn, M. Bernetta. The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry. New York: Gordian Press, 1966: 168-206.

Ramsay, Paul. "In Exasperation and Gratitude". Sewanee Review 74 (1966): 130-145.

Ransom, John Crowe. "The Rugged Way of Genius". Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965. Ed. Lowell, Taylor, and Warren. New York: Farrar, 1967.

Rideout, Walter. B. "To Change! To Change! ". Poets in Progress. Ed. Edward Hungerford. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967.

Schwartz, Delmore. "Light on the Poet's Waste Land". Critical Essays on Randall Jarrell. Ed. Suzanne Ferguson. Boston: Twayne, 1983: 41-43.

Seidler, Ingo. "Jarrell and the Art of Translation". Analects (Summer 1961): 37-48.

Shapiro, Karl. "The Death of Randall Jarrell". Randall Jarrell: 1914-1965. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967: 195-229.

Simpson, Eileen. Poets in Their Youth. 1982. London: Picador, 1984.

Taylor, Peter. "Randall Jarrell". Randall Jarrell: 1914-1965. New York: Farrar, 1967: 241-252.

Travisano, Thomas. Midcentury Quartet: Bishop, Lowell, Jarrell, Berryman, and the Making of a Postmodern Aesthetic. Charlottesville, VA: U of Virginia UP, 1999.

Vendler, Helen. "The Complete Poems". Part of Nature, Part of Us. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980: 111-114.

---. "The Inconsolable". The New Republic July 23, 1990: 32-37.

---. "The Third Book of Criticism". Part of Nature, Part of Us. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980: 115-118.

Vickers, Brian. "Rhetoric in the Modern Novel". In Defence Of Rhetoric. Oxford: Clarendon, 1988: 414-434.

Wood, Michael. "Keeping the Reader Alive". The New York Review of Books. December 2, 1999: 43-48.

Wright, CD. "Mission of the Surviving Gunner". "Randall Jarrell: A

Symposium". Field: Contemporary Poetry and Politics 35 (1986). Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College Press, 1986: 19-20.

Young, David. "Day for Night". "Randall Jarrell: A Symposium". Field: Contemporary Poetry and Politics 35 (1986). Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College Press, 1986: 46-49.

Other Criticism

Adorno, Theodor. Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life. Trans. E. F. N. Jephcott. London: Verso, 1974.

---. Prisms. Trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1982.

Altieri, Charles. Painterly Abstraction in Modernist American Poetry: The Contemporaneity of Modernism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Attali, Jacques. Noise: The Political Economy of Music. Trans. Brian Massumi. Theory and History of Literature 16. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1985.

Benjamin, Walter. Illuminations. Trans. Harry Zohn. Ed. Hannah Arendt. 1970. London: Fontana, 1992.

---. One-Way Street and Other Writings. Trans. Edmund Jephcott, Kingsley Shorter. London: Verso, 1979.

Bennett, Bonnie A., and David G. Wilkins. Donatello. London: Phaidon, 1984.

Bernstein, Charles. A Poetics. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992.

Bercovitch, Sacvan., ed. Reconstructing Literary History. Harvard English Studies 13. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Berryman, John. "From the Middle and Senior Generations". 1959. The Freedom of the Poet. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974: 310-315.

---. "Poetry Chronicle 1948: Waiting For the End, Boys". 1948. The Freedom of the Poet. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974: 297-299.

Blasing, Mutlu Konuk. Politics and Form in Postmodern Poetry: O'Hara, Bishop, Ashbery, and Merril. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Bloom, Allan. The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

Bloom, Harold, ed. American Poetry 1946 to 1965. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.

---. The Anxiety of Influence. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

---. Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human. New York: Riverhead, 1998.
---. The Western Canon. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994.
Bradbury, Malcolm, and James Macfarlane, eds. Modernism: 1890-1930. Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1976.
Consibee, Philip, ed. Georges de La Tour and his World. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
Butler, Christopher. After the Wake. Oxford: Clarendon, 1980.
Conte, Joseph M. Unending Design: The Forms of Postmodern Poetry. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991.
Davis, Mike. Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster. London: Verso, 2000.
Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature. Trans. Dana Polan. Theory and History of Literature 30. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
---. "Rhizome". On the Line. Trans. John Johnston. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983: 1-65.
Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. "Politics". On the Line. Trans. John Johnston. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983: 69-115.
Docherty, Thomas, ed. Postmodernism: A Reader. London: Harvester, 1993.
Eagleton, Terry. The Illusions of Postmodernism. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
Engelhardt, Tom. The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation. New York: BasicBooks, 1995.
Farrell, Kirby. Post-traumatic Culture: Injury and Interpretation in the Nineties. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1998.
Featherstone, M. Consumer Culture and Postmodernism. London: Sage, 1990.
Felperin, H. The Uses of the Canon. Oxford: Clarendon, 1990.
Fiedler, Leslie A. The Return of the Vanishing American. 1968. London: Paladin, 1972.
Fraistat, Neil, ed. Poems In Their Place: The Intertextuality and Order of Poetic Collections. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.
Fraser, G. S. The Modern Writer and His World. 1953. Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1964.
Fussell, Paul. Killing in Verse and Prose. London: Bellew, 1990.
---. The Great War and Modern Memory. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.
Gorak, Jan. The Making of the Modern Canon. London: Athlone, 1991.
Guattari, Félix. Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics. Trans.

