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Artists Connect

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Artists Connect

By

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the

Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Professional Writing in the Department of
English

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Certificate of Approval

Master's Thesis

This certifies that the Thesis of

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Artists Connect

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Freedom to Connect: Essential for Writing

As a musician and writer, to keep my balance, I play the piano regularly. Music-making not only renews me but also gives me the artist's appreciation for the written word. When I play a Debussy prelude concerning a clown, for example, I can chuckle as I play, and in turn, this humor enables me to enjoy a poem or an article. The rhythm, sound color, tempo, and atmosphere of a piece can either inspire me to write, or simply refresh my mind, giving it the needed rest to write later. I consider myself creative, opinionated, articulate, inquisitive, and compulsive. Curiosity leads me to research a topic; drive keeps me going until I'm finished. Originality causes me to approach a subject in a unique way. My tendency to connect the seemingly disparate makes me combine subjects in a unique way. And just as I need to limit my focus to respect deadlines, I need to explore literary and musical topics, since they occupy a neck-and-neck place in my life.

A few years ago I picked up John Maxwell's *Talent is Never Enough*, where I read that if I focused on my strengths, my weaknesses would take care of themselves. That's when I decided to hone my verbal and writing skills, which I could exercise with closed eyes. So I switched my major from music to English. And ever since, no matter what I did officially, no matter how my label changed, the need to make music has driven me like a good angel. I read about an interview with concert pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy, where he describes the need to practice as "sweet slavery" to the piano. I'll never forget one painful episode a few years ago, in summer semester. I took an intensive and concentrated course on Shakespeare, and in preparing for a big final exam, I abstained from the piano for two weeks. When I came out of the exam, I walked into my practice room with tears in my eyes as I faced the black and white keys. I played extra-sweet Bach, Debussy, and Albeniz that day. Six years ago, as I was practicing a simple

piece for improvisation, I also pulled out a Bach prelude and fugue from the past and played it. The rich music filled me and I knew then that I had to find a serious piano instructor. After four semesters as music major and after several years as a private student, I'm still convinced that I must make music as long as I live.

I spend most of my time with friends and classmates. The rest of the time I'm alone reading, writing, or playing the piano. I met my piano professor a few years ago, in the spring of 2005. We met for an audition at the end of April, and I had my first lesson in May. In the fall, he asked me if I'd audition for the School of Music. I presented myself at two auditions, one for piano, and one for voice, and was accepted in both, so I studied both piano and voice my first semester. For the second semester, I decided to focus only on the piano. With each semester I played better and understood music theory and music history better.

One day I suffered a memory slip as I played a piano concerto in master class, in spite of months of preparation. I decided to change my English minor to English major, and my music major to music minor. My piano professor did not stop me, so I proceeded with courses in English literature, American literature, film studies, poetry writing, creative writing, and creative nonfiction writing.

Yet I never turned my back on the piano; in fact I enjoyed the balance I achieved in dividing my energies between music and literature. I arranged for monthly lessons and practiced as regularly as possible, and continue to do so to date. I recently tried for the Van Cliburn Outstanding Amateur Competition but was not selected. I may find a local venue to play in, since I've been polishing pieces and sounding better. One tremendous satisfaction I get in my musical quest: solving technical problems. Nothing discourages me more in a passage than a tight hand. Sometimes I can see the cause of the tension; other times I ask my professor to help

me. The last time, I played three difficult passages for him, and he solved all three by changing the fingering or by changing my thinking about the phrases. “It’s my job,” he said, when I thanked him.

God has blessed me with a great piano teacher, with great friends, with great writing teachers, and, most importantly, with the Bible, His Word. I accepted Christ at age twenty-two, one afternoon, while reading the seventh chapter of the Gospel of John. I’ve studied the Old and New Testaments and I’ve seen the relevance of the Scriptures to my daily life. I have experienced both joys and sorrows: I lived as a single woman many years before marrying, I lived as a married woman twice as long, and once again I’m living as a single woman, only now with a daughter. I count the love of books and music a close contender to that of family and friends, and I consider myself honored to write, make presentations, and teach.

Over the past twenty-four months, with my creative nonfiction and fiction assignments, I’ve written about events or people in my life that I would never have tackled on my own. Because the exercises required specific aspects of a story, I focused more on technique and less on any pain or shame. I disclosed awkward episodes much more easily than if someone had forced me to do so. Also, my peers’ stories opened my mind to various treatments and presentations of events and scenes. The books I’ve read have made me consider different angles from which to view a subject. On my part, I’ve been planning to write other stories related to my family. Reading about a legendary grandfather or about a relative who barely escaped death as an infant made me think outside of myself and outside the usual memoir frame of reference. Learning about the extreme trials of immigrants into the Texan or Arizonan borders made me think beyond my family or ethnic group. Learning about specific individuals in specific geographical areas made me understand universal human needs. The book *Antonio’s Gun* struck

home. I relished the accounts of Tijuana, Mexico, about the man who wanted to run a café that presented opera and of the woman who wanted to sing opera. These stories filled me with joy and inspired me to run for a worthwhile goal. Both of these people kept their dreams alive and accomplished their goals with positive action. Both people ended up living their dreams in the opera community of Tijuana, their hometown.

In a current class I just finished Chitra Divakaruni's *One Amazing Thing*, a modern-day *Canterbury Tales*, set in the basement of an Indian Consul in the U.S., full of people seeking visas, yet trapped in the building due to an earthquake. Fiction conveys so much of real life, and it also informs daily life. Just think about words we use frequently, such "odyssey," or phrases such as "all ye who enter here abandon hope," or "the lady doth protest too much." I've reached the midpoint with a novel featuring a concert pianist involved in international intrigue and cloak-and-dagger. The genre will be a mix of romance and dramatic action.

I believe the craft of writing has less to do with scribbling or typing and more to do with experiencing life, reading, and pondering. My cosmopolitan background, liberal arts education, and Christian beliefs dictate the issues and subjects I address. My frame of reference and sense of purpose will cause me to present works—memoir, fiction, and creative nonfiction—to uplift and inspire the reader. I don't understand why my master's program slotted me in "applied" writing, since I write creatively. To counteract this, I've taken creative courses for support credit and directed studies for applied credit. I have written a medium-length memoir, organized by the characters in my life. I'll add the most recent months to it before publishing. Along these lines, I've been thinking about my father's childhood. But a book on this subject will require much research, probably in collaboration with my three siblings. Our father Benjamin Cramer always spoke elusively about his early days. We did meet one of his childhood friends, and we heard

him call our father “Patch,” a nickname from early days. But not until our father’s death did we learn from this friend that he and Benjamin grew up in a Jewish orphanage in New York City. Why our father kept this a dark secret mystifies us. If anything, I think he should have regarded his humble origins as a badge of honor: he graduated from Columbia University and worked overseas as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer for the State Department. We also know his parents’ names and the fact that they immigrated to America from Austria in the early 1900s. Ben was born in 1904 and lived to the age of eighty-five. Genealogical research with my siblings would bring to light details about him and at the same time unite us in a new way.

Besides writing about myself or my family, I enjoy expressing opinions and thoughts, as well as describing things or places. I also like to connect what I see to something I remember. I think like a poet, going for the essence of an activity or a person, rather than for detail. I also think like a philosopher, going for the principles or significance manifested in an activity or a person, rather than mere physical presence. I relish writing poems in free verse and also poetic prose. I also enjoy writing essays on ideas and relationships between ideas. I would get great satisfaction from publishing a memoir that engages readers with issues they can relate to. I also see myself writing pieces for Christian magazines on Bible passages or on ethical issues in daily life. Finally, I also see myself writing articles for literary or musicological reviews, given my dual background in literature and music.

This brings me to my endless fascination: the relationship between literature and music. For several years now, whenever I discover a new principle in one field, I instantly see the correspondence in the other. In fact, the reason I became interested in poetry in the first place came from a book I read, a series of interviews with concert pianists. A common thread ran through these very different people: they recommended serious students of music to study

poetry. Subsequently I added a minor in English to my music major and took a poetry workshop. There I reveled in writing poems in different styles. I found the activity cathartic, revelatory, and refreshing. Better understanding of poetry gave me better insight into the pieces I played at the piano. Musical composition and poetry writing stand a hair's breadth apart: one hangs on musical tones, and the other, on speech sounds and images. But both the piece and the poem need rhythm, atmosphere, and a sense of “going home” at the close—which the form supplies.

My connection to two different art-mediums inspired me to write a book, *Artists Connect*, in which I compare and contrast pairs of famous artists who never met in person, though they may have known about one another. They specialized in the same or in different fields and lived in the same or different time periods. Then they meet via a time warp or a space warp and interact. Thus, I present a new mix by alternating two genres: expository writing that compares and contrasts two real figures, and historical fantasy that combines these real figures with the supernatural. As historical fantasy falls in-between science fiction and simple fantasy, so my furtive space and time warps place my work in-between Philip K. Dick's “Adjustment Team”—basis for *The Adjustment Bureau* film—and C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, also adapted to the screen. I introduce the reader to five pairs of artists: writer Herman Melville and painter Norman Rockwell; writer Flannery O'Connor and composer/pianist Franz Liszt; playwright William Shakespeare and novelist Miguel Cervantes; composer/pianist Fanny Mendelssohn and writer Louisa May Alcott; and composer/organist Johann Sebastian Bach and composer/harpsichordist Domenico Scarlatti. First I compare their lives, their styles, and their masterpieces, and then, in the following chapter, I have them meet. I've reached the half-way point, and I plan to publish the book in both hard copy and audio form. In the process of writing

the manuscript I've learned not to present information already available in books or on the web, but to present what I think, what I connect, what I conclude, and what I propose. I've had to rewrite the three extant nonfiction chapters to substitute the individual biographical format with a compare-and-contrast format. This exercise constrained me to shrink the three fiction chapters as well, by "starting in the middle," as Chekov would say. To compress the longer nonfiction chapters, I prioritized what I wanted the reader to grasp: the era in which the artists stirred, their life-style and creative style, and their masterpieces or main characters. This thinking provided virtual "drawers" in which to sort my data and observations, so that I could easily subsume some topics, eliminate others, and present still others as footnotes.

Artists Connect presents seemingly disparate figures to the reader in order to show that art in any field—literature, theater, music, or visual art—constitutes the intent, and the medium serves only as the expression of that intent. I present contemporaries who never met, as well as people who lived a century apart. Thus, the reader learns about a 19th-century Hungarian male musician—Liszt—and a 20th-century American female writer—O'Connor, both devout Catholics, unsuccessful in finding a marriage partner but successful in their solitary activities of writing and composing. Then the reader meets two American male artists, one a 19th-century writer—Melville—and the other a 20th-century visual artist—Rockwell, both born in New York City, both spent the latter part of their lives in western Massachusetts, and both liked life around water. Then I introduce to the reader and to each other two contemporary male writers, one a British playwright—Shakespeare—and the other a Spanish novelist—Cervantes, both from the Renaissance, both knowing about each other (but never meeting), and both reaching new heights in playwrighting and novel writing, and both championing their respective languages. After that, the reader gets acquainted with two 19th-century females who never met, one a German

composer/pianist—Fanny Mendelssohn—and the other an American writer—Louisa May Alcott, both fighting the social stigma of women in the public arena and both achieving fame. Finally, I present two male figures from the Age of Enlightenment, one a German composer/organist—Johann Sebastian Bach—and the other an Italian composer/harpsichordist—Domenico Scarlatti, both aware of each other and both pioneers of virtuoso solo keyboard works and performing them at the organ and the harpsichord, respectively. By studying these famous artist-pairs, I hope to inculcate into the reader the notion that art pursued by different avenues does not change its nature. For instance, if a sculptor and a composer get together and ask each other for comments on their work, each could well understand the other's work in terms of art, and each could offer comments meaningful to the other. In other words, the sculptor doesn't need to study music theory to critique the musical composition, and the composer doesn't need to study spacial composition to wax eloquent on the statue. The two artists could certainly communicate meaningfully and learn from each other. I believe that in academia, English majors, music majors, theater performance majors, dance majors, visual art majors, and other art majors need to interact and listen to one another in order to develop to their full potential. When concert artists like Vladimir Ashkenazy urge upcoming pianists to study poetry they mean that all the components of good poetry also apply to good music-making. The only Ph.D. I would consider would be an interdisciplinary one, connecting classical music at the piano with literature and writing, and with that degree I would teach undergraduate and graduate majors from the various art fields.

When I consider my condition as hybrid artist, I understand I received my love of music from my mother and of writing from my father. My mother studied music and played the piano into her teens. In my mind's ear I can still hear her playing "Cordoba," by Albeniz. At age four

my parents introduced me to music and literature: with my mother I first heard and enjoyed Prokofiev's first violin concerto, and with my father I read and recited Mother Goose and Edward Lear poems. He taught me "The Owl and the Pussycat" and even drew illustrations for the stanzas. I can still see Pussycat and Owl in their little pea-green boat, the way Papa drew them. More than that, I remember his words to me, such as when I was little, "Don't pull the leaves off the trees; it's like pulling someone's ears off." Or later, "You're the most disciplined of all the kids." Or still later, "Consecrate yourself to your studies."

My parents, while never attaining professional status in their interests, inspired me with their passion for music and the written word, and I gratefully acknowledge that. I add another component to the mix, an analytical attitude that allows me to evaluate a poem or a piece of music, or an artist's performance. The qualities that make a poem great also make a musical composition great; the ingredients in a special acting performance will also appear in a special dance performance. Two kinds of qualities come to mind, logical or cerebral and emotional or gut-level. In the brainy camp, an artistic creation needs proportion and meaning. To attain proportionality the parts need to balance each other out, like food on a double-weight scale, and when the two amounts on each side balance out, the scale reaches stasis, or immobility. To attain meaning, a work needs to convey significance, relevance, and transcendence to the recipient (viewer, listener, reader). When I watch *Barefoot in the Park*, I empathize with the newlyweds, the mother-in-law, and the lonely bachelor, and I want them to stop hurting each other, grow up, and bring joy to one another. As for the emotional side, I believe a work needs to communicate at a basic level, and compel the recipient to transform vicariously. I also believe it needs to bring permanence and inspiration. When I watch Prince Hamlet brooding over a human skull, it forces me to accept death as a given and to remember the shortness of

everybody's life—mine and my loved one's. And meditating on the fleetingness of life inspires me to act in a positive way in my here-and-now. Altogether, the intellectual and the visceral qualities need to combine and produce an organic and natural whole. Beethoven's Fifth Symphony illustrates all these features: perfect balance of motifs, communication of a variety of deep feeling, compulsion toward the heroic, and a sense of the eternal. Hamlet's soliloquy, a Petrarch sonnet, an O'Connor short story, a Tchaikovsky ballet, a Chopin nocturne... all qualify as great art, with balance, meaning, love, and inspiration, all delivered naturally and seamlessly. I can call a lovely dance a beautiful movement or poetry in motion; I can call a special piece of music a tone poem or liquid gold; I can call a provoking movie a piece of visual, historic, and performing art. In my mind, art is art, and beauty is beauty, and only the viewer, the listener, or the reader can capture what the creator conveys, so that ultimately the communication is individual and personal, even in group situations. If Vladimir Ashkenazy makes me weep as he plays the Chopin "Berceuse," it makes no difference how many people sit around me, or whether they respond to him at all, because Chopin, Vladimir and I have touched a lodestone through a time and space warp, if you will.

