Mechanics of Allegory in Randall Jarrell

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Abstract: I first argue that what a generation of scholarship has disinterred as moral "disturbances" in Jarrell's poetry are not. Rather, Jarrell's disturbances offer evidence for a functional reading of allegory as being and becoming otherwise than human. Typically, analyses of Jarrell's allegory remain confined by an ontological circularity; moving beyond humanist poesis as both pretext and culmination, however, creates productive disturbances often and correctly associated with Ovid's own. While affirming a formalist departure for poetry—changes in being tethered to changes in form—Jarrell's use of allegory presents, I argue, an even more dynamic and functional model for an antinominalist poetry: the formlessness of primary being as proper, even necessary, to the arrived at (secondary) human event. Militating against this tendency to prefer human outcomes—as against processes of being—Jarrell's mechanics recognize in formlessness the pleasures of nothingness out of which human subjectivity, the power to shape our own being, arises. A theory of accidents driving poetic change allows me in turn to invoke, and in part to challenge, the premise posed by Martin Heidegger that animal being is subordinated to the human. My analysis of Jarrell's mechanics concludes with the suggestion that his poetry effectively subverts its own poetic inheritances, including the nineteenth-century premise that poetry, like biological necessity itself, is positive and positively human.

Key words: humanist allegory　formalism　antinominalist poetry

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标题:兰德尔·贾雷尔的寓言技术

内容提要:本文首先提出当代文人都挖掘了一些什么,对贾雷尔诗歌中的道德紊乱的挖掘常被忽视。他作品中的道德紊乱的寓言不仅仅关乎人,更关乎存在。他诗歌中的寓言非常典型地拘泥于存在论的框架之下。无论是作诗的目的还是作诗的完成,超越人道主义的作诗法会经常产生与奥维德诗歌创作同出一辙的紊乱。当确定形式主义者作诗的起点——在形式的变化中变化——笔者认为贾雷尔对寓言的运用为反唯名论诗歌展示了更具活力的样式:初始存在的无形式是人的活动的恰当先行和必须。与阻止存在的过程一样,贾雷尔打破人为活动优先的倾向,使其诗歌创作的技术在"无形式"中认可了"无"中的乐趣。而在这个"无"中,塑造人自身存在的力量——人的主体性出现。驱使诗歌变化的偶然

性理论使我求助于并质疑海德格尔提出的假设:动物的存在依附于人的存在。通过对贾雷尔技术的探讨,本文认为他的诗歌有效地颠覆了他自身诗歌的固有特征,包括颠覆了19世纪的假设,即诗歌与生物需要一样,是积极的而且必定是人道的。

关键词:人道主义寓言　形式主义　反唯名论诗歌

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In this essay, I first argue that what a generation of scholarship has disinterred as disturbing in Randall Jarrell's poetry is not. Typically, analyses of Jarrell's use of allegory remain confined by an ontological circularity—whereby his poems are, remain, and necessarily become their human subject. Rather, I suggest that his poetry offers evidence for a functional reading of allegory, what I call Jarrell's mechanics, as being and becoming otherwise. Moving beyond the human category as both pretext and culmination for poesis creates productive disturbances—metaphorical changes in signification linked to metamorphic changes in form-as-being—often and correctly associated with Ovid's own. ①

Rendering desire metamorphic, in turn, voids a moralist logic mandating specific formal attributes and outcomes. Jarrell's poetry is formalist rather than moralist. Attending his poems' processes, Jarrell's mechanics confabulate an exclusive, humanist epistemology as the right and proper domain of being—the preferred norm underlying all forms—even while sustaining desire for all forms preceding, succeeding, and including the human. So, too, Jarrell's formalism mandates change categorically, even beyond whatever forms desire itself may momentarily impose. Becoming human in Jarrell's work therefore requires entertaining alternative sites of subjectivity along the routes its very telos presupposes, and human imaginings may be revealed only by the light of other, vestigial traces (usually non-sentient, plant and animal forms) through which anterior versions of being have passed. As I attempt to show in my analysis of his later poems, "The Tree", "The Woman at the Washington Zoo," and "The Statue of the Donatello," Jarrell's poetry benefits considerably from these accidental disturbances and disruptions the mechanics of his allegory require.

A functional theory of accidents driving emergent being, one that allows for disturbances attending the formation of subjectivity, allows me to challenge specific vocabulary provided by Martin Heidegger. In particular, I query the latter's concepts of weltarm (animals as poor in the world) and of weltbildend (the uniquely human privilege of being as world-forming). When applied to specific non-sentient and animal beings in Jarrell, these governing assumptions driving Heidegger's humanism frequently stutter and misfire. Indeed, Jarrell's mechanics effectively subvert their poetic inheritances, especially the late nineteenth-century premise that poetry, like biological necessity itself, is positive and positively human. Differently from his contemporaries Marianne Moore and Wallace Stevens, moreover, Jarrell's allegory veers through myriad animal forms which, leading powerfully nowhere, return the subject of

poetry to being and not to the mastery of human being Heidegger requires.