Rosemary Sheed. Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1984.
Halberstam, David. The Fifties. New York: Random House, 1993.
Hallberg, Robert von. American Poetry and Culture 1945-1980. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1985.
---, ed. Canons. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984.
Hamilton, Ian. A Poetry Chronicle. London: Faber, 1973.
Harvey, David. The Condition of Postmodernity. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.
Heffernan, James A. W. Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.
Holden, Jonathan. Style and Authenticity in Postmodern Poetry. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1986.
Hughes, Robert. The Culture of Complaint. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.
Hunt, Peter. Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature. London: Blackwell, 1991.
---, ed. Literature for Children. London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1992.
Jameson, Frederic. Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. Durham: Duke UP, 1991.
Janson, H. W. The Sculpture of Donatello. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.
Jauss, Hans Robert. Towards an Aesthetic of Reception. Trans. Timothy Bahti. Brighton: Harvester, 1982.
Kalstone, David. Becoming A Poet. London: Hogarth, 1990.
Kammen, Michael. Mystic Chords of Memory.
Kermode, Frank. An Appetite for Poetry: Essays in Literary Interpretation. Glasgow: Collins, 1989.
---. The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change. London: Faber, 1983.
---. History and Value: The Clarendon Lectures and the Northcliffe Lectures. Oxford: Clarendon, 1988.
---. Poetry, Narrative, History. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988.
---. The Sense of an Ending. New York: Oxford, 1967.
---. The Uses of Error. London: Collins, 1990.
Kroker, Arthur. The Postmodern Scene – Excremental Culture and Hype. London: Macmillan, 1988.
Kurzweil, Edith, and William Phillips, eds. Writers and Politics: A Partisan Review Reader. London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1983.

Lund, Hans. Text as Picture. Trans. Kacke Götrick. Lewiston: Edwin Nellen Press, 1992.

McClatchy, J. D. White Paper: On Contemporary American Poetry. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

Michaels, Leonard, David Reid, Rachel Scherr, eds. West of the West. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

Michelson, Bruce. Richard Wilbur's Poetry: Music in a Scattering Time. Amherst: U of Mass P, 1991.

Mitchell, W. J. T. Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

---, The Language of Images. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

---. Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Molesworth, Charles. The Fierce Embrace. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1979.

Morrison, Blake. The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s. London: Methuen, 1986.

Morris, Timothy. Becoming Canonical in American Poetry. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

Nabokov, Vladimir. The Viking Portable Nabokov Reader. New York: Viking, 1971.

Nadel, Alan. Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.

Nelson, Gary. Our Last First Poets. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1981.

Panofsky, Erwin. Early Netherlandish Painting, Vol. 1. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953.

Perloff, Marjorie. The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

---, ed. Postmodern Genres. Oklahoma Project for Discourse and Theory 5. Norman, OK: University of Oklahama Press, 1988.

---. Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Pinsky, Robert. The Situation of Poetry. New York: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Poggioli, Renato. The Theory of the Avant-Garde. Trans. Gerald Fitzgerald. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1968.

Polenberg, Richard. One Nation Divisible. New York: Viking, 1980.

Pound, Ezra. The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound. 1954. London: Faber and Faber, 1985.

Rich, Adrienne. Collected Early Poems 1950-1970. New York: Norton, 1993.

---. What Is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics. London: Virago, 1993.

Said, Edward. "Presidential Address 1999: Humanism and Heroism". Publications of the Modern Language Association 115.3 (May 2000): 285-291.

Saslow, James M. Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

Strauss, Walter L., ed. The Complete Engravings, Etchings and Drypoints of Albrecht Dürer. New York: Dover, 1972.

Talbot, Charles W., ed. Dürer in America: His Graphic Work. New York: Macmillan, 1971.

Wellek, René. Discriminations: Further Concepts of Criticism. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.

Winters, Yvor. In Defense of Reason. New York: Princeton University Press, 1947.

Wyatt, David. The Fall into Eden: Landscape and Imagination in California. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Žižek, Slavoj. Enjoy Your Symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out. London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1992.

---. The Plague of Fantasies. London: Verso, 1997.