I'm excited about God, about beauty, about art, and, especially, about the commonality of the art fields. I'd like to write and teach in an interdisciplinary manner, specifically to convey the importance of art and its impact. I'd like to inspire people to study art in various fields to reach their full potential in life. I'd like to make a difference in this world with my writing, my teaching, and my music-making.

They left us the words.
--Pablo Neruda, *I Confess that I Have Lived*

Cervantes and Shakespeare: the Don and the Prince

The two writers who were contemporaries, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra and William Shakespeare, could not have picked two more diverging socioeconomic settings. Cervantes represented the invisible middle class in Spain, and Shakespeare, the thriving middle class in Great Britain. The Spanish novelist hailed from humble beginnings; the British actor and playwright came from a well-to-do family. Cervantes stemmed from the impoverished lower nobility, with an unsuccessful father who dabbled both in business and in medicine, whereas Shakespeare's father, a pillar of Stratford-on-Avon, ran a profitable leather and glove business.

The dismal economic situation in Cervantes's Spain spelled doom for the hidalgos or lower echelons of nobility, the future middle class; in Shakespeare's England the middle class flourished without constraint, and the crown promoted the performing arts. The 16th century in Spain had promoted optimism, with a lay culture more and more opposed to the Catholic Church. The middle class rose; scholars and artists studied the Greek and Latin classics; universities vied with each other. Patronage from the nobility abounded, encouraging invention and discoveries, and the press multiplied books all over Spain (Mondada 13-14). The beginning of the 17th century marked the beginning of a depressed era named Renaissance Melancholy or Iron Age (Mondada 14). European literature and philosophy reflected man's insecurity in his connection to the world, as in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (Mondada 14).

Cervantes was born in the first part of the Renaissance—Spain's Golden Age—and died in the Iron Age. The mineral riches from the New World were fueling the Germany of Emperor Charles V, but not Spain. In addition, the Catholic Kings Isabel and Fernando had expelled the

Jews and Moslems from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, causing Spain to lose her economic infrastructure (financiers, economists, money changers, and bankers). A century later, in 1609, Felipe III ensured Spain's demise proclaiming another ethnic cleansing. So while capitalism flourished in Protestant Northern Europe—particularly Flanders—and moved towards the modern era, Spain reached a grinding halt, with no capital, no investments, no manufacturing, no industry, and no jobs. The rural population and the lowest nobles, the *hidalgos*, suffered the most. Agriculture dwindled, and the peasants moved to cities. Imports flooded Spain, and yet the country lacked jobs. Felipe II closed all the mines (Mondada 17). The textile industry collapsed; cattle ranching shrank, the student population in universities receded to one-half; homeless and hobos abounded (Mondada 17). Spain's economy stood on its head: it held claim to New World silver and gold, and yet poor conquistadores like Pizarro and Cortes, from poor areas like Extremadura, never received recognition or money for themselves or for their hometowns.

Besides their economic circumstances, Shakespeare's and Cervantes's personal lives also contrasted. Cervantes endured an unhappy marriage, while Shakespeare seems to have enjoyed a life-long, stable one. Cervantes's personal life included an affair, whereas Shakespeare's included no recorded illegitimate children. While middle-aged Cervantes married a woman twenty years his junior, teenaged Shakespeare married a woman eight years his senior. At eighteen, the budding actor and playwright married Anne Hathaway, and they had their first child, Suzanna, six months later. In 1585, at age twenty-one, Shakespeare had a set of fraternal twins, Judith and Hamnet. Cervantes, for his part, had an affair with a married woman, Ana de Villafranca, in 1584; they produced a girl, whom he legitimized with the name Isabel de Saavedra (Mondada 11). Sometime later, Cervantes traveled to Esquivias, north of Madrid, to

interview a poet's widow, to edit and publish his work (Mondada 12). While there, he met nineteen-year-old Catalina de Salazar y Palacios. With almost twenty years' difference, Cervantes married her. They settled in Esquivias, causing Cervantes to shuttle between Madrid and this town. This marriage of convenience never brought happiness to Cervantes (Alvar 454).

The two men's careers debuted quite differently, although they both involved disappearing from their hometowns. While Shakespeare stepped from glory to glory as an actor and later as a playwright, Cervantes's first exposure occurred thanks to a third party. At age twenty-one, in 1568, he studied in Madrid with Lope de Hoyos, a famous teacher. De Hoyos commemorated the dead queen, Isabel de Valois, by publishing a book, which included four poems by his "dear and beloved disciple" (qtd. in Mondada 10). But the following year Cervantes ran off to Italy, with a letter of recommendation from the mayor of Madrid (Mondada 10). As for Shakespeare, the authorities indicted him for poaching, so he disappeared from Stratford-on-Avon and resurfaced on a London stage. For five years, from 1585 to 1590, he worked in an acting troupe, and by 1592, at age twenty-eight, his name had become a household word. This success prompted him to write the first of his Henriad plays, *Henry VI, Part One*, which, in turn, inspired him to produce the second and third parts. He thus incurred the jealousy of Robert Greene, who wrote *Groats-worth of Wit*, and called Shakespeare a "Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde" (qtd. in McDonald 15).

Both writers suffered losses. Personal tragedy struck Shakespeare in the midst of professional success: one of the twins, the boy Hamnet, died at age eleven in 1596.¹ Cervantes's darkest period occurred after his jail experience in Sevilla. He learned that Ana, the mother of

¹ William then bought New Place, a mansion in his town. Legend says he planted a mulberry tree himself in the backyard. Six years later (1602), Shakespeare purchased over one hundred acres of Stratford farmland and a cottage. Three years after that, he bought a half-interest in the tithes of local villages.

his illegitimate daughter Isabel had died. King Felipe II also passed away, and Cervantes wrote a satirical poem to his memory, “To the Tumulus of Felipe II” (Alvar 457). A year later his brother Rodrigo died in the battle of The Dunes (Alvar 457).

One glaring difference marks these two lives: Cervantes lived an odyssey life, rarely in place, which included soldiering, whereas Shakespeare lived and worked rooted in London and Stratford-on-Avon and never entered the army. Cervantes careened toward disaster in his youth. In Rome he worked for Julio Aquaviva, a significant Vatican figure, and a year later, in 1570, he went to Naples, along with his brother Rodrigo, to enlist in the Third Army (*Ejercito Tercero*), under Diego de Urbina, a famous captain (Mondada 10). Aboard the *Marquesa*, in one of the greatest battles of all times, the Battle of Lepanto, the novelist fought the Turks and received a wound that disabled his left hand, thus earning the appellation, *El Manco de Lepanto* (the Cripple of Lepanto). In 1575, after five years of military life, Cervantes decided to go back to Spain. The brothers sailed on the galley *Sol* (Sun) from Naples, but unfortunately, the Turks intercepted the ship in the Mediterranean, across from Barcelona and the Bay of Roses, and took the Cervantes brothers as prisoners of war to Algiers for five years.² Cervantes returned to Spain in 1580, landing in Denia, near Valencia. After eleven years of absence he probably kissed the soil. Most certainly, he sought stability. The scholar Alberto Sanchez says: “The Cervantes subsequent to the imprisonment is the man who witnesses the sinking of all the political and esthetic ideals of his youth” (qtd. in Mondada 11; tr. mine). He braced himself for the great fall of the Great Spain of Lepanto, and for the great defeat of the Great Armada (Mondada 11).³

² The Greek renegade, Dali Mami *el Cojo* (the Lame), Miguel’s captor, sees his two letters of recommendation, one from Don Juan of Austria, and one from the Duke of Sesa, and jacks up his ransom to five hundred golden ducats, which the Cervantes family cannot raise. During his five years of imprisonment, from 1575 to 1580, Miguel attempts an escape every year. In 1577, his brother Rodrigo gets rescued. Three long years later, Miguel’s captors chain him in order to take him to Constantinople, but in September, two Trinitarian Brothers, Juan Gil and Anton de la Bella, rescue him

³ The Spanish called this Armada “Great.” The English gave it the derisive name, “Invincible” (Alvar 452-455).

Cervantes sought a position in Madrid but found none, so he went to the Spanish court in Portugal, where he received fifty ducats and a position in Oran, on Algeria's coast, across from Spain.

Both artists moved in supportive circles, though Shakespeare received a larger share of accommodation. Censure in Spain made theatrical activity tentative,⁴ whereas England proved a propitious backdrop: British monarchs thought like actors. Queen Elizabeth I Tudor wrote poetry and her own speeches.⁵ She and her successor James I encouraged and promoted theatrical activity as a healthy emotional outlet for the middle and lower classes, so that, except during outbreaks of plague, productions proliferated freely. As a boy, Shakespeare attended the Free School at Stratford, learning, as his friend Ben Jonson would rib, "small Latin and less Greek" (qtd. in McDonald 9). Young Shakespeare also enjoyed dramas and mystery plays by traveling troupes. The older Shakespeare rounded off his son's education by apprenticing him to a butcher. In 1598, Shakespeare met Ben Jonson, cultivated the friendship, and turned one of Jonson's plays, *Every Man in His Humour*, into the equivalent of a box-office hit. When the Globe Theater was built in 1599, Shakespeare's company used it as a venue.⁶ At age forty-nine, in 1613, when the Globe lay in ashes, Shakespeare closed up shop and stepped into a different sort of battle, in the farming world. A big dispute had arisen regarding the enclosure of common fields around Stratford, for pastureland (the farmers won that time).

As for Cervantes, when he returned to Madrid he failed again to receive a post in the Indies, but did succeed in breaking into the circle of literati. He wrote *La Galatea*, *The Treaty of*

⁴ During Cervantes's captivity, in 1579, the theaters in Madrid open. In 1582 we find Cervantes back in Spain as a spectator. Then, three years later, in 1585, a stronger censure comes about, and the theaters close, and don't reopen for about fourteen years. Felipe II's official censors keep a squeeze on performances starting in 1589; the deaths of the king's daughter in 1597 and of the king himself reinforce the gag on theatrical activity (Alvar 22). In 1599, Lope de Vega writes his *Isidro* play, which he produces in 1600, when the theaters reopen. But playwrights work with circumspect freedom (Alvar 457).

⁵ In one speech, regarding her half-sister, Mary Queen of Scots, in 1586, Elizabeth included a telling phrase: "[W]e Princes, I tell you, are set on stages, in the sight and view of all the world duly observed" (qtd. in D&D 680).

⁶ By the time The Globe burned down in 1613, Shakespeare's troupe had performed *Troilus and Cressida*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, in that theater.

Algers, and *La Numancia*. He also enjoyed attending theater performances around Madrid (Alvar 196-197).

Shakespeare's financial success stemmed from his business sense and his productions, not from his publications. In 1599 the Globe Theater was built and became Shakespeare's main venue. The Lord Chamberlain's Men, his company, performed all his plays⁷ and proved a profitable venture. Ten years later, in 1609, the playwright acquired the Blackfriars Theater, allowing him to double performances and the attendance.⁸ In fact, during his lifetime, he only published his plays in quartos.⁹ The Globe held three thousand spectators, so that a large number of people frequently attended performances for a little money. At age thirty, Shakespeare owned the most stellar acting troupe in England. He partnered with Richard Burbage, son of the carpenter and entrepreneur who built The Theatre, their troupe's original venue, The Theatre.¹⁰ Shakespeare also worked hand-in-glove with the monarchy: the Crown encouraged theatrical activity and attendance, and Shakespeare's plays supported the monarchy's ideals, such as social order.¹¹

Interestingly, the main characters in both *Hamlet* and *Don Quixote* act out their thoughts in an orderly fashion.¹² Shakespeare's play focuses on a union resultant from coveting, fratricide, adultery, and incest (Greenblatt 1659).¹³ In 1603, the death of Elizabeth I, the last of the Tudors, ushered in the reign of James I, the first of the Stuarts, from Scotland, another

⁷ *Titus Andronicus*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

⁸ At this time he bought several more homes for his family, thus demonstrating both the profitability of his ventures and his family orientation.

⁹ The plays in folio form got published posthumously as the First Folio, by John Heninge and Henry Condell, in 1623, and the Second Folio, in 1632. All the poems together as a collection came out in 1640. As editions, the collection appeared several times in the 1700s, at the hands of Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, and others.

¹⁰ By contrast, the Inquisition kept tight control over Spain's theater, interrupting public performances no less than did the plague. So Cervantes basically turned from the stage to focus on paper.

¹¹ For example, in *Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses gives a speech against chaos but in favor of order: "Take but degree away . . . / And hark what discord flows" (qtd. in McDonald 322).

¹² *Hamlet* deals with incest, which strikes the death blow to social order (see McDonald). Brother killing brother equals fratricide, and brother bedding brother's wife equals incest—because the sister-in-law counts as sister. And because the ghost features prominently in the play, one wonders if Mozart bases the ghostly Commissioner in *Don Giovanni* on Shakespeare's ghostly Hamlet I in *Hamlet*?

promoter of theatrical activity. Shakespeare received an extension to his license to perform at the Globe, and the following year he came back to the court performing *Othello*, which he also took to Oxford University.

In contrast, Cervantes did not earn a steady income from his writing. He endured false accusations and unjust jail sentences at least three times, whereas, according to the records, Shakespeare never saw the inside of a jail. While Cervantes, in spite of his war heroics, suffered the indifference of the Spanish crown, Shakespeare basked in the fervent support of the English crown.