I

Perceived contrariness, alongside the lack of a stable position relative to his peers and the succeeding tradition, distinguished Jarrell from the very beginning as poet and critic. Yet his unique differences apart were more conventional than is often supposed. A specifically modernist version of allegory, Jarrell's poetry reacted predictably to a specific set of problems Auden identified, and responded to them in terms Auden helped to formulate.[②] Unlike Auden's, however, Jarrell's legacy has remained fettered to a lack of critical imagination which has not recognized sufficiently that, by returning to allegory, Jarrell was simply responding to the present and negative injunction Auden had first and emphatically declared: "poetry makes nothing happen" (Mendelson 248). Equally an illustration of and response to Auden's predicament for postwar Anglo-American poetry, Jarrell's turn toward allegory occurred at an important historical and ethical crossroads.

Remarkably, the tendency of the criticism has been to perpetuate the viewpoint that Jarrell's response to Auden's injunction was something idiosyncratic and peculiar, rather than appropriate or emblematic. Most recently, David Bergman affirms that Jarrell's poetry is "disturbing.... [H]e fills his poems with folk- and fairy tales, children and talking animals, all the distractions of easy reading, and then shoots you between the eyes" (Bergman 350). How such disturbances are viewed in Bergman's analysis is not entirely clear, except as queer, for example, or imbued with Freudian significance. Yet by invoking Matthew Arnold as a prominent antecedent—and here I quote Bergman's own words: "how much harder is it for the rest of us [reading Jarrell] to cope with the unbearable about which we can do nothing?" (352)—Bergman also reminds us of far older coordinates for Jarrell's and Auden's disturbances, here post-dated, as ciphers of critical discomfort. As Bergman's rather reluctant praise suggests, Jarrell's shadowed, at times spiteful, and often willfully sentimental poetry engages with an inverted and hollowed-out modernism which is neither as clean nor as imagistic as the Arnoldian tradition, including its New Critical descendants, might have preferred.

Close-readings of specific poems below will, I hope, respond effectively to charges made against Jarrell's poetry in the brief literature review above, including the absence of technique as well as his dark and centered pathology. By taking on such a distinguished lineage, however, I am not interested in polemic for its own sake. Rather, I seek to correct a residual (and somewhat patronizing) strain in Jarrell criticism since Lowell which still refuses, to my mind squeamishly, to leave us kids at home alone with Uncle Randall's poems. Jarrell's refusal to pathologize allegory the way many of his critics assert he does—as disturbing —signals his preference for a poetry functional of becoming, rather than affirming the best that has been thought and known everywhere. He likewise seeks to re-route desiring energies, which otherwise link human mastery to subjectivity, toward poetic reconsiderations of form. Jarrell's mechanics motivate further discussion of poetry of perpetual motion to the very limit of subjectivity itself.

And if, by the end of this essay, I am to have made the case for preferring a functionalist to a norm-based criticism when reading Jarrell, the question of his disturbances can be argued either syllogistically (prompting an unsatisfactory circularity as to whether or not his work is for or against whatever canonizing tendency of whichever period), or alternatively, be characterized as a given set of dynamics perceptible to the reader. Using the latter approach, the singular and stubborn resistance of Jarrell's poetry to formal definition, even as it cycles through myriad forms, becomes decidedly more interesting. We realize that Jarrell's resistance to the particularity of form emerges as a motivation—more appropriately, a wish—for being beyond form which, once reincorporated, generates further energies necessary to the on-going search.

II

For all their differences, Auden and Jarrell believed faithfully in story telling as a necessary restorative when facing the modernist onslaught of truth. By attempting to make the poetry of storytelling answer to and for the present (modernist) paucity of context, both poets embraced narrative foundationalism as a compensatory salvation. Auden's preferred narrative was Anglo-Catholic, whether of inspiration or consequence; Jarrell's was confabulatory, as the necessary arrival of being at change. Both heaved with the fervor of the converted to the principle that our being necessarily derives from those stories we believe in and write about.

Yet, for Jarrell, the story a poem tells not only constitutes a proposition requiring evaluative judgment (as true or false, good or evil) but a functional process driven by the listener's root dissatisfaction with the world as it is, as well as with the world the story describes. This interactive negativity also motivates the listener-reader's present-continuous desire for change, through his or her wishing against the poem or story's form as presently told: "A story, then, tells the truth or a lie—is a wish, or a truth, or a wish modified by a truth. Children ask first of all: 'Is it a true story?' They ask this of the storyteller, but they ask of the story what they ask of a dream: that it satisfies their wishes" (Jarell, *Kipling, Auden & Co* 143). Jarrell states the problem of such a wishing antinomianism succinctly, as the catalyst for narrative change once activated by the listener's or reader's desire. Delicate and precarious, the negativity of wishing transforms the given poem or story into a future narrative desired presently, and throws the gauntlet down before static forms of the narrative present. Wishes are thus prescient demands: not only that the poem or story as given must change but that they shall, in any event, intrinsic to generating narrativity as a forward process. Wishes transgress present stories as they find them and in so doing create new stories.

Moreover, such wishing negativity rewrites poems and stories beyond closure, as if; as if imparts the narrative basis of a desire for change beyond present context, world, and body. In such a rendering, desire is necessarily metamorphic of present narrative and wishing makes otherwise inert stories and poetry happen. But how to write the story of a poem itself in the process of changing, necessarily subjected to the catalytic power of the listener's wishing, and metamorphosing before our very eyes,

mutatis mutandis? Beyond futility, how can and should one write such a story of dissatisfaction with present stories at all? Such was Auden's pre-emptive strike against the Anglo-American modernist establishment before the Second World War, and in so doing he declared a vocation for the next generation of poets. Even so, I'd suggest it was Jarrell who was best equipped, after the war, to write the kind of poetry whose necessity Auden invoked; that is, the poetry of nothing as it is happening. Both poets participated equally in the movement requiring poetry to serve as an instrument of change beyond present context; characterizing such change, and to what purpose, was the agenda of the moment.

The two poets diverged considerably, however, when it came to the question of how best to trammel the negativity of wishes. They differed, that is, in whether or not to sacralize specific narratives as part of an evaluative process (better and worse stories, good versus evil wishes) so as to distinguish, in turn, between the precepts for which narratives serve as vehicles. They differed, to whit, about how to fix the problem of the same story satisfying conflicting wishes.

This problem of satisfying conflicting wishes presents a distinction of kind we can make between the two poets' use and appreciation of form, between Jarrell's antinomianism and Auden's skepticism. For Jarrell, wishing for alternative form is irrevocably productive and an end in itself; his wishing negativity assures the forward continuity of narrative potential heedless of the law. For Auden, wishing can only ever be a provisional, if nevertheless necessary, means of highlighting narrativity as an inescapable problem which the promise of God's Word alone satisfies. If Auden turned toward the telos of an Absolute Desire, the Form of all forms ("Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"), Jarrell settled on the lesser mechanics of formist desire as an engine of possibility regardless of the destination. For Jarrell, formism, like myth, requires the intervention of the lower gods as well as the plenitude and variety of their wishes. His wishes are therefore productive of proliferating words and the newer worlds they create. For Auden, the wishing negativity that would visit change upon worldly sin is a principal requirement of faith, but one that is also doomed to failure. (It is likewise a requirement for the Christian to submit himself to this wish, and its necessary failure, every day.) For Auden, only the promise of the Word, ultimately, can resolve conflicting forms and narratives, as well as the volatility of wishing as particularly human problems.

Ultimately, the functionality of Jarrell's allegory is best imparted by the variety of wishes his forms undertake; there is no meaning prior to (or succeeding) the wishes that give life to the inertness of narrative. The shape-shifting wishes of his personae are meant to break out into being rather than to sacralize it. Accordingly, Jarrell compels his allegory toward the formal domain, which remains the truth that best modifies, and is best modified by, wishing. His poetry's particular motivation is also its most distinguishing feature. Jarrell's mimesis-in-process—the momentary transit of desire through myriad forms or its transitive mimesis—achieves the status of narrative via a through-way allegory, whereby any desire only emerges by assuming other possible forms and guises.

III

Beyond narrativity, the promise of quietude motivates Jarrell's transitive mimesis, even as his formist engine of becoming otherwise defers the stasis upon which the resolution of the human/other story depends. Jarrell's allegory lives and dies—for Auden, must be resurrected—by the gerund of its own becoming unto formlessness. It is presently actual (I am becoming) but also transitive, insofar as it disrupts the exclusivity of human being as a necessary culmination (I will always only become). Human form migrates toward formlessness. Jarrell's allegory accordingly urges being beyond subjectivity, toward the synchronous construction of multiple engagements converging at one point in space and time.