The two writers' relative stability affected the amount they wrote: Cervantes, with an unstable life, produced sporadically, whereas Shakespeare, with a stable life, produced steadily. Cervantes took several years to complete his first important work, *La Galatea*. He published it in 1585 as *Part One*, but never wrote the sequel because meantime he decided that the pastoral genre could not reflect the realities of his time (Mondada 12).¹⁴ Yet because he loved pastoral narration, he folded several into the *Quixote* to produce “sweetness, love, ideal worlds” and “peace,” to counteract harsh reality (Mondada 12).¹⁵ In 1593, Cervantes lost his mother, and his tax-collecting job in Andalucía ended.

Cervantes wore the tax-collector hat several times. One of those times he worked in Granada. The government paid him the salary it owed him in arrears, and his life coasted for three years until he landed in jail in Sevilla, this time accused of causing a bank failure. In that jail Cervantes first conceived the *Quixote* (Alvar 456). In 1587, at the age of forty, he was hired as general commissioner to provide the royal galleys with foodstuffs. For fifteen years he accumulated oil, grain, and other foods for the ships of Felipe II, and, in the process, received an

¹⁴ Six books make up this novel, in the style of Jorge de Montemayor, who produced *La Diana (Diana)*.

¹⁵ The first two editions came out in Spain, in 1585 and 1590; a third edition came out in France later (Alvar 190, 194).

education in financing, in credit, and in Spanish law. He had received an honorable mention in 1574 for his fighting in Lepanto, but no remuneration to go with it (Mondada 11-12). In 1588 things got worse when he was falsely indicted for making bad investments and thrown in jail. Two years later, still in Andalucía, he again requested a position in the Indies to no avail. In 1592 he repeated the jail experience, this time in Castro del Rio, for an alleged shortage of thirteen sheaves of wheat (Alvar 455). Cervantes's breakthrough occurred then: he finished the first part of *Don Quixote*. Then, in 1603, Cervantes followed the King and his court to Valladolid and settled there with his wife Catalina, his natural daughter Isabel, and his sisters. He published a short version of *Don Quixote*, turning the character's name into a household word. He published the official version of the work in December 1604, which sold under the direction of the Duque of Bejar, and he published a subsequent edition in March of 1605 (Alvar 458).

Both writers likely carried a hidden identity: Cervantes, that of a Jewish renegade, and Shakespeare, possibly that of a Catholic recusant. While Cervantes practiced his Catholicism in public, Shakespeare possibly practiced his in secret. Cervantes took on minor Franciscan orders at the end of his life, whereas Shakespeare probably met with recusant (secret) Catholics at the beginning of his adult life, and, according to recent research, may have traveled to Italy toward the end of his life, ostensibly to meet with literati, but perhaps to gain the official sanction of the Roman Catholic Church.

As for Cervantes, toward the end of his life, in 1606, he returned to Madrid and became a monk while still seeking a place in the world of letters. His daughter Isabel married, had a child, lost her husband, and remarried the following year. In 1609 Cervantes became a monk in one of the Venerable Tertiary Orders (*Venerables Ordenes Terceras*). Then, at age sixty-six, he

switched to the Venerable Third Order of Saint Francis.¹⁶ The next year he and one of his sisters moved to Calle Huerta number 18, in the *Barrio de las Letras* (Neighborhood of the Literati), in Madrid. Meanwhile his *Don Quixote* had won even wider readership with an English translation by Thomas Shelton. He published his *Exemplary Novels (Novelas Ejemplares)* (Mondada 13). The following year he published his *Voyage to Parnassus (Viaje al Parnaso)*. In that time Cesar Oudin produced a French edition of *Quixote*. Then, in 1615, Cervantes moved to Calle de Francos, at the corner of Calle del Leon, and published his volume of plays, *Eight New Comedies and Eight New Interludes (Ocho Comedias y Ocho Entremeses Nuevos)*, which were never performed. He also published *The Second Part of the Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha (La Segunda Parte de la Historia del ingenioso hidalgo don Quixote de La Mancha)*.

In April of 1616, in spite of poor health, Miguel de Cervantes received the Franciscan habit and, shortly after, his last rites. The next day he penned an impressive dedication to his *Persiles*, a poignant good-bye to the world (Alvar 460), and passed away on April 23rd, the same day as Shakespeare. Cervantes's friends buried him in his Franciscan habit, in the Convent of the Discalced Trinitarians, in the Calle de las Cantarranas (the current Lope de Vega Street) in Madrid (Alvar 461). As for Shakespeare's death, the vicar of Stratford, John Ward, wrote in his diary, fifty years later, that "Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson had a merry meeting, and it seems drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a fever there contracted" (qtd. in McDonald 34). Mr. Ward, as friend of the Shakespeare family, possibly knew more than most about the writer's life; however, the gossipy tone of the information hits me between the eyes.

¹⁶His sisters Magdalena, Catalina and Andrea all join in the *Venerable Order Tercera de San Francisco* (Venerable Third Order of Saint Francis), and shortly thereafter, Andrea and Magdalena die, and so does Cervantes's granddaughter. In 1611, he attempts unsuccessfully to accompany the Count of Lemos to his viceroy realm in Naples.

Both authors wrote in several genres. Besides plays, Shakespeare also wrote poetry, such as *Venus and Adonis*, based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which he dedicated to the Earl of Southampton. He also wrote *The Rape of Lucrece*. His troupe, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, produced all his plays, such as *Titus Andronicus*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare himself performed in Queen Elizabeth's presence for ten years. At one point Cervantes got a literary contract and produced poems such as "Odes to the Company of England," and romances such as *The Home of Jealousy*, *The Captive*, *Rinconete and Cortadillo*, and *The Jealous Man from Extremadura*. Three genres had developed in the Spain of Cervantes: the ascetic and mystic, the pastoral and chivalric, and the comic picaresque (such as the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*, and Mateo Aleman's *Guzman de Alfarache*).

Cervantes's work shows us characters changing each other through conversation; Shakespeare's work shows us characters changing through overhearing themselves, or self-observation, in dialogue. Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier says that the Don, an idealist, "cannot listen to himself" because his mind affords no room for doubt (Bloom 150-151). I would add that Sancho Panza the realist is equally unable to listen to himself because he refuses to evaluate himself, and the Don fills that slot perfectly, since he has purposed to right wrongs—especially Sancho's wrongs. As for the Don, he cannot help but hear the garrulous squire, whose mouth flows freely with words, and—to the Don's great irritation—with numerous irrelevant proverbs he strings together like rosary beads. In fact, the Don feels compelled to correct, instruct, and guide the squire, even when Panza drives him to the edge. The situation invites constant surprises and witticisms and, above all else, the reader's anticipation of the characters' responses. The teamwork of the reader, the narrator, and the characters turns the work into a joint stage-play of the mind. Cervantes lives on alongside his Knight of the Sorrowful Face every time someone

joins alongside the skinny *Rocinante* (the Don's horse) and the sassy *Gris* (Sancho's gray donkey).

Harold Bloom maintains that in Shakespeare the recognition scenes of the strongest survivors occur in the tragedies, but that mostly they come to understand themselves by overhearing their solipsism. Like Moliere and Dante, Cervantes transforms his characters through their relationships. Shakespeare's characters evince "no true listening" on stage. Cervantes presents not only "true listening" but also "space for play" (Bloom 151). Here I must add that, having lived in Spain, I know the Hispanic black, pragmatic wit that pokes fun at one and all, including self. In Bloom's introduction to *Cervantes's Don Quixote*, he explains that Shakespeare taught us to listen to ourselves, and Cervantes, to listen to one another (1).

Cervantes and Shakespeare achieved some fame in their lifetimes, but most of their fame came posthumously. Shakespeare lived a short intense life. Born on Saint George's Feast Day, April 23, 1564, seventeen years after Cervantes, he lived only fifty-two years, until April 23, 1616, passing away on his birthday and on the same day as the sixty-nine-year-old Cervantes. A century after Shakespeare's death, Samuel Johnson pronounced that nobody except Homer "invented so much" and that Shakespeare set "the form, the character, the language, and the shows of the English drama" (qtd. in *Notes* 12).

Both men suffered the attacks of jealous rivals: Cervantes, that of Lope de Vega and the fraudulent Avellaneda (who published a counterfeit second part to *Don Quixote*), and Shakespeare, that of Robert Greene, at the start of his career.

Cervantes set *Don Quixote* at home, in Spain; Shakespeare set *Hamlet* abroad, in Denmark. La Mancha, in central Spain, acted as poster child of Spain's destitution. In a dreary economic landscape, with empty banks, unemployed peasants, and ragged sheep and goat herds,

this desolate, scorched part of *Castilla* (Castile), with the Arabic name of *al-Mansha* (“Dry Earth”) (Mondadori 22), at two thousand feet of elevation, with scarce population, lime-washed villages, and scattered windmills, presented the perfect setting for Cervantes’s chef-d’oeuvre.¹⁷ By the mid-1500s hidalgos had lost their importance in Spain, both on the battlefield and in court.¹⁸ The day of infantry had dawned; that of the knight had eclipsed. The monarch had become the absolute dictator, so that lesser figures in the landed classes counted for nothing. Thus Cervantes presents us Don Quixote, the Nobleman of Dry Earth, useless and idle, fantastically drumming up a life for himself.

Shakespeare and Cervantes addressed the sociopolitical issues of the day. In Spain, Lope de Vega joined ranks with Cervantes in refusing to produce purely escapist entertainment (Mondada 15). In the *Quixote*, Cervantes addresses Spain’s ethnic losses when he presents the character Ricote (Part 2, ch. 54). The Morisco comes back to Spain secretly, and Sancho won’t denounce his friend, who laments, “Anywhere we find ourselves, we weep for Spain” (qtd. in Mondada 17). Cervantes thus criticizes the King’s decree (Mondada 18). Both Shakespeare and Cervantes penetrate reality by analyzing it, and both synthesize genres and elements of reality to relate to people from all walks of life, always using the “silk of truth” (Mondada 22). Honesty at all costs constitutes their motto, even at the expense of an ideal vision. In *Don Quixote*, representative characters stand for the population of *nuestra Espana* (our Spain), a term Cervantes uses in one of his prologues.¹⁹

Both masterpieces present autobiographical material. With only one letter’s difference between Hamnet and Hamlet, Shakespeare perhaps associated his lost son with the Prince of

¹⁷ A bird’s-eye view reveals to us the town of Toboso and Consuegra Castle. A few miles from Toboso we make out the probable home of a hidalgo, a modest member of nobility.

¹⁸ Archers have taken precedence over mounted knights in battle, starting in the Battle of Agincourt, as seen in the Shakespearean play *Henry V*.

¹⁹ Thus, the first secret of *Don Quixote* as a permanent work of art: its humanity (Mondada 23). Schlegel says that, in Cervantes, reality “imposes itself painfully” (qtd. in Mondada 23). Our author gives voice to the frustrations and sufferings of the Spanish people.

Denmark. Cervantes projects his own experience in the scene where the Don frees all the galley slaves (in Part One) and proclaims, “It is *not just* to make slaves of those God created free” (qtd. in Bloom 156, italics mine). The enormous contribution Cervantes makes to the literary world consists in merging two literary genres, the tragicomic novel with the picaresque. Shakespeare in effect invented the modern tragedy and the modern tragicomedy. Cervantes invented the modern novel: he merged Gines’s outward focus with the Don’s inward focus.

Nevertheless, the two authors reveal themselves differently in their work. Cervantes’s warmth toward his reader evinces that he has found his niche. I love the rapport he sets up with me as I peruse his prologues to each of the parts of *Don Quixote*. He presents his ideas in dialectic form (in the guise of a conversation) in the prologue of Part One. The prologue to Part Two, a soft invective against the plagiarist Avellaneda, also engages me. And let’s not forget the epilogue to the entire work, where he says he’s hanging up his beloved quill. By contrast, Shakespeare hides behind his verse, so that to this day, no one knows the identity of the two subjects of his sonnets, the “dark lady” and the young man. True, Shakespeare’s dramatic instructions remain vague, but drama exacts collaboration both in creating and in executing a play. Away from the noisy stage, however, on paper, with one reader at a time, a sonnet provides an ideal venue for self-revelation. And yet Shakespeare chooses not to reveal himself. I gather, from reading Shakespeare’s sonnets and Cervantes’s prologues, two opposite personalities, one reserved and one outgoing. If we met up with these two gentlemen and produced a stage version of *Don Quixote*, I dare say Shakespeare would make a great Don, and Cervantes, a great Sancho. On the other hand, were Shakespeare to invite Cervantes to share the limelight for a production of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare himself would make a great Prince to Cervantes’s singing gravedigger who tosses out skulls while belting out an off-key ditty. With

Cervantes, the Knight of the Sorrowful Face moves in an “internal exile,” like his creator (Bloom 150). Cervantes’s life of injustice, as a non-rewarded war hero, as a non-compensated prisoner-of-war, as a maligned tax-collector, as a renegade Jew, and, finally, as a barely-recognized author, adds up to a man held back from both income and recognition.

Both the *Quixote* and *Hamlet* reflect their authors’ ambitions. Cervantes’s immortality rides on Rocinante, in the form of the Knight of the Sorrowful Face. I find it hard to distinguish between the voices of Don Quixote and of Cervantes. Cervantes blends genres like the picaresque, the pastoral, the tragic, and the comedy, to produce the first modern novel, as Shakespeare blends genres in his plays to produce the so-called “problem plays.” Cervantes achieved an ambitious agenda through *Don Quixote*. In the first place, he dismantled “the authority . . . of the books of chivalry” (qtd. in Mondada 25). He also righted wrongs (Mondada 25). Secondly, Cervantes established self-determination for his characters and for himself as their creator. Thus we see Don Quixote changing his name from “Quijada”—reminiscent of *queja* (complaint)—to “Quixote”—with the aggrandizing suffix “ote” meaning “great.” Both Don Quixote’s birthplace and birth date remain blurry. The narration starts out with the statement that the Don was born “not long ago” and in a place “I don’t care to recall” (*Don Quixote Part I*, ch. 1). More importantly, both he and Sancho prove capable of psychological depth and of change. Thirdly, Cervantes blends two genres, the chivalresque and the picaresque, and gives them a different twist.²⁰ Cervantes stands as the pioneer writer to use realism in a novel, presenting everyday events the way our five senses absorb them, and thus creating a film-like effect (see Alvar).

²⁰ The chivalresque type focused on fame and destiny, like *Amadis de Gaul*; the picaresque, for its part, on having fun and poking fun, like *Lazarillo de Tormes* (Mondada 25).