Such a convergence occupies, in Martin Heidegger's famous formulation, a lizard lying on a rock:

> When we say that the lizard is stretched out on the rock, we should cross through (durchstreichen) the word "rock," to indicate that while what the lizard is stretched out on is doubtless given him in some way [irgendwie], but is not known [or recognized] as rock. The crossing-through does not only mean: something else is apprehended, as something else, but: it is above all not accessible as entity. (qtd. in Derrida 52 – 53)

Heidegger further denotes the lizard's position described in the passage above as "poor in the world" (weltarm). Derrida elaborates upon weltarm as: "The animal has and does not have a world" (50); and accordingly, "the animal has and does not have spirit" (51). The suture created by the lizard at rest—the rock warms the lizard's belly on a summer's day but cannot be accessed as an entity by the lizard's being—accentuates rather than challenges weltarm and necessitates the lizard's crossing out as a primary being compared with human being. The rock, moreover, experiences a double crossing through: it sustains yet a third order subordinated to the human, again apart from what the animal has not, with both lizard and rock remaining equally unable to access the human as entity. Once and twice, animals and rocks are necessarily crossed out as entities in Heidegger's formulation; by contrast, humans can never be crossed or double crossed.

In a previously unpublished poem, "The Tree," Jarrell's persona wills his or her own crossing out, in an apparent challenge to Heidegger's imposition of weltarm as the exclusive domain of the animal and rock. In the poem, an observed tree and a recently departed bird occupy alternative sites of being the persona juxtaposes so as to articulate his own wish for metamorphosis beyond the present:

> When I look at the tree the bough was still shaking,
> So surely there was a bird
> That lit for an instant and left its motion
> To the dead wood.
> But the bough has ceased; what the tree remembers

Who is there to tell?
I have not changed, I have not forgotten,
I am waiting still. (Jarrell, "The Tree" 190)

Here the poet's emphasis on the present absence ("surely") of the animal, the trace ("still shaking") of the trembling bough, initially seems to indicate the having-not having of weltarm, the dumb silence of animals and objects. Competing tenses in the first line are likewise jarring: simple present tense ("I look") collides and then merges with the past continuous ("the bough was still shaking"), effecting a present and declarative mood that declares the nothingness of the event not once (absent bird), but twice (dead tree). Yet the persona remains alone, standing as if fixed to the ground. His or her own memory of the event crafts another version of the suture from Heidegger's parable—the now-absent bird that just an instant ago was perching on the still-present tree.

In the poem, the persona uses memory to restage the connection between bird and tree in a space and time now departed. As merely the instrument of reckoning, however, the persona's memory cannot access the shared entity their joining (bird on bough) has created. Moreover, the apparent absence of the bird apart, the tree apparently has no subject or state it can share with the persona. (One has the impression it wouldn't own up, even if it could.) And, just now, the bird has also gone. In this doubled absence of entity, the persona of the "The Tree" crosses out his or her being not once, but twice; he or she merely waits for the change of becoming. Jarrell's persona is doubly passive under the sign of the human; with no being to tell, as well as no other being to recount what he or she may have told. The being-"I" of the human waits and, while waiting, is crossed out by the departed bird (human), and a second time by the present tree.

Moreover, as a human, the persona of "The Tree" wills the return of the bird, fails, and is impoverished by the world in so failing. Here is an instance where the power of Jarrell's wishing cannot transform the story of non-human being-in-world; instead, the persona waits to be transformed. Whereas the tree has and has not waited for the bird, the persona can only wait. Such waiting at once banishes the promise of a present fulfillment of desire, as well as creates forward conditions for its expression in some subsequent wish the persona cannot as yet foresee. But, at least apparently, he or she does not and cannot change ("I have not changed"). In a challenge to Heidegger's weltarm, the departure of the bird not only smites the tree down as "dead wood"—not in itself: the tree still lives—but just as plausibly, the persona, who will always still be waiting for the tree to tell. Here the animal's weltarm, attended by the tree, actually assumes the power of weltbildend. Their twinned entity intervenes so as to challenge the basis of the persona's ontology as a uniquely human and world-forming domain.

In "The Tree" this doubled crossing-through of the human category by animals and non-sentient objects cannot be explained by Heidegger's model: "Can one not say, then, that [Heidegger's] whole deconstruction of ontology, as it is begun in Sein und Zeit [Being and Time] and insofar as it unseats, as it were, the Cartesian-

Hegelian spiritus . . . is here threatened in its order, its implementation, its conceptual apparatus, by what is called, so obscurely still, 'the animal?'" (Derrida 57). I agree with Derrida that animals threaten, even as they would also seem to serve, the explicitly humanist hierarchy of dasein Heidegger establishes. The persona of "The Tree" apparently wishes for a much more radical equivalence than Heidegger's model can allow, between what the tree "remembers" and what the persona has "not forgotten." Yet the humanist willfulness of Heidegger's dasein, like Jarrell's own motivating allegory for human unbecoming in the poem, also creates remarkable conditions for the metamorphosis of desire beyond Heidegger's requirement of weltbildend, of human being alone as world forming.