Both characters focus on ideals of Judeo-Christian ethics and principles. Hamlet forgives Claudius as he watches him pray; he also forgives his mother in her bedroom. On the other hand, he destroys the conniving Polonius, deeply hurts Ophelia in his breakdown, and destroys her indirectly. He allows the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to revenge himself against his stepfather Claudius and later kills his friend Laertes and his mother Gertrude. As a Christian, Hamlet almost forgives his new set of parents and wonders about the sins of his deceased father, who suffers in purgatory because he died without last rites. Possibly the “fear of the Lord,” which the *Book of Proverbs* in the Bible defines as the beginning of wisdom, keeps Hamlet from taking revenge on his stepfather. Hamlet’s own and everybody else’s demise takes place because the guilty and duplicitous Claudius sets up a duel in order to keep his nephew from killing him. In the end poison kills Prince Hamlet, as it has killed his father before him. Had Claudius not set up the duel, the royal Danish family may have survived.

In Cervantes’s work, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza love each other and stay inside the order of the play. Bloom points out that the relationship between the knight and his squire holds firm through thick and thin. In contrast, Gines stays outside the order of play. He’s a “shape shifter” because he morphs from Gines to Master Pedro, but only externally (Bloom 157). The Don, because of his theology, calls Gines an “ape of the devil” because he lives only in the present and in the past, and suspects him as a trickster (Bloom 158).²¹ Cervantes faces both death—through the Don—and life—through Sancho (Bloom 159). Sancho thus becomes the surrogate heir of the Don. I would add that the Don represents Spain’s past while Panza

²¹ We could even see Gines as representative of Cervantes’s great rival, Lope de Vega, who produced numerous plays and poems with “inaccuracies” (superficialities). Gines stands as a model of the picaresque genre surpassed by the novel (Bloom 159).

represents Spain's future. Bloom relays Unamuno's position on the Don as a Christ-figure who becomes insane to make us all sane (150). As Christ's body suffers and bleeds for the souls of mankind, so Don Quixote's mind suffers for the sake of mankind's mental well-being.

Both *Hamlet* and *Quixote* feature the technique of framing. Harold Bloom considers *Don Quixote* an embedded tale about "literary" madness and about mutually-changing characters.²² The self-conscious characters in Part Two talk about their readers and their lives in Part One, much like a modern-day cartoon character jumping out of one frame into another. We see embedded plays and embedded tales. The scene at the Dukes' castle presents a play within a play, which we read about thanks to a chronicler (Cervantes) who found a manuscript written anonymously but translated by a Moorish-Manchegan named Cide Hamete Benengeli.²³ The disappointing part for Don Quixote coincides with the development part for Sancho Panza, who goes off to govern his Baratara Island.²⁴ As governor, Panza learns to speak up for his rights in the presence of learned people, as when the doctor puts him on a starvation diet. Panza adjudicates well, using his keen powers of observation.²⁵ Without ever finding out that his set was made up, he resigns from his position with the Dukes, most respectfully. Bloom points out that in Part One, Quixote sees the inn as a castle, but in Part Two, he sees a genuine castle. Whereas in Part One our ears hear embedded tales, in Part Two our eyes see a twice-embedded play. This framing makes the foreground more convincing, which also occurs in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, with the play-within-the-play. And, while the Don reinterprets reality in Part One, in

²² In his essay, "Cervantes: The Play of the World," Bloom proclaims *Don Quixote* an embedded chronicle with characters greater than their publication (145-160).

²³ (In fact, in that long section of Part II, the reader sifts through six levels: (1) the anonymous writer, (2) a Moorish translator, (3) a chronicler-narrator, (4) the cast of characters, with Don Quixote, Sancho Panza, and the Dukes, (5) the long-lasting play-acting of the Dukes, who create an imaginary world for Don Quixote, and (6) finally, the play the Dukes put on one evening for their guests.)

²⁴ "Baratara" connotes *barato* (cheap) and so represents Spain itself, a convenient source for New World goods and for manpower for Charles V's army.

²⁵ As we see in the case of the man who owes money to another man but stuffs it inside his hollow cane instead of returning it. Panza's shrewdness allows him to suspect the hollow cane, break it open, and give the money to its rightful owner. After a few of days of decision-making, Sancho learns two things: he makes a good judge, but he doesn't want a public life.

Part Two he goes in the other direction, taking what he sees literally, as in the puppet show of Maestro Pedro, or in the scene with the peasant girls that Sancho presents as Dulcinea and two attendants.

Cervantes's and Shakespeare's two main characters, Don Quijote and Hamlet, affect their madness: one to create adventure and the other to investigate his father's death. Don Quixote has determined his own acting role. He knows Dulcinea to be a myth. As a metaphysical actor, the Don "risks derision to keep his idealism alive" (Bloom 154). Quixote chooses, of his own accord and without any constraint, to dress up and behave like a knight errant, to live the self-determined life, and not the politically determined life of a languishing hidalgo (the still-born Spanish middle class). As for Hamlet, others constrain him: soldiers tell him to go see the ghost, and then the ghost tells him to carry out vengeance on the usurping king. Hamlet kills many, some by design, and others by accident. While Hamlet interacts with others without absorbing their qualities; the Don becomes more like his closest companion and friend, Sancho Panza. Another difference regards the two protagonists' attitude to life. In spite of his sad countenance, Don Quixote enjoys life as much as Sancho does. Harold Bloom says the Don "wants to win, no matter how many times he gets painfully flattened. [His] madness . . . is a poetic strategy worked out by others before him, and he is nothing if not a traditionalist" (151-152). Don Quixote, wanting to imitate art (literature), lives fully by play-acting. His mirages and the combination of comedy and tragedy aid and abet his appetite for adventure and his determination to dislocate material order. As an actor, he reforms reality, and as a hero, he stands out. He constantly suffers emotionally because he acts in the face of habit and matter (Bloom 148).²⁶ Wary of the Counter-Reformation and the Inquisition, Cervantes uses the fool's

²⁶ Bloom points out, Cervantes succeeds as a novelist but fails as a playwright and poet. He hardly makes a cent from his writing; he works in positions he despises; his family is troubled. Shakespeare, on the other hand, succeeds as a playwright and poet but never attempts a novel; he

license, like David in the Old Testament and like the Fool in *King Lear*. (Interestingly, Shakespeare and Cervantes published *Lear* and *Quixote* the same year, in 1604.)²⁷ Bloom states that the Don of the musical, *Man of La Mancha*, moves in a dream-quest, showing heroic individuality. Bloom also calls Cervantes a “wicked enchanter” for setting up characters in Part Two who have read Part One of *Don Quixote* (Bloom 148). The heart of the work lies in the relationship between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza as they participate in the order of the play in hilarious conversation.²⁸ What makes reading the *Quixote* so pleasurable indeed lies with the interaction between the two men as they respond to situations or react to trouble. When one of them gets testy I laugh, anticipating what the other is about to say—I laugh with my whole being (and I believe this describes the attitude of Cervantes).

Cervantes’s openness stands in contrast to Shakespeare’s ambiguity and focus on psychology. William Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* around 1600, and it stands as a “monument to literature” but one built on “shifting sands” (Greenblatt 1659), because it presents so many questions, like “What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth?” (qtd. in Greenblatt 1659). Guilt motivates Claudius as he fears that Hamlet knows about the secret crime. Guilt also motivates Gertrude, Claudius’s wife, who conspired with him to murder the elder Hamlet and to get married (Greenblatt 1660). Shakespeare demonstrates the effects of worry on behavior. Besides the death of his father, Hamlet mulls over mortality in general, his mother’s sexuality, and the corruptibility of the flesh (Greenblatt 1665).²⁹ The ghostly father functions as a terrorist. Eighteenth-century Voltaire stated that the father’s ghost struck more

derives wealth from his art; his family is stable. Bloom states that both authors share a peer group with Dante and Goethe in the Western canon, and as wisdom writers, they join the ranks of Moliere and Montaigne. Both write in the highest caliber because they aim at enhancing and encouraging, and not reproving.

²⁷ Cervantes, a humanist disciple of Erasmus, proposed an inward Christianity. According to Alvar, the Cervantes family was a renegade Jewish family. Miguel’s grandfather changed the family name from Diaz to Cervantes (30).

²⁸ The dialogue presents an area of free play for the reader. In one scene Quixote and Panza discuss the exact location of Panza’s pain from a beating. The anger with which Panza assaults Quixote signals the “intimacy of equality” the two enjoy as well as their “play” (Bloom 149).

²⁹ He admires man when he exclaims, “What a piece of work is a man!” but ends up muttering about “this quintessence of dust” (meaning “man”) (qtd. in Greenblatt 1665).

terror than any other ghostly figure in contemporary writing.³⁰ Besides worrying, Prince Hamlet also indulges in disproportionate emotion. T. S. Eliot, who absorbed the British psyche by living in England most of his adult life, points out, in his 1919 essay “Hamlet,” that the Prince’s feelings outsize the facts they relate to.³¹ Hamlet is “dominated by an [inexpressible] emotion . . . in excess of the facts as they appear” (qtd. in *Notes* 48).³²

Both works exhibit complexity. *Hamlet* exhibits several kinds of reasoning: moral, psychological, and philosophical. Shakespeare took a turn from his previous historic and tragic plays to bring a new brand of subjectivity, with an intense language where prose and verse converge.³³ Likewise, in his novel, Cervantes places the reader in the mind of Don Quixote the play-actor, just as he also presents his own coined words like *poetambre* (hungry poet). Shakespeare points out the inwardness and isolation of Hamlet and Ophelia, and creates disturbing exchanges and encounters where “love and poison” mix (Greenblatt 1661). The play presents several issues: political corruption, shallow friendship, Ophelia’s devotion to her father, Gertrude’s carnality, and the impersonal life cycle. Hamlet mentions that “we fat [= fatten up] all creatures else to fat us” and that we “fat ourselves for maggots” (qtd. in Greenblatt 1665).³⁴

The two masterpieces mark a milestone in their creators’ careers. *Don Quixote* catapulted Cervantes into fame; *Hamlet* did not make Shakespeare any more famous, but it

³⁰ Compared to Darius in *The Persians of Aeschylus*, who foretells the “fortunes of his family,” *Hamlet*’s ghost demands “vengeance” and “reveals secret crimes” which plays into the viewer’s desire to eliminate Claudius (qtd. in *Notes* 29).

³¹ Thus the “objective correlative,” or the tie linking character to events and objects, stays out of proportion. The facts in his story suggest emotions to all viewers, but in Hamlet alone these emotions attain gigantic proportions.

³² I would interject here that Prince Hamlet accepts the ghost’s words on faith, and later writes a play to test the reaction of his stepfather Claudius. His private epiphany may have overwhelmed his emotions, but he uses reason and pragmatism to decide his course of action. In *Hamlet*, says Eliot, we see demonstrated the idea that “intense feeling, ecstatic or terrible, without an object or exceeding its object, is something which every person of sensibility has known . . . the ordinary person puts these feelings to sleep . . . the artist keeps them alive by his ability to intensify the world to his emotions” (qtd. in *Notes* 49). I add here, that any work of art—visual, literary, musical, dramatic, or otherwise—takes shape via the design and emotions of its creator and provokes similar emotions in the viewer/reader / listener. Also, I think here Shakespeare presents a character who knows something his contemporaries don’t; he acts like an Old Testament prophet who bides his time in confronting evil-doers and in righting wrongs.

³³ Shakespeare expresses the intensity with complex syntax and an expanded diction, to portray Hamlet’s tortured mind. In this play alone Shakespeare coins no less than six hundred words, never before used (Greenblatt 1661).

³⁴ Prince Hamlet’s character functions as a channel for human musing. C. S. Lewis (1894-1963), in “Hamlet: the Prince or the Poem?” (1942), states that, through this self-talk, Shakespeare utters “broad truths about humanity,” but does not reveal Hamlet’s character traits. The exclamation, “What a piece of work is a man” prompts the audience to think about life and its “great value” (qtd. in *Notes* 50).

featured a new component: the primitive desires of the viewer. Harold C. Goddard, in *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (1951), explains that in *Hamlet*, for the first time, Shakespeare includes the audience's expectations and shows his understanding of primal emotion (*Notes* 53).³⁵ This tells me that Shakespeare likely embraced Aristotle's definition, "A man is his desire." Shakespeare, continues Goddard, contrasts what should be with what is, as when Hamlet tells Laertes, his betrothed's brother and his friend, that "I'll be your foil . . . in mine ignorance / Your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night, / Stick fiery off indeed" (qtd. in *Notes* 53). I would add, in this scene the prince puts his friend above himself, thus exhibiting a Christian virtue.

Cervantes's and Shakespeare's work presented universal appeal and also left a rich legacy in the languages they championed. These two stars of their respective countries and literature eclipsed on April 23, 1616, on Saint George's Day, a feast commemorating the hero-saint who delivered England from a dragon.³⁶ The Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, in his autobiography, *Confieso que he vivido* (*I Confess that I have Lived*), writes: "[The Spanish conquistadors] took everything and they left us everything . . . They left us the words" ("The Words," Neruda 78-79, tr. mine). As Damrosch and Dettmar state, "every director has had his or her vision of what Shakespeare meant an audience to see," (773) which fact underscores, as Ben Jonson expressed, Shakespeare's vitality "for all time" (qtd. in D&D 773).

³⁵ Said differently, Shakespeare knows the audience will "assume that Hamlet should kill the King . . . as he [expects] them to assume Katherine [is] a shrew, and that Henry V [is] a glorious hero for attempting to steal the kingdom of France" (qtd. in *Notes* 53).

³⁶ Like the two American Founding Fathers John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in America, who, after a life-long association and friendship, passed away on the same Independence Day of 1826, so Shakespeare and Cervantes, two stars of world literature who never met, also found their rest on the same day.

At a place in *La Mancha*, the name of which I don't care to recall,
not long ago there lived an *hidalgo* of the kind with a lance in a lance holder,
an old leather shield, a skinny nag, and a running greyhound.

--Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha Part I*, ch. 1 (tr. mine)

“The Play’s the Thing”

--Shakespeare, *Hamlet* Act 2, Scene 2

William shouts, “Action!” and an actor steps out with a sheaf of parchments. William tells him to skip to Act Three, Scene One.

The actor flips several pages and intones, “To be or not to be. That is the question...”