Ultimately, by willing his or her double crossing-out, the human persona in "The Tree" awaits the presence of being in the absence of human mastery. And like so many of Ovid's gods and figures, Jarrell's persona, by waiting for the other (tree) to speak, comes to embody the silence of the tree not speaking. By the end of the poem, it seems clear that the persona has after all changed, and that present-absent wish of the persona presently describes two trees not-speaking, both waiting for a bird. By thus embracing stasis, Jarrell's persona wills his or her nothingness into being as the tree. Yet by deferring the actuality of the bird's return, metamorphosis occurs in the poem in the absence of the mastery human change typically wills as its own. As a tree, the human cannot will the bird to return; nor, indeed, can he write its return. Wishing as waiting thus achieves the transition as expectancy, beyond the passivity of stasis, toward a prospect of change as it is about to happen. Finally, the persona's desiring the tree to speak—an impossibility attributable to, indeed deriving from, his or her own silence—establishes an equivalence that alters irrevocably the use of allegory as the humanist monopoly of weltbildend. The persona in "The Tree" seeks to share with the tree the absolute poverty of the bird's absence, in contrast to the animal's relative plenitude of spirit and world. In the bird's absence, only the trembling branch and the trembling persona remain. They tremble together; indeed, they would become the trembling.

By embracing the poverty-in-world of rocks and trees, Jarrell's allegory stages its own dissolution as the welcome return to organic totality. Yet it also defers the stasis of such a return, as well as invites the narrative-transforming wishes Jarrell's functional allegory requires. Driven by the desire for change, Jarrell's persona wills his being beyond the human form, and his allegory's formist mechanics motivate the pondering of being ("waiting") as a meaningful alternative to the present. As a rewriting of Heidegger's dasein, such formist mechanics of here-not here require, for Jarrell, the promise of welcome disappearance, as well as a sense of mourning for the already departed. The trick of reading Jarrell's transitivity therefore involves reading his allegory not only as the desire for change itself, but in abeyance of the allegory's object once changed. The subject of Jarrell's poetry is always at once beyond change as well as always poised to change. Given this dynamic, one reasonably expects the subject of Jarrell's allegory to change into something, only to have the fact of change presented as either anterior or belated to our cognizance.

In Jarrell's poetry, animal forms, too, enjoy their pound of humanist flesh. The

bird in "The Tree" smites the persona presently; its departure enables the persona's death to humanity as well as transformation, his or her legs rooting deep into the ground that waiting becomes. Jarrell's animals and non-sentient beings thus inhabit a radical negativity both of and beyond what we think of as human subjectivity. They inhabit for us—making us, in fact, an us—the necessary pivot in the formation of world consciousness Heidegger's weltbildend requires. We cannot imagine or write either ourselves or our being in the world without animals. (To think, for example, that future remembrance will understand this year, any year, as the year the common honey bee became endangered.) It is unique to our humanity, however, that we require animals—as if our own animality could be suspended or held apart—to feel the effects of change first. Jarrell's poetry disputes this species preference by acknowledging change as a strangely compelling tyranny which encompasses all creation equally.

In Heidegger's hierarchy, the being of rocks and trees cannot exist without the weltarm of animals whose forms, in turn, beckon the desire and violence of human mastery. Just as often, however, Jarrell's allegories trap his human subjects within the dynamic of their becoming otherwise. And notably, while animals are necessarily trapped by weltbildend, they never signify the trap. Accordingly, they serve their humanist masters in allegorical terms, yet never instrument its mastery as a language lorded over another being. Animals never seek to speak the language of their masters.

IV

By ensuring his poetry's human subjects are mastered as equally by change as are animals, Jarrell addresses the problem of mastery as constitutive across all ranks of being. For Jarrell's generation of poets, however, the wish for a return to an animalist totality belonged most particularly to Marianne Moore. In Jarrell's high regard for Moore, we encounter his living and contemporary fascination with her animals as, in Jarrell's terms, "with holes, a heavy defensive armament, or a massive and herbivorous placidity superior to either the dangers or temptations of aggression" (Jarrell, *Poetry and the Age* 198). In such terms, however, Jarrell also finds Moore's animals too tame. They are essentially moralist, inverted signs of the human:

> Because so much of our world is evil, she has transformed the Animal Kingdom, that amoral realm, into a realm of good; her consolatory, fabulous bestiary is more accurate than, but is almost arranged as, any medieval one. We need it as much as she does, but how can we help feeling that she relies, some of the time, too surely upon this last version of pastoral? "You reassure me and people don't, except when they are like you, but really they are always like you," [Moore's] poems say sometimes, to the beasts; and it is wonderful to have it said so, and for a moment to forget, behind the animals of a darkening landscape, their dark companions. (Jarrell, *Poetry and the Age* 199)

I quote the passage at length, not only because it typifies Jarrell's reading of a particularly moralist attribution for Moore's animals, but because it says much about Jar-

rell's own allegorizing, as valorizing the resistance of mimesis to pastoral. Clearly, Jarrell is also reading a "dark" humanity back onto the innocence of Moore's animal realm.

In the above passage, we observe how Jarrell knowingly re-inscribes the human category ("but really they are always like you") onto Moore's animals, using an essential humanist circularity— humans are as animals do, and vice-versa—but with an important caveat: animals-as-humans are never themselves masters, no matter how much their being enables the mastery of others. It is this higher-order mastery, the human mastery, which is determining and binds the animal experience to the darkening world of humanity. It is this darkening world, then, and not only the compensatory, counter-morality of Moore's hortus conclusis that compels Jarrell's attention.

I suspect Jarrell is intrigued by Moore because, in his view, any moral response to human totality is compelling—much as it was for Nietzsche[③]—precisely because it must fail. Jarrell is intrigued by the necessary failure of Moore's compensatory, animal universe as an impossible refuge from being and time. Morals given flesh, Moore's animals are impoverished by human predicaments to the extent that they draw power from those very same categories they would seek to question. For Jarrell to embrace animality therefore requires that he must abandon, equally, the moral role for animals Moore preferred, as well the sine qua non animals fall into as a consequence of moralist projection: their derivative status as shadow-humans. (For his part, Nietzsche understood all too well, and celebrates, that animals cannot in themselves convey morality as truth.) Rather, another shadow lurks behind the animal, the master holding its leash. All more is the pity that Jarrell recognizes in Moore's sympathy another tether to such mastery.

Constructing animal subjectivities as Moore does therefore requires that animals be essence and their dark human companions accidental. Jarrell somewhat differently asserts that animal and human subjectivities exist in a shared relation of being subject to change—Moore's animals yoked to morals, Jarrell's to their accidents—and to the contingencies of nature which, once mastery is imposed, transmute the boxed turtle into a proper human tomb, and transform the protected animal into the projection of human desires exposed and vulnerable. If human subjectivity enshrouds animal being as merely its own inverted form or mold, it equally and remorselessly anticipates all too precisely the animal armaments designed to counter humanist incursion. Victims of moralist projection as well as the weltarm of being, animals are never permitted to be themselves.

Rather, as Wallace Stevens wrote, animals are represented by poets "who need what [they have] created" (51). Stevens's interest in Moore's work was, like Jarrell's, connotative. Both Stevens and Jarrell saw in Moore's animality a different cipher for the appearance of modernity: "When she observes [animals], she is transported into the presence of a recognizable reality because, as it happens, she has the faculty of digesting . . . appearance" (103). Stevens found Moore's representations salutary because her animals are appearances that may be equated (after William James) as perceptibly "real." Stevens' perceptible real is very much aligned with Moore's animal, and neither figure, as Stevens puts it so nicely, accedes to the com-

monplace that "the centuries have a way of being male" (Stevens 52). Stevens's own interest in a perceptible formism is suggested by his recognition, along with Jarrell and Moore, that animals remain ungendered by being as well as by time, a fact which may account for their all too pathetic amenability to the mastery imposed by human mythology. Myths render animal being subservient to the on-going narrativity of the human species.

In a remarkable confabulation of poetic virility with myth, Stevens declares the emergence of a new figure for history which, bearing signatures of Plato's *Phaedrus*, Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and Yeatsian symbolism combines human and animal forms: "[W]hat we are remembering is the rather haggard background of the incredible, the imagination without intelligence, from which a younger figure is emerging, stepping forward in the company of a muse of its own, still half-beast and somehow more than human, a kind of sister of the Minotaur. This younger figure is the intelligence that endures"(52). Stevens' "half-beast and somehow more than human" figure is not entirely severed from its basis in myth. Yet in succeeding the "rather haggard background of the incredible," this human-animal figure effectively supersedes a prior, brutish divinity ("imagination without intelligence") and allows for the emergence of a modernist-pragmatist subject who can construct the modern (external) world based upon sensory perception rather than mythical antecedents.

For Stevens, that the perceiving and intelligent poet co-opts animal subjectivity in service to a practicable modernity is far preferable to the moral order Moore's animal kingdom reserves in a fortified enclave threatened by (human) incursion. Stevens wants the natural world to be seen, and hence bounded by, human intelligence. For her part, Moore's animal subjectivity reveals only what Stevens's human intelligence cannot or would not see, even if it could. In Stevens's vision of an emerging pragmatic subject, as well as in Moore's cloistered animality, we readily observe animal subjectivity expressed, respectively, as the deficit and excess of human intelligence.

Rather differently than Stevens and Moore, Jarrell questions humanist assumptions underlying allegorizing as given—that the only allegories are human allegories—and seeks to evacuate allegorizing of weltbildend, of humanist primacy as world-forming. For his part, Jarrell grasped that humans master neither present desires whose objects they recognize as their own nor future desires whose as yet undiscovered objects achieve form independently through creative acts of imagination. Moreover, unlike Moore, Jarrell recognizes that animals cannot hide from the allegories of their masters. And unlike Stevens, Jarrell does not fully trust that animal subjectivities may be seen and perceived intelligently. Accordingly, Jarrell typically rejects any claims for allegory imposing one particular sovereign embodiment over and against alternative forms and expressions of being-in-world.

Yet to hold fast to this antinomian principle as Jarrell seems to do—namely, that the very presence of animals defies the law of human mastery (weltbildend), thereby creating forward space for post-human or human-animal subjectivities to emerge—necessarily imposes a false distinction in kind. The expression of any desire in whatever form, human and animal, necessitates the imposition of sovereignty over form as

an axiom. To desire at all requires the momentary imposition of the subject over its object. Accordingly, the desires for formist liberation Jarrell's poems encode cannot but help themselves to animals; his poems, like his personae's desires, will do with animals as they please. In writing of animals, the desires of Jarrell's poetry therefore bring "animals" into being only nominally; at one and the same moment, desires constrain and displace whatever it is animals actually are.

Along with Stevens and Moore, Jarrell ultimately cannot reject the constructive power of humanist allegory, however loosened it may be his vision, as the confining casement for alternative — notably, animal—forms. Accordingly, he never completely refutes the intrusion of humans looking into, so as to construct, animal being. Animals challenge human allegorizing as an exhaustive domain but are never held entirely independent from it. In his commitment to allegory, at least, Jarrell always and perhaps reluctantly remains one of us. Nevertheless, his contributions to Moore's and Stevens's lexicon of a human animality broaden, so as to diversify, the forms of expressive desire animals embody and, as above, seek to loosen the association of animals with weltbildend as a peculiarly human claim.

V

Asserting the irreducibility of being to any particular and sovereign form, Jarrell's allegory questions weltbildend as a human monopoly. It also draws considerable force from the impoverished domain (weltarm) it claims as its own animal or nonsentient legacy. Superseding the ontology imposed by "I," alternative forms crowd Jarrell's poetic landscape and provide unique texture: "The saris go by me from the embassies. / Cloth from the moon. Cloth from another planet. / They look back at the leopard like the leopard. / And I . . ." (Jarrell, *Complete Poems* 215). As above, in "Woman at the Washington Zoo," the persona watches ambulatory saris, their forms at once vacant and molded, inviting as well as shaping the projection of anthropomorphism. But projected by whom and upon whom or what? Left on their own, saris cannot watch; yet these do. And here, they watch leopards, as if they, too, were leopards, while the "I" trails on watching saris watch leopards. Here the "I" functions as merely a placeholder in the poem around which the logic of spectatorship revolves, motivating the dispersal of other forms centrifugally: saris, leopards, and a vulture without the "red helmet" (Jarrell, *Complete Poems* 216). And these are only those watchers named in the poem.

Clearly, the persona's initial take on the scene ("The saris go by me") establishes position for the poem and anchors his or her own subjectivity. Initially, he or she reads converging surfaces much as we read the poem's own representations—as the recognition of similar patterns. As we continue reading, however, accreting images (leopard spots and sari weaves, Washington D. C. transformed into a lunar landscape) interact with proliferating subject positions (leopard, sari, persona, you, me) which, in turn, constitute a community of responses within the broadening signifying field. The persona is quickly outdistanced, centrifugally, by the plenitude of others' readings. Such an outward radiation of alternative forms, itself the result of a breakaway reaction involving multilateral readership in the absence of a centered sub-

ject, disperses the allegorical potential for becoming well beyond ontology: I, not I, south Asia, the moon, a leopard, a sari, Washington, D. C. Hong Kong, the moon, Chicago, wherever and whenever I seek to pattern (belatedly) whatever others have patterned.