Stunned, I listen to the most powerful English passage I know of. Such inspiration, such writing, such acting! Now I understand who this new friend is. Who hasn't heard of him? Political and cultural news flies from Spain to England and from court to court like a sparrow. I've heard of his “Henriad” and *Richard III* and *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado about Nothing* but have never seen them. I hear that in these plays William brings out themes and ideas that have revolutionized English drama and English theater production. Up to now I've only seen Spanish theater, mainly Lope de Vega, Lope de Rueda, and Calderon de la Barca. I love Vega's comedies and Barca's serious plays, especially *Life is a Dream* (*La vida es sueño*):

“What is life? A frenzy.

What is life? An illusion.

A shadow, a fiction,

and the greatest good is but small;

for all of life is a dream,

and dreams, dreams are.”

The actor continues:

“To die, to sleep;

to sleep: perchance to dream: aye, there's the rub;
 for in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
 when we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
 must give us pause..."

William asks the young man to step farther back, and to try something else. I sit transfixed. I know William started out as an actor in London, before playwrighting. It takes a good actor to teach a good actor. Two more peasants appear, with shovels and pickaxes. One makes digging motions, singing a ditty I've heard in Spanish—an inane drinking song about a girl (dear reader, I'm sure you know it). The peasant outside the grave goes to the tavern to get ale. The digger continues his intense off-key song, and a third fellow we've never seen before weaves across the stage, hiccupping. The digger assumes the other to be his friend and a priceless exchange takes place.

William sees me in stitches and smiles, showing a dimple. On stage the prince and his friend walk by the grave. The digger tosses out a skull, barely missing Hamlet's head. Hamlet looks at us with wide eyes. The digger keeps tossing dirt and singing atrociously. Another skull shoots out, this time clipping the prince, who catches it and looks at it. William lets out a snort. Then Laertes joins him at right stage. The prince asks the peasant who he's digging for and he answers, for a woman. When the prince asks for which one, the answer comes, for the dead one. Details come out concerning the young woman who drowned. The prince's face falls. After all, in spite of the comic relief, we are watching a tragedy.

William interrupts the acting and asks the prince and the friend to switch places and repeat the skull scene. This time nothing bars my view of the skull. I nod my approval to William, who winks. I clap and yell "Bravo!" William approaches the proscenium and calls the

two peasants, who come forth with their pickaxes. William pretends to protect his head, and the others grin as they sit down. When he's done talking, William comes back, checks the sundial on the ground, and sits down.

“Action!” he says.

The two peasants walk out slowly this time, one of them scratching his head under his cap, and the other dragging one foot. They go from the beginning of the scene, discussing the legalities and technicalities of a proper Christian burial, which in this case depends on self-inflicted or accidental death. They say that she fell in the water; she did not jump in. One peasant digs and sings. A black sheet on a rod separates the digger from the rest of the stage, the digger to the left, and Hamlet and his friend Laertes to the right. A skull flies over the curtain and bounces off Laertes's head. “Ouch!” he says off-script.

The digger's eyes widen.

“Hey, watch it in there,” says the prince. At that instant another skull hits the prince on the ear, and he says, “Ow!”

William and I shake with laughter. When we look back up, the prince is holding another skull, and launches his soliloquy. At the end, my throat catching, I tell my friend, “Perfect!” We applaud and William goes back to the stage for another discussion.

An hour later, walking down a sunny London sidewalk, I say, “William, I loved the second run-through! The timing ...“

“We'll see.”

“What's wrong?”

“I'm not certain about the peasant scene—it requires something.”

“The second time worked better with the limping ...“

“Don’t you think the peasants need to look *sharper* for the legal discussion, even with the mispronounced words?”

I say, “Mayhap. So, before they drink you want them to look clean and groomed?”

“Yes: combed hair, scrubbed faces, but dark circles under their eyes.”

“And before the grave-digging they ought to wear neater clothes, am I right?”

“Yes. And the second peasant should weave onstage when he returns, to contrast with the morose, deep-thinking prince.”

“Hamlet?”

“Yes.”

“I’m curious, William; where did you get that name?”

“Denmark. He’s the Prince of Denmark, about twenty-score years ago.”

“Four hundred years ago? Interesting. William, I must tell you”

“Yes?”

“The earthy humor between the two peasants and between the gravedigger and the prince reminds me of my book.”

“*You* wield a quill, too?!”

“I try—“

“Tell me!”

“I’ve almost finished the first part ...“

“Of what?”

I stare at the ground.

“Sorry,” he says.

“I’m writing *The History of the Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha.*”

“If my Spanish serves me right, *mancha* is a stain or a spot, right? Funny name, that.”

“In Spanish, yes, but in Arabic, *Al-Mansha*, means Dry Earth.”

“*Marvelous!*” William claps his hands.

“And *Quijote* is a play on *Quejana*, the character’s real name, which connotes *queja* or complaint, and *quijada* or jawbone ...“

“Samson’s weapon against the Philistines—*brilliant!*”

“Also *quicio* means wit.”

“Is this stellar work comic or tragic?”

“Both: the dialogue between Sancho and the Don falls into the comic for the most part, and the back-story and Quixote’s inner self fall into the tragic.”

We arrive at our inn and walk upstairs to our room. William unlocks the door in silence. We sit down; I place my booted feet on a hassock. With shining eyes, he says: “In 1596, seven years ago, I lost my son Hamnet, and ever since, I’ve written tragicomedies... He would have celebrated his eighteenth year this month.”

In the courtyard below a baby wails. I say, “I lost a granddaughter myself, I know ...”

“Well, Miguel, you and I soldier in the same army, don’t we?”

“Except you use flesh-and-blood people on a stage, and I use paper dolls on a page.”

“But just think: *every reader’s mind* is a little stage.”

“And each cast of actors presents its own play.”

“True: a small change a great difference makes—I so love the boards! When in Stratford, I’m Anne Hathaway’s husband, but when in London, I’m the Globe’s husband.”

“A global lover!” I say.

And we laugh.

“When you want to see other than what’s in front of you, you’re missing out on life.”
 --Norman Rockwell

Melville and Rockwell: Sea-Room and the Ordinary

The two artists, Herman Melville and Norman Rockwell, meet on some common points but offer many more differences. Both hailed from New York City, and both spent years in Western Massachusetts toward the end of their lives, near the Berkshire Mountains—Melville in Pittsfield and Rockwell in Stockbridge. They differed most in terms of personal happiness and mental stability. Melville married once and endured unhappiness; Rockwell failed in his first but thrived in his second and third marriages. Also, the writer and the artist exemplify the difference between a race horse and a work horse, respectively. Melville lived life as an adventurer; he wanted to escape unhappy circumstances. Rockwell lived out his artist’s life in order and discipline, taking one or bike rides a day, and a nap. Both men had children: Melville produced four unhappy children, two of whom committed suicide. Rockwell produced three sons, all happy and successful artists in their own right, in different fields. While Herman Melville suffered with likely bipolarism (Delbanco 134), Norman Rockwell enjoyed a steady and healthy mental and physical life.

The two Americas of Melville and of Rockwell feature present two different kinds of underdogs. In the 19th century, at the height of immigration, New York City turned into a melting pot for the four corners of the globe. As a young man, Melville witnessed horrific destitution in Liverpool, England, and as an old man, he eyewitnessed the deterioration of New York City, his hometown. Impoverished immigrants inhabited inadequate, disease-filled spaces, so that by the 1900s parts of New York City would mirror Liverpool.³⁷ Even in the full swing of abolitionism, some Yankee reformers despised immigrant paupers. Thus New England

³⁷ Witness Steven Crane’s story, “Maggie: a Girl of the Streets,” whose main character lives out her short life amidst crime and prostitution in the Bowery, in the lower eastside of Manhattan.

abolitionist Maria Child described the New York City of 1841 as a “common sewer for the filth of nations” (qtd. in Delbanco 102). Forty long years later, Miss Liberty would welcome one and all to New York Harbor. While 19th-century America witnessed injustice to foreigners, 20th-century America witnessed the upheaval in integrating descendants of former African slaves into society. The Civil Rights Movement broke out in Rockwell’s time, and this quiet artist provided visual reporting of the unrest.³⁸

Both figures addressed social issues of the day. Bob Hope dubbed Rockwell the “Mark Twain of American art” (Walton 7). Indeed, Rockwell depicted Americana brilliantly in both his solo and collaborative work. He once said in a lecture, “We may fly from ordinary surroundings . . . but we find it is not a new scene we needed but a *new viewpoint*” (italics mine; qtd. in Walton 99). *American Magazine* quoted Rockwell as saying, “All of us who turn our eyes away from what we have are *missing life*” (italics mine; qtd. in Walton 126). The psychologist Erik Erikson commented that Rockwell put “much happiness in paintings . . . to be enjoyed by him and others. “Perhaps he *created* his own happiness” (italics mine; qtd. in Walton 20). I agree: Rockwell created his own—and America’s—happiness. Melville loved controversy, and Rockwell loved the ordinary, but they both stood up for their convictions. Both made strong statements concerning social inequality against foreigners in 19th-century America, and concerning former African slaves in 20th-century America.

The two men came from different ancestry: Melville counted the New York Quaker Dutch in his family tree—prominent Hudson Valley Dutch families (Delbanco 21), whereas Rockwell counted English ancestors, from Somerset, who settled in Windsor, Connecticut, in the 17th century. Herman Melville was born to Allan Melvill and Maria Gansevoort Melvill, on August 1, 1819, in New York City, with a token Revolutionary War hero on each side of the

³⁸ He depicted street violence in Mississippi and the forced desegregation of public schools.

family.³⁹ Maria took the initiative to add the “e” to the Melvill surname after Allan passed away in 1832, when Melville was thirteen (Delbanco 24). Both artists had merchant ancestors; Melville’s were wealthy, and Rockwell’s were humble. Allan Melvill, unfortunately, demonstrated only talent for speculation and risk-taking, not for sound business. He set himself up as an importer of “accessories,” i.e., anything not classified as clothing (Delbanco 19-20). He plowed ahead optimistically, ignoring common sense and any guidance his wife Maria would have provided.⁴⁰ Allan persisted in living beyond his means and dragged his wife and eight children into bankruptcy. To stay one step ahead of creditors, he moved the family half a dozen times around New York City (Delbanco 22).

Both men experienced awkwardness in their youths: Rockwell, as the clumsy younger brother of an all-round athlete, and Melville, as the slow-talking younger brother of an articulate young man. Nevertheless, as older brother Jarvis flourished in general studies and on the football field, Rockwell developed his artist’s eye and a flair for visual drama. He became his friends’ favorite sidewalk artist⁴¹ and at the time of the U.S. victory at Manila Bay in 1899 in the Spanish-American War, Rockwell created cardboard battleships to fight sea battles on the street (Walton 29). Rockwell did not thrive in school; he even performed poorly in an art course because he felt restricted. His homeroom teacher discovered his talent, however, and set up a one-man show for him, and thus the boy’s life turned a corner (Walton 36). He attended the Chase School of Fine Arts twice a week, and at the age of fifteen, he gave drawing lessons to a parishioner and her friend, Ethel Barrymore. Years later, in Hollywood, Ms. Barrymore swept in

³⁹ Major Thomas Melvill and General Peter Gansevoort distinguished themselves (Delbanco 17, 18).

⁴⁰ A Dutch Reformed Calvinist, firmly grounded in Bible knowledge (Delbanco 21), she certainly would have encouraged Allan to live within his means and to avoid debt, according to the paradigm, “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another” (*New American Standard Bible*, Romans 13:8).

⁴¹ Similar to Dick Van Dyke’s character in *Mary Poppins*, who created chalk art on the sidewalk and inhabited it with the boy and girl main characters.

front of Rockwell and a crowd, and announced, “You used to give me sketching lessons!” (Walton 36-39)

Similarly, on Melville’s side, according to the parents, older brother Gansevoort possessed a “tenacious memory and glowing fancy,” whereas Melville came across as “less buoyant in mind” (qtd. in Delbanco 25). In a letter, Allan Melvill described seven-year-old Melville as “very backward in speech and somewhat slow in comprehension . . . and of a docile and amiable disposition” (qtd. in Delbanco xiii).

Norman Percevel Rockwell, second son of Jarvis Waring Rockwell and Nancy Hill Rockwell, was born on February 3, 1894, and spent his early years in New York City. His first contact with the country occurred in Central Park (Walton 23). (Architect Downing first advocated building this park in 1850—the same year Melville revised *Moby-Dick*.) Rockwell’s family, of modest means, often took the trolley to the terminus as an inexpensive trip to the country. Later they spent summers on a farm outside the city. These rural escapades brought happiness to the family, especially to shy, pigeon-toed Rockwell, who wilted in comparison to his athletic older brother Jarvis.⁴² Rockwell enjoyed the fresh air and doing chores for the farmer who hosted the Rockwells (Walton 33). This does not mean the boy led a miserable life at home. His mother Nancy stood against the career of a visual artist because her own father, Howard Hill, an alcoholic, had led a disastrous career, barely providing food for his family, and lined up his twelve children to produce copies of his drawings (Walton 25). On the other hand, father Jarvis, an amateur artist, spent time with Rockwell at the dinner table, copying photos (Walton 27), and read stories by Mark Twain and Charles Dickens, which fueled the future artist to draw pictures from his mind and no longer from illustrations (Walton 29).

⁴² Norman bore two nicknames: “Snow in the Face” for his paleness and “Moony” for his glasses (Walton 35).

Melville's family suffered various crises, but not Rockwell's. At one point Allan Melville had Maria and the other children ride the train to Albany while he and eleven-year-old Melville traveled up the Hudson River. For years Melville would store this memory of huddling in the hold of a steam-ship, and use it in *Moby-Dick*, where Father Mapple tells about Jonah lying in a berth with his mind "turning in anguish" (qtd. in Delbanco 23). Reunited in Albany, the family settled in a village named Lansingburgh, Massachusetts. Eventually, Allan died of exposure to cold and ill-health.⁴³ Melville's uncle Thomas Melville owned a farm in Pittsfield, western Massachusetts, where Allan's family had spent summers to escape cholera outbreaks in New York City.⁴⁴ The Melville family spent time in Pittsfield, and then settled in Lansingburgh, also in Massachusetts, in 1838 (Delbanco 26). A maternal uncle, Peter Gansevoort, sent young Melville to an engineering academy.⁴⁵

Melville faced psychology head-on, a field which Rockwell touched on only indirectly. In 1852, with the publication of *Pierre*, Melville's reputation moved from cannibal to madman. The *New York Day Book* headline read: "Herman Melville Crazy" (qtd. in Delbanco 179).⁴⁶ Nineteenth-century America did know the condition of manic-depression—today's bipolarism: physician Benjamin Rush (1745-1813), friend of the Founding Fathers, described it as "the place where mirth and a heavy heart . . . meet together" (qtd. in Delbanco 134). Unfortunately, at the time, doctors had no treatment for it. In any case, this illness likely caused the terrific squabbles in the Melville household. Eleanor Metcalf, Melville's granddaughter, learned from her mother,

⁴³This occurred after a failed business venture and a trip home without a carriage, in sub-zero temperatures. The physician informed the family that, in the event Allan survived his severe fevers, he'd emerge as a maniac. Years later, in *Moby-Dick*, Melville would model the ravings of Ahab in the hammock on his own father's ravings in bed (Delbanco 24).

⁴⁴ Years later Melville adopted this home and birthplace of *Moby-Dick*, and baptize it "Arrowhead."

⁴⁵ Herman never did find employment as an engineer, perhaps because of truculence or flightiness (Delbanco 27).

⁴⁶ Not only did the critics dismiss this psychological novel, but Melville's own wife Lizzie, who witnessed her husband's ups and downs, labeled Melville as "crazy" in a letter to the Reverend Samuel Shaw, in 1867 (Delbanco 276).

Frances Melville Thomas, that Melville and Lizzie Melville quarreled horribly.⁴⁷ In *Pierre*, Melville exposes and explores several aberrations of the human mind: mother-son and brother-sister sexual tension, and life-death tension. The main character, Pierre, ends up cloistered in a room scratching away on paper—very much like Melville in his upstairs studio at Arrowhead (Delbanco 194). While Melville isolated himself, Rockwell consistently sought the company and support of friends and peers. He and two friends took a trip to France, Germany, and Spain (Walton 108). In 1929, when his first wife filed for divorce, he went the Hotel des Artistes in New York City, a fancy residence with room service and a night club in the penthouse, where he stayed four months with bachelor artists. He and his roommate discovered how to get to the dumb-waiter carrying booze from the basement to the penthouse, and regularly pinched one bottle out of several (Walton 112). Rockwell related to those around him everywhere he lived; Melville lived like a hermit. Rockwell’s amiability and integrity earned him nickname “Uncle” from his Vermont and Massachusetts neighbors; Melville’s insecurity and bipolar behavior kept him isolated, even within his family.

Wartime inspired Norman Rockwell positively, whereas it inspired Melville with grief, prompting him to write serious poems.⁴⁸ Rockwell approached a Navy recruiter for World War I, but missed the weight requirement by seven pounds. He fattened himself up, met the requirement, and worked as a Navy photographer and portraitist (and Third-Class Varnisher and Painter) for three months (Walton 90-92). Afterwards he went back to his artist’s job with the Boy Scouts of America and the *Saturday Evening Post*. For World War II, starting in October of 1941, Rockwell presented Willie Gillis over a four-year span, all the way from Army greenhorn to life out of the service, and in college, over a span of four years (Walton 155). At a time when

⁴⁷ In the 1920s, Melville biographer Lewis Mumford approached Mrs. Thomas, who said that “only one condition limited that interview: on no account might [he] even mention her father’s name!” (qtd. in Delbanco 180). Mumford concluded that Mrs. Thomas’s silence loudly proclaimed the alienation between Melville and his family (Delbanco 180).

⁴⁸ The American Civil War inspired him to write *Battle Pieces*.

visual artists were brainstorming in Washington, D.C., to produce a message from the White House to the American public, Rockwell experienced an epiphany and shared his idea the next morning with his best friend Schaefer.⁴⁹ He would illustrate FDR's "Four Freedoms" speech with four paintings: "Freedom of Speech," "Freedom from Want," "Freedom from Fear," and "Freedom to Worship." He produced "Want" and "Fear" in a matter of weeks; "Speech" and "Worship" he struggled with (Walton 161). When he finished, Rockwell took all four canvases off their frames, rolled them up together, and inserted them in a canister. The two friends boarded the train to D.C. to present the four paintings to every U.S. official. But nobody would sponsor the paintings. On their return trip to Vermont, the train traveled through Philadelphia, home of the *Saturday Evening Post*. They got off and went to talk to Ben Hibbs, the new editor of the *Post*. He "jumped up and down" with excitement, took the art, and told Rockwell he'd spare him from further cover art (qtd. in Walton 160). To sell U.S. war bonds, Hibbs helped organize a tour for Rockwell. The Government rewarded the war bond purchasers with a portfolio of the Four Freedoms with Norman Rockwell's signature. One hundred-thirty-three million dollars in war bonds later, after a sixteen-city tour, Rockwell staggered back to Vermont, ten pounds lighter (Walton 162).

Norman Rockwell developed his talent quickly. He dropped out of high school to attend the National Academy School and receive classical French training (Walton 42). He also attended the Art Students' League in Manhattan, with famous graduates (Walton 45).⁵⁰ He fell under the spell of two famous instructors, Mr. Bridgman, in life drawing, and Mr. Fogarty, in still-life. From one, he learned to draw "true to the body," i.e., adhere to the skeletal and muscular systems; from the other, to draw "true to the intent of the author," i.e., conform to, and

⁴⁹ Classmate in art school and life-long friend, Mead Schaeffer (Schaefer).

⁵⁰ In both schools Rockwell learned from conservative teachers a lifestyle which contradicted his expectations of bohemianism.

collaborate with, the author of the text the drawing complements (Walton 50). From both he acquired adherence to detail for visual authenticity. He assisted Bridgman in exchange for tuition.⁵¹ Rockwell emerged responsible, competent and efficient. He also came away with a life-long friend, artist Mead Schaeffer—Schaf—also a New Yorker, who later followed him to Vermont. Whereas Rockwell gathered artistic momentum in his youth, Melville struggled financially. Allan Melville's death left Maria a widow with eight children. The two eldest boys left private school. Melville worked as an errand boy at the New York State Bank in Albany (Delbanco 24), and later worked in older brother Gansevoort's cap-and-fur shop (Delbanco 25).⁵² Not only did Rockwell start out fast, he also diversified and exposed himself to the stage. He worked as an extra at the Metropolitan Opera, where he befriended tenor Enrico Caruso.⁵³ Rockwell, a friend from art school, and Caruso, formed an unholy trio in the opera staff (Walton 54-55).⁵⁴ Rockwell's personal experience with the stage and his fascination with figures like Ethel Barrymore impressed him with a love of drama and humor that infused his entire career. He dressed his models in particular outfits and coached them into particular positions and attitudes by demonstrating for them with exaggeration (Walton 187, 265-66). He used live models in his studio for years before switching to photographs.

Rockwell launched himself early on, compared to Melville. Out of art school, Rockwell approached the Boy Scouts of America, who hired him as art director for their magazine, *Boy's Life*, and as illustrator for their guidebooks. He heard of the Hawthorne Academy in

⁵¹ Among other duties, Norman hired models for the school. Norman's classmates dubbed him "Deacon" for his seriousness.

⁵² Allan and Maria had slated Gansevoort for Harvard.

⁵³ Caruso earned a reputation as a prankster who drew caricatures of divas or leading males and published them in *La Follia*.

⁵⁴ In *Tosca*, Caruso played General Radames, who ends up imprisoned underground (under the stage). There, as he moaned and groaned, Caruso drew sketches. The two boys played two guards above the prison. When the soprano fell to the floor, they carried her off stage, with Norman holding the upper body—the less heavy half of the singer. One night the two got confused and picked up the wrong ends. Norman had no muscle for the lower half of this lady, so the two boys could not carry her, and Caruso, in his underground cell, almost died of laughter instead of his wounds (Walton 56-57).

Provincetown on Cape Cod, and attended there one summer.⁵⁵ There Rockwell acquired the love of ocean-side views, smell, and sensations, which he used in his numerous sailor and marine subjects (Walton 70-76). Afterwards, Rockwell shared an apartment in New York City with Clyde Victor Forsythe, an established cartoonist, who challenged him to present his work to the *Saturday Evening Post*. The hallowed magazine daunted young Rockwell, who nevertheless bucked himself up to produce several paintings. In the spring of 1916 he built an enormous wooden crate to transport them in, and took himself off to Philadelphia to meet with the editor, George Horace Lorimer, who loved the paintings and hired young Rockwell on the spot (Walton 90).⁵⁶

Both Rockwell and Melville married young; the artist planned his wedding but the writer wandered into it. Melville disembarked from the *U.S.S. United States* frigate in Boston Harbor in 1844, and went to visit Judge Lemuel L. Shaw, executor of his father's estate. The judge's daughter Elizabeth still lived at home, so she and Melville were able to review their friendship. They married in 1847.

Rockwell earned his living from his art, whereas Melville worked as a customs officer (like Hawthorne) at the end of his life. When Rockwell earned five times the average man's salary in the U.S. (Walton 82), he got married.⁵⁷ Rockwell received more and more commissions for illustrations, cover pages, and portraits. Unfortunately, the busier he got, the more the distance grew with his wife, who shared none of Rockwell's enthusiasm for art or

⁵⁵ In this artist colony he met other young artists—one of them his first love, Frances Starr, from Chicago. Norman and Frances took long walks and sketched seascapes and shared their dreams, but when they parted, they never saw each other again.

⁵⁶ Rockwell floated out of that interview, barely believing that he now stood among the cover page artists of one of the most prestigious magazines in the country. He soon got into the rhythm of deadlines for ten cover pieces a year, earning him \$40,000 a year (Walton 94). He once suffered with artist's block and depicted himself at a blank easel scratching his head. Years later, in 1960, he'd produce the famous "Triple Self-Portrait," depicting himself as an artist, painting himself on canvas using his reflection in a mirror. Because the artist is looking in the mirror, the viewer sees the back of the artist's head, the artist's reflected face in the mirror, and the depiction of the artist's face on canvas, with an introspective expression. In all three images, Rockwell is smoking his beloved pipe.

⁵⁷ He married Irene, a girl he'd known from his youth. They set up house in New Rochelle, New York, on the upscale Lord Kitchener Street.

travel, and lived only for parties.⁵⁸ Until they divorced Rockwell lived through a phase of attending parties in top-hat and tuxedo and pipe, and drinking. He stopped drinking when the hangovers stood in the way of painting purple morning skies. Rockwell later married Mary Barstow, a Stanford graduate and school teacher he met through friends. While Rockwell worked in the studio, Mary cared for their three boys, Jarvis, Thomas and Peter, and, along with Schaefer's and John Atherton's wives, regularly dropped her activities to fetch a prop. Teamwork also occurred among the artist husbands, who reviewed each other's work (Walton 136, 186).

Both men traveled, though Melville did so intensely and compulsively throughout his life, and Rockwell did so regularly, and at times on commission. On his trips Melville found solace and fresh material for writing; Rockwell found better self-understanding from his trips, but continued to paint what he had always painted. Melville's stay in the South Pacific island of Nukuheva inspired *Typee*.⁵⁹ He also wrote *Omoo: a Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas*, presenting commercial sexual encounters (no more the edenic innocent sex of *Typee*). The last segment of Melville's sea voyage on the *U.S.S. United States*, gave him material for two more works, *White-Jacket*, a coming-of-age story, and *Benito Cereno*, a law-versus-ethics story.⁶⁰

Both men produced their greatest works, *Moby-Dick* and *The Four Freedoms*, near a memorable event in their lives. At Arrowhead Farm, on August 5, 1850, four days after Melville's thirty-first birthday, and one day after his third wedding anniversary, a neighbor and friend organized a picnic on Monument Mountain.⁶¹ The picnic guest list included Nathaniel

⁵⁸ She thrived on social climbing, while Norman thrived on producing art at his easel and on traveling the world. At one point, his inspiration flagged, and the couple planned a trip to Europe. At the last minute, Irene begged out and sent Norman off alone.

⁵⁹ He then boarded the *Lucy Ann* and went to the Sandwich Islands, now known as Hawaii. A few weeks later he joined the U.S. Navy and, as an American sailor, boarded the frigate *U.S.S. United States*, which took him to Boston Harbor in 1844, after three years at sea (Delbanco 41-45).

⁶⁰ Both works feature sadistic floggings of sailors on the decks of ships. By the time these two novels appeared in book form in 1850, the U.S. Congress had taken a stance against, and declared illegal, floggings on U.S. Navy ships (Delbanco 115).

⁶¹ Up to this point, this mountain had inspired poets, artists and novelists. William Cullen Bryant hiked throughout Great Barrington between 1815 and 1825, and authored a lyrical poem, "Monument Mountain," about a Mohican maiden whose forbidden love for her cousin prompted her to leap to her death from the mountain's cliffs. According to the poem, the Mohicans built a rock cairn over the grave of the young woman,

Hawthorne, from Lenox, Massachusetts, and his wife Sophia Peabody Hawthorne. Until then, Hawthorne and Melville, though familiar with each other's work, had never met. Hawthorne had read and reviewed *Typee* positively, lauding Melville for the vivid, lifelike descriptions of the people of Nukuheva. Hawthorne had just published his own collection of stories, *Mosses from an Old Manse*, which included "Rappaccini's Daughter." Melville had previously received a copy of *Mosses* from an aunt, but had not read it. At the picnic in the Berkshires, a storm brewed, and the picnickers scattered for shelter in the caves. Thus Melville and Hawthorne spent two hours together, enjoying each other, and forging a kind of friendship Melville had never known. Later Hawthorne rushed home to devour all the Melville novels,⁶² and Melville rushed home to devour *Mosses* and write *Hawthorne and His Mosses*, a glowing review (Delbanco 126). In this review Melville wrote that he now enjoyed a blood brotherhood with "Nathaniel of Salem," whose "soft ravishments spun [him] around about in a web of dreams," and a community where "genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round" (qtd. in Delbanco 127). For unknown reasons, the friendship with Hawthorne lasted only until 1853, though Melville viewed him as his soul-mate (Delbanco 135). Melville once wrote in a letter that Hawthorne had "refreshed all [his] meadows, as the Housatonic... does in reality" (qtd. in Merrell and Gilman 135). Melville also wrote, "I shall leave the world with more satisfaction for having come to know you" (qtd. in Merrell et al. 141). In another letter, Melville wrote Hawthorne, "Your heart beats in my ribs, and mine in yours, and both in God's" (qtd. in Delbanco 137). Buoyed by his reading of *Mosses* and by Hawthorne's positive reviews of his own earlier work, Melville determined against writing yet another seafaring adventure, and instead produce a work of art with "plenty of sea-room to tell the Truth

naming it "Mountain of the Monument" ("Property History"). On August 5, 1850, this mountain would earn more fame by bringing together two literary geniuses who would change the course of American literature.

⁶² According to his wife Sophia, he did so in a matter of days.

in” (qtd. in Delbanco 127).⁶³ The interchange with Hawthorne produced “germinous seeds” in Melville that caused him to revamp the book from the inside out, working every day until four or five without eating, according to his wife Lizzie’s letters (Delbanco 140).⁶⁴ *Moby-Dick* catapulted both Melville and the American novel and Melville onto the world scene (Delbanco 126, 27). The dedication to Hawthorne read, “I have written a wicked book and feel spotless as a lamb” (qtd. in “Herman Melville”).

While Rockwell enjoyed a stable and enduring partnership with his mentor, the editor at the *Saturday Evening Post*, Melville broke up with Hawthorne for unknown reasons. Lizzie didn’t acknowledge Melville’s situation, yet Sophia Hawthorne, in her letters, describes manic-depressive behavior to a “T” when she describes Melville spinning a yarn by becoming “each several person of the tale,” but also producing a “quiet expression... an indrawn look... [a] strange, lazy glance [that] does not seem to penetrate through you, but to take you into himself” (qtd. in Delbanco 65, 135). Until their friendship cooled two years later in 1853, according to Sophia, Nathaniel Hawthorne became “Father Confessor” to Melville, who carried much psychological baggage and needed to unburden himself (qtd. in Delbanco 210, 211).

Rockwell increased his clientele by selling his artwork to magazines other than the *Saturday Evening Post*, but overall, the *Post* remained his north star. In fact, the artist’s relationship to Lorimer, the editor, went beyond a simple editor-artist rapport: the older man also encouraged and mentored the younger one. The greatest proof of Lorimer’s influence on Rockwell occurred in 1923 when Rockwell returned from a month in Paris studying abstract, expressionist and surrealist styles. He studied and imitated these modern genres but found no satisfaction in them. Back in Philadelphia, he related his experience to Lorimer, who urged him

⁶³ Melville used this phrase in his review, *Hawthorne’s Mosses*. Sophia Hawthorne repeated this expression in her letter to Evert Duyckinck, Melville’s relative and publisher: “Melville has given sea-room to his intellect... he is in the mere boyhood of his possibilities” (qtd. in Delbanco 135).

⁶⁴ He made statements such as, “Give me Vesuvius’ crater for an ink-well!” (qtd. in “Herman Melville”)

to stick to the work people loved to see: depictions of ordinary Americans doing interesting things, with deep feeling (Walton 98). People saw themselves in Rockwell's art and sales of the *Post* always rocketed when the cover featured this artist's work. Like his contemporary Aaron Copland, who composed *Fanfare for the Common Man*, Rockwell made the common man his business.

Both men suffered personal losses. In the 1860s Melville experienced two heartbreaks. Hawthorne died while traveling in New Hampshire. Although Melville and Hawthorne's relationship had cooled eleven years before, Melville heard the news in shock, according to his wife Lizzie (Delbanco 273). During the Civil War he wrote *Battle-Pieces*, a collection of poems not well received.⁶⁵ Nevertheless poetry did serve Melville to express his feelings. In "Shelley's Vision," from *Timoleon* (1891), he probably had Hawthorne in mind when he penned:

To have known him, to have loved him
 after loneliness long
 and then to be estranged in life,
 and neither in the wrong;
 and now for death to set his seal—
 ease me, a little ease, my song! (qtd. in Matthiessen 18, 19)

Then two years later, Melville's eldest son Malcolm (Mackey) died.⁶⁶ And twenty years later, in 1886, his second son Stanwix (Stanny) died, alone in a San Francisco hotel (Delbanco 276, 295,

⁶⁵ William Dean Howells reviewed this work in *The Atlantic* in 1867 as "not words and blood, but words alone" (qtd. in Delbanco 273).

⁶⁶ At age eighteen, one day, he spent the day playing military games with his friends, and came home at three in the morning. The following evening the Melvilles went upstairs to Mackey's room and found him in bed, dead of a gunshot wound. He had a problem with sleepwalking, so everyone wondered if he accidentally shot himself while sleepwalking, or if he shot himself on purpose, committing suicide. At that time, his father Melville had been drinking more and more, and suffering fitful moods. Nobody knew if Malcolm kept a pistol by his pillow to fend off an abusive father, or to give himself a general feeling of security (Delbanco 275, 276).

296).⁶⁷ Melville poured out his double grief into his last novel, *Billy Budd*, featuring Billy, a pre-Fall Adam, an amalgamation of both sons.^{68 69}

As for Rockwell, his wife suffered panic attacks after the move to West Arlington, Vermont. Rockwell took her to a psychiatric clinic in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, to see famous Dr. Erik Erikson. The Rockwells subsequently moved to Massachusetts, and loved Stockbridge, a pretty town with a bygone-era atmosphere due to the absence of fast food, neon lights, and apartments (Walton 202). At first the Rockwells lived on Main Street, with Rockwell using as a studio a second-floor loft with a huge picture window. But the people-watching—he called it “a constant peep-show”—proved too distracting for him, so he and Mary scouted for a house outside the city limits (qtd. in Walton 199). Their happy days came to an end when, in 1959, at age fifty-one, Mary passed away from a heart attack. Rockwell, devastated, secluded himself in his work. He’d determined to simply “whip out the paints and really go to it” (qtd. in Walton 210-11). Inevitably, his life became lonely, and Dr. Erik Erikson, Mary’s doctor, urged Rockwell to meet people. Inevitably, his life got lonely, and Dr. Erik Erikson urged him to meet people. After his wife Mary’s death, Rockwell enrolled in a poetry reading class at the community center, and there he met the third love of his life: “cute little Molly Pundit,” a retired schoolteacher (qtd. in Walton 224). They married in Stockbridge.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ This son had tried his hand at such disparate occupations as dentistry and prospecting, and never settled down to any one thing. He probably suffered from a weak relationship with his father.

⁶⁸ The following century, *Billy Budd* met with great acclaim in America and in Europe. In fact, the work inspired two other versions, in opera (by Benjamin Britten) and in film (by Peter Ustinov). Tomas Mann called this novel “the most beautiful story in the world” (qtd. in Delbanco 321, 322).

⁶⁹ The novel relates the story of Billy Budd, a young man of illegitimate blood who seeks only peace and harmony wherever he goes. He boards a British Royal Navy ship, and works under John Claggart, the master at arms. Captain Vere runs the ship, and rumors circulate about a mutiny. Claggart brings Billy to Vere and falsely accuses him of conspiracy to mutiny. Left to defend himself, Billy stammers under the stress, and strikes Claggart, killing him accidentally. Vere knows Billy to be innocent of mutiny designs, but, given the atmosphere of mutiny on the ship, Vere cannot risk showing any softness or indulgence towards his favorite sailor, who just killed a Navy officer. He court-marshals Billy and hangs him from the yardarm. Before dying, Billy shouts, “God bless Captain Vere!” and the whole crew echoes this back (Delbanco 307-309).

⁷⁰ Norman and Molly enjoyed their partnership at home and abroad their entire married life. The Rockwells’ daily routine included one or two bike rides together, and one nap and two studio sessions for Norman. His whole life revolved around his beloved easel. At one point, he fell from his bicycle and had to sit in a wheelchair, which he’d roll up to the easel. Later, when he no longer needed it, he stored the chair in the studio to use for models.

Both artists developed a rhythm for producing. During his courtship of Lizzie, Melville lived at the homestead in Lansingburgh, with his mother Maria and several sisters (Delbanco 62-63). There Melville produced *Typee* and *Omoo* in quick succession. Two years later, in 1849, he wrote *Mardi*, *White-Jacket*, and *Redburn* even more swiftly, in the space of two months. He exploited his audience's hunger for the exotic and its tolerance for foreign mores, thus marking his niche (Delbanco 85).⁷¹ Cannibalism titillated pre-Civil War America and Europe, so Melville took advantage of the situation, and built himself up as the American who lived among cannibals. Now he settled into a story he'd heard before his trip, about a Nantucket whaleboat, *The Essex*, which a whale attacked and annihilated in the Pacific.⁷²

Rockwell and Melville took different journeys to artistic fulfillment. Melville exposed the truth with the *topics* he chose, such as sex in paradise, in *Typee*, or relations between races on a ship, in *Moby-Dick*. His mode was explicit: he found his "sea-room," unencumbered by any other writer, in his own niche. Rockwell, for his part, exposed the truth in the *manner* in which he reported what he saw. His mode was implicit: he sought the extraordinary in the mundane, as in "Snagging the Big One."⁷³ Perhaps the most telling quote comes from a lecture Rockwell gave at the Society of Illustrators in New York City. Someone asked him, "Isn't illustrating just a way to make money?" And Rockwell replied, "No man with a conscience can just bat out illustrations. He's got to put all his talent and feeling into them!" (qtd. in Walton 188)

The two artists came into their voices at different times in their life. Norman Rockwell discovered his passion for depicting ordinary people doing interesting things, early on (Walton 98). He hailed from a modest yet stable background, found his artistic voice as a teenager, and

⁷¹ He was creating a new taste in his audience, thus illustrating the statement by Wordsworth and Coleridge: "[E]very author . . . great and . . . original, has had the task of creating the taste by which he is to be enjoyed" (qtd. in Delbanco 85).

⁷² The surviving crew, afraid to land in Tahiti because of rumored cannibalism, stayed in lifeboats, half of them dying of dehydration and starvation, and the other half feeding on the corpses of their fallen mates, thus practicing cannibalism themselves.

⁷³ One of his most famous pictures, of a grandfather and grandson fishing, with the old man catching his first fish with great joy while the grandson looks on almost bored.

overcame personal, economic and professional challenges. He found solutions within himself, and also from the God his parents introduced him to as a boy. His father, an Episcopalian, always kept him and his brother from the streets and occupied all week long, with school, choir, and church activities (Walton 26). Rockwell grew up learning to schedule himself and to respect authority.

Melville blended genres; Rockwell kept his styles separate. In *Moby-Dick* Melville combined the categories of fiction, nonfiction, essay, travel, philosophy, playwrighting, comedy, and tragedy. Rockwell pioneered artistic reporting in the 60s, depicting violent and suspenseful scenes from civil rights tensions. He also collaborated with writers of fiction, illustrating stories in books or magazines.

Rockwell welcomed new ways to paint. In 1935, after a long artist's block, Rockwell found an opportunity to illustrate *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. Rockwell traveled to Hannibal, Missouri, Twain's hometown, which had remained unchanged, and bought old farming outfits from men, women, and children. The town knew Rockwell as the crazy reverse-peddler, who offered cash for old clothes, even those still on people's backs (Walton 124). In 1937, he was commissioned to paint a mural in Princeton, New Jersey, at the Nassau Inn, depicting Revolutionary War patriots, which he named "Yankee Doodle" (Walton 127). After the war, in 1951, Kansas City suffered severe flooding from the Missouri River. For the first and only time in his career, Rockwell collaborated with his friend John Atherton on another mural. The work features a strong man in engineering garb, with rulers and a plumb line, standing in the foreground, looking toward the rising sun, with a cityscape, a farm scene, and the Missouri River in the background (Walton 183).

In studying Melville's career, one notices the differences in publishing industries on either side of the Atlantic. Even when he had achieved fame in the U.S. and in Europe, the American editors worked far more slowly than their British counterparts,⁷⁴ so Melville used his leverage in England to prompt American publishers to produce his first novels, *Typee* and *Omoo*.

While Rockwell maintained a positive outlook on life, Melville wavered between positivity and negativity. In 1943, when Rockwell's studio burned down during the night (probably from gun shell props that caught fire from a smoldering pipe), he lost twenty-eight years' worth of material: thirty paintings, sketches, costumes, reference files, antique guns, and brushes made in Germany (Walton 164-165). The next day his Vermont neighbors brought him a few new pipes. "They took us to their hearts when we were in trouble," said Rockwell (qtd. in Walton 167). And he thanked the Lord for another fact: he had shipped out his "Freedom of Worship" painting just a few days before the fire. He lost his studio but gained a new appreciation for his art and also a new enthusiasm for future projects—so much so, his friend Schaef wished his own studio had burned down (Walton 170). The Rockwell family then moved to West Arlington, Vermont, into a house near the Battenkill River (Walton 167). Spunky Rockwell lived longer and commented, at age eighty, "To hell with birthdays!" (qtd. in Walton 282), and passed away four years later, in 1978, in Stockbridge. As for Melville, his health declined after *Billy Budd*. A fall from a carriage left him with an injured shoulder and ribs, worsening his condition. In old age he lived on East 26th Street in New York City, and passed away in September 1891, at the age of seventy-two.

⁷⁴ Melville's brother Gansevoort, who worked as American envoy in London, approached British publishers on his behalf.

Rockwell's Four Freedoms paintings include "Freedom from Want," "Freedom from Fear," "Freedom of Speech," and "Freedom to Worship."⁷⁵ The first depicts a family reunion around the Thanksgiving meal, the second, parents putting their children to bed, the third, a youngish man speaking out at a town hall meeting, and the last, a multicultural crowd praying. I'd like to focus on the first one, since it implies the other three. A family that sits around a meal to celebrate a holiday has probably prayed together and also probably speaks freely and lives out of harm's way. The picture draws the eye to its center, also the table's center, which the grandmother is about to fill with a large oven-browned turkey. Her husband, the only other person still standing, looks down benevolently over the main course. The rest of the crowd looks elsewhere, either at the viewer or at each other, smiling, laughing, and chatting, thus communicating an irrepressible joy of fellowship, regardless of the amount of food. The Four Freedoms' popularity spread around the world in the 40s, and the Soviets seized the opportunity to accuse Americans of gluttony, even though the depicted meal could hardly be labeled as hedonistic.

To facilitate the comparison of these two artists, I'd like to focus on Melville's *Moby-Dick* and Rockwell's *Freedom from Want*. When considering the Pequod and the Thanksgiving table, we contemplate two sets of boards, one set, a floating piece of America without moorings, and the other, a sturdy, fixed reference point for a thriving family. The boards of the main deck provide Ahab with a stage for his solo dominance and control; the boards of the family table provide nourishment for its three generations. As for the centerpiece, the ship presents the main mast, where Ahab nails the promised doubloon for the man who helps him hunt down Moby-Dick, and the dinner table features an empty spot full of light from the window, symbolic of the

⁷⁵ In 1941 U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt gave the "Four Freedoms" speech which declared freedom of speech, freedom of faith, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

Judeo-Christian ethic in America, given that Jesus Christ described Himself as the Light of the world. I would add that Ahab's impaled coin represents Judas's thirty pieces of silver, and, therefore, by placing this money in prominence, the captain changes the mission of his ship, contrary to the contracted service he owes its owners. By placing the gold coin front and center for the crew, the captain reverses, if you will, the picture of the cross, thus turning himself into a Satanic leader, motivated by vengeance toward the so-called vicious whale who chewed off his leg. By contrast, the assembled family, with all its laughing and talking, shows its readiness not only to partake of the meal, but also to pray and thank God for His gifts. Both sets of characters represent their society: the Pequod carries Americans and foreigners, presenting a cosmopolitan atmosphere; the feast features a New England working-class family, presenting a provincial atmosphere. For the whaling adventure, families have inevitably been abandoned; right before the final tragedy, thanks to Starbuck's prodding, Ahab remembers his family for only a few minutes; on the other hand, the three-generation family at the table sits contented, headed by a benevolent patriarch. The community on the boat features an all-male crew, an unnatural and homosexual situation, whereas around the table we see several couples, a natural and heterosexual situation.

The Pequod's goal, as mentioned above, entails deviation from the express wishes of the owners—to harvest whales for their oil and other benefits—and taking irrational risk in order to hunt down an animal. The Thanksgiving group, on the other hand, simply and openly shares a meal, away from daily work, enriching its life. Economic need provides the only connection between the crew members in *Moby-Dick*, and together they form an artificial male-only group disconnected from country, hometown, and family. This isolation enables Ahab's absolute dictatorship, which easily overpowers Starbuck's solitary resistance. On the other hand, family

bonds provide the connection around the Thanksgiving feast, and these people find their need supplied abundantly (as mentioned before, their needs include freedom from harm, freedom of speech, and freedom to worship). As for the focus, “sea-room” and the exotic drove Melville in this and several other works, whereas ordinary situations and the deep feelings they evoke motivated Rockwell. As for psychology, Melville shines the spot-light on Ahab as a poster-child for insanity and obsession—the *folly* described in the Book of Proverbs in the Bible. By contrast, the dining family presents a model of sanity and modest enjoyment—the *wisdom* found in the Bible. The two main characters represent opposing politics: Ahab turns into a Fascist dictator, who subsumes his crew to his whimsy, whereas the *paterfamilias* symbolizes the servant-leader with a democratic mind-set, concerned for his loved ones. Ahab’s despotic “I,” bound and determined to catch the great white whale at the expense of his ship, his crew, and his mission, contrasts sharply with the feasting family palpable “we,” bespeaking of teamwork and cooperation. Ishmael also suffers from solipsism, when he admits to sitting in the crow’s nest but not seeing anything because of the universe revolving in his head (*The Complete Shorter Fiction* xxxiv).

The tone of the two works contrasts sharply: Melville uses suspense, violence, horror, and death in his tragedy, while Rockwell uses tradition, gentleness, laughter, and food in his portrayal of healthy family life—physical and spiritual. The two works likely present autobiographical elements that reflect their creators’ lives: Ahab’s ravings probably were modeled on Melville’s father, and Ishmael’s initial depression was probably modeled on Melville’s bipolarity; on the other hand, the normality of the middle-class family probably reflects Rockwell’s own stable upbringing. Melville approaches societal issues in *Moby-Dick*

with the same mocking tone of later psychological short stories, such as “I and My Chimney.”⁷⁶ In fact, the start of *Moby-Dick* includes downright comedy, in the scene where Ishmael and Queequeg sharing the same bed. Also, Flask and Stubb provide further amusement throughout the work, one with a runaway mouth, and the other with an ever-present pipe. On the other hand, Rockwell communicates a quiet admiration for the modest family celebrating a holiday with joy and simplicity. Both Melville and Rockwell employ a reporting mindset: *Moby-Dick* includes detailed data on marine biology (science), on the whaling industry (economics), and on the Nantucket fishing system (capitalism). *Freedom from Want*, for its part, presents minute detail with the size of the turkey, the size of the family, the empty areas on the table, the expression, wrinkles, and attire of the two hosts, and the light streaming through the window, background to grandpa’s black suit, which in turn acts as background to grandma’s white apron, in front of which appears the dark turkey en route to the white tablecloth.

⁷⁶ See Melville 349-375.

Housatonic (Beyond the Mountain Place)

Wait!” I tell Schaefer, holding him back. My stomach has stopped growling; my heart is thumping. Across the stream come two men, dressed like the models in my studio, when I did the Louisa May Alcott project. My watch reads three-thirty. My sneakers—my friend’s, too—have turned into soft-leather high-tops, with laces and buttons up the side, to match the other guys’ shoes. Our bikes are no longer leaning against that tree. Did someone steal them?

Schaefer halloos the guys.

The two men look up and across, and shade their eyes. The older, taller, slimmer one, with the brown top-hat and dark sideburns, breaks into a grin. Next to him, the stouter, bearded one stops talking.

I hold up a sandwich to ask them if they’re hungry. They shake their heads.

“We’re coming over to you!” says Schaefer.

“Considerate of you,” I say, but I see what he means: we’re wearing tougher gear than our guests—or are we theirs? I pat my pipe and tobacco in my pants’ pockets and pick up the food basket and the fishing gear. Schaefer waits at the water’s edge, fishing rod and tacklebox in hand. Water bubbles and glimmers around our stepping-stones. A shiny form slips around a mossy stone as I step close behind Schaefer. The gurgling sound quickens me: my lungs, eyes, and ears pulsate with life. Today will bring me something new for my easel. The two men sit on a wide square rock; Schaefer extends his hand to them; I drop my gear in the fresh grass and join them.

“I’m Schaefer, this is Norman. We’re artists,” says Schaefer.

The husky one says, “Herman’s my name, and my friend here’s Nathaniel of Salem.” Herman’s light eyes remind me of my son Peter’s.

“We’re both writers,” says Nathaniel.

“Pleased to meet you, Herman and Nathaniel,” I say.

“I’m afraid,” says Nathaniel, “that Herman gave you my nickname. My surname’s Hawthorne.”

“Hawthorne?” I say. “Any connection to the Hawthorne school in Provincetown, on Cape Cod?”

“No,” he says. “Though that flatters me. Is that an art academy?”

“Yes, one I attended long ago,” I say.

“I’m not familiar—but I’d enjoy visiting it.”

I say, “Wait a minute, you’re both writers. You’re not ...”

“... the Hawthorne of *The Scarlet Letter*?”

My palms sweat.

“Yes,” answers Herman, the stout one. “He published it this year, in ‘50, and four years ago, *Mosses from an Old Manse*.”

Nineteen-fifty or eighteen-fifty? This bike trip started out on August first, nineteen-fifty-two. Our bikes have disappeared, our shoes have morphed, and we’ve moved back one hundred years.

“Herman,” I say. “What place do you call home?”

“New York City,” he says.

“No kidding!” I say. “That makes three of us from the Big Apple!”

“Big Apple?” Herman says. “Did you coin that?” He smiles, looking down. Schaefer and I exchange looks.

I pull out sandwiches and bottles of seltzer water. I find out that Herman and Nathaniel have met just today at a picnic on Mount Memorial, but that a storm drove them to a cave, where they talked for two hours. Herman chatters with hand motions; Nathaniel ponders before answering. Herman's a volcano, and Nathaniel, a deep well. Where's my sketchpad when I need it? And Schaef never packs it. I'll just click the camera behind my eyes: Herman, the square-faced, bearded, blue-eyed, sturdy guy, and Nathaniel, the long-faced, side-burned, brown-eyed willowy guy.

Schaef asks, "Herman, are you the one who wrote *Moby-Dick*?"

"*Moby-Dick*? What an interesting title! What does it mean?" Herman says.

"Don't know what it means," says Schaef. "But that's what they called that big white whale ..."

"Whales—yes—I'm writing about whales now!"

Nathaniel says, "In fact, Herman himself waxes eloquent on 'telling the truth in plenty of sea-room,' like a whale!"

We laugh and Herman blushes.

I offer a bottle of water to my new acquaintances. Nathaniel takes the bottle, and the ruffled metal cap turns into a cork. "A bottle of seltzer—what an excellent idea! I've heard that New York's water leaves something to be desired," he says. Meantime, Herman chatters to Schaef about fish, whales, the Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, ships, and sailors. Nathaniel tells me that Herman has written several books from his trips on merchant ships, whalers, and a man-o-war.

Then, pointing at our poles, Nathaniel says, “Don’t let us keep you from fishing.”

“Oh, that’s O.K.,” says Schaef, “The only time Norman catches fish is when I stick a trout on his hook! Besides, even when his body’s sitting here, his heart’s back at his easel in Stockbridge. In fact, on his last trip to Europe, his wife Mary packed an extra pad and a watercolor set for him.”

Nathaniel says, “Of course. I daren’t scorn my muse when she urges, especially when my wife Sophia slumbers. Norman, you and I write our messages, you with shapes and I with words. Simple or profound, we communicate to the world from our minds ...”

“...or from our dreams,” says Herman.

“Yes,” says Nathaniel. “Truth does come to us directly in our dreams and then, in our waking hours, we try to forget what we’ve learned.”⁷⁷

I tell my friends about trying to paint in other styles in Paris. “It didn’t satisfy me,” I tell them, and my editor told me to stick to illustrating ordinary people doing interesting things. My career turned a corner that day, after a long block. Now I tell people, when you want to see other than what’s in front of you, you’re missing out on life.”

We pick up our things, stand up, and walk together.

Nathaniel says, “That may work for you, but for me, writing is like gluing together pieces of a letter that the wind has scattered.”

Herman says, “I find writing an exercise in scraping my brain—all of it!”

We chuckle. Nathaniel and I puff on our pipes.

Schaef says, “Maybe Norm scrapes his canvas clean because he can’t scrape his brain.”

Nathaniel says, “Well, I think today’s American publishers lump writing together with wordsmithing.”

⁷⁷ Nathaniel Hawthorne made this statement in “The Birthmark,” a story in the *Mosses from an Old Manse* collection (1846).

Schaef says, “Nate—Nathaniel—didn’t you write *The House of Seven Gables*?”

“I’ve been sketching—how do you—are you *prescient*?”

I elbow Schaef, who nods. Then I ask Herman about his writing experience.

“Oh,” he says, “I think of my upstairs room at Arrowhead Farm as the deck of a ship, and my windows as the portholes, and the grass outside as the ocean all around.”

I say, “For me, I decide what the picture needs to look like, and what the character needs to do, and then I find a model to match my ideas. I sweet-talk the model to dress up and to get in a certain position and expression. Then I put all the details on canvas. For you, *all* of your material’s in your head. For me, only *some* of my material’s in my head; *most* of the material’s outside of me.”

“I simply relive the memories of my youth,” he says. “See, I took several trips at sea in my twenties. The first happened a few years after my father’s bankruptcy in New York City. I got aboard the *Saint Lawrence* on route to Liverpool, in England. I spent three months at sea and one month on shore.”

“What did you see?” I ask.

“At sea, nothing much aside from the ship, but horrors in Liverpool!” Then he tells us of people dying or lying dead in the gutters as others walked by, and his eyes cloud over. He says, “Every day that passes, our great city’s streets resemble Liverpool’s more and more.”

Thanks to that history course on Manhattan I can understand what he describes. Thanks to reading Crane’s “Maggie,” with all the dirt and crime of the Bowery, I can visualize it.

“Later,” Herman says, “I climbed on board the *Acushnet* as a cabin-boy to go whaling. We went all the way to the Polynesian Islands. I left—deserted, really—on the island of Nukuheva, in the Marquesas. That’s how I wrote *Typee*. Then I sailed on the *Charles and*

Henry, all the way to the Sandwich Islands in the middle of the Pacific—*Omoo* came out of that. Then I joined the Navy and climbed aboard the *U.S.S. United States*, which took me back to Boston. That’s how I wrote *White-Jacket*. When I have time, I’ll write about my trip to Liverpool.”

“Herman,” I say, “why call the story *White-Jacket*? Does the ship carry crazy sailors?”

He laughs. “No. The crew dubs the protagonist that because he wears a nearly white jacket and thinks himself superior to them.”

The big ball of fire in the sky droops in a creamy-orange horizon. My heart pounds, torn between prolonging the encounter, and going home—bikes or no—to Stockbridge, in nineteen-fifty-two. I don’t want to relive any of the 1900s, let alone get stuck in the 1800s. I tap Schaef on the shoulder, and he tells our friends, “We ought to get going.” We shake hands. Nathaniel bows his head. This man surely engages with others—a contented, secure man. Herman, just as interesting, shows an inward expression that I can’t wait to put on canvas. His gestures tell me that his imagination rarely takes a break, even in the company of others: an anxious man.

“Norman,” says Herman, “would you be so kind and give me your address, so I can send you a complimentary copy of my book next year?”

“Thanks, Herman.” My mind reels. I picture him receiving a Return-to-Sender package from Stockbridge, with “Address and Addressee Unknown” stamped on it.

Schaef rescues me by saying, “We might go on a year-long tour.”

I add, “But we’ll make sure to get a copy! I’m sure it’ll make the *New York Times* best-seller list!” As we part I take another mental photo of Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Schaef and I hike back to Stockbridge in silence. We sigh with relief when we spot the sign—new this year—marking the Stockbridge city limits. We reach my place, get in my car, and drive him home to West Arlington, Vermont. We ride in silence. We don't mention time-warps or insane asylums.

I brake at Schaef's house, and get out of the car to hug him. "So long," we say.

I drive home musing over the amazing afternoon. In my garage, as I put away my beige fishing-pole with the two red pin-stripes, I see Herman's face in my mind's eye, and hear his voice. Before stepping inside, something catches my eye in the far corner of the garage: two bikes lean against the wall. I drop into my easy-chair and tamp my pipe. Now I can see Nathaniel's face and brooding eyes. I feel like that fortunate trout in the stream that swam away today. I walk over to my book-shelf to reach for a tattered forest-green leather-bound book. I open to the first page and read, "Call me Ishmael."

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