In "Woman at the Washington Zoo," Jarrell showcases his allegory's mechanism, whereby multiple readers encoding ever-shifting surfaces are united within the same interactive process. So, too, the mastery a localizing subjectivity might impose is perpetually displaced. Rather than seeking out the ontological substance underlying form, then, Jarrell is principally preoccupied with documenting those accidents attending the emergence of form in a process of collective readership. Accidents crystallize form in a momentary utterance, sign, or event only to have their metaphorical "housing," as poet A. V. Christie calls it, be shed altogether, revealing nothing. ④

Jerome Mazzaro describes the urge toward dissolution in Jarrell as redemptive. By highlighting the link between embodiment and ontological certainty Jarrell's personae are always involved with efforts to escape engulfment, implosion, and petrification, by demanding that they *somehow* be miraculously changed by life and art into people whose ontologies are psychically secure. The changes may allow them then to *drop the mechanism* by which in their relations they preserve themselves and to feel gratification in relatedness. ⑤

Mazzaro and I share an appreciation of Jarrell's "miraculous" changes, but to a differing consequence. In my view, the mechanics underlying Jarrell's miracles sustain not the demand for ontological security "somehow" but generate perpetual desires for change beyond the specific requirements of ontological security when expressed as particular formal demands. Jarrell's demands upon form are consistently demanding indeed; but they never have as their goal the preservation of any existing form. Jarrell's somehow is always, in fact, a something required to change into something else. To "drop the mechanism" of desire, as Mazzaro puts it, would therefore require dropping change, beyond present form, as a motivating prospect. And this Jarrell's best writing can never allow. He willingly sacrifices present ontological security in favor of forward expressions of alternative being.

Nor, however, was Jarrell a believer in the rolling out of a soft, imagistic pluralism for its own sake. With its stunning appreciation of punishment, Jarrell's poetry comes closer to Ovid than any other modern verse I can think of; its profusion of forms signify not multiplicity alone, but variety in the ultimate interest of documenting abuses arising whenever and wherever power and authority are localized to a preferred form. At this point it is important to remind ourselves, moreover, that Ovid's personae are not born allegories as such—they arrive at a given form-in-being only after having passed through various phases co-articulating non-human and human states, and after having survived a violent process of being-transfer. The fact of surviving such change does not justify the violence of formism for its own sake but does occasion the becoming of difference as a meaningful consequence. Accordingly, I do not agree with the interpretation Michel Benamou provides, whereby the outputs of Jarrell's allegory supersede its operative functionality, its becoming in transit whether most of Ovid's changelings do not seem more truly themselves after their mutation. For my

purposes, the answer to this question is no. Jarrell's transitive mimesis affirms the subject's metamorphosis as necessarily reflexive of its object and heedless of whatever arrival the changing object may subsequently experience. To change must always involve changing.

Jarrell's poetry thus represents becoming as the effect of a gerund—preferring the description of processes to those of received states—whereby the force and momentum of metamorphosis exert heretofore unthinkable pressures upon static tenses. Or, again, in "The Bronze David of Donatello" Jarrell's forms are liberated via a sequence of similes:

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

Benamou here rejects as too iterative the parade of metaphor Jarrell here unleashes (strength: girl/girl:bird/ boy:girl/boy:girl:bird:something). I suggest, rather, that it is precisely the on-going reiteration of assembled and subsequently dismantled forms, subject to the function of change and culminating in no particular referent or object—imagine a linguistic rather than metabolic economy, whereby a semiotic Krebs cycle draws perpetual energy from the recombination of different metaphors bonding and then breaking—that catalyzes Jarrell's allegory beyond the human form.

Ontologically insufficient, the force and power of relationality also offsets backside risks—most notably, the present danger of weltbildend lording over alternative forms—attending an undue dependence upon the human category. When Jarrell dispenses with metaphor, however, a curious positivism emerges in his work which denatures the functionality of his formism and re-centers weltbildend. In the final section of this essay, we peel back the armature protecting Jarrell's allegorical mechanism, only to reveal the fretwork of yet another throbbing engine, the beating of the tell-tale human heart.

VI

To conclude, it is a precondition of Jarrell's best work that once the desire for form has been baited, it has already been switched. Hence his allegory's extensive preoccupation with the inevitability of rebirth in forms transcending subjectivity-as-mastery. Jarrell's formalist mechanics likewise motivate change perpetually, as opposed to embracing outcomes designed to compensate for the alienation of being narrativity imposes. Such, at least, appears to have been one signal distinction between Auden's and Jarrell's approaches to allegory, not only as pertains to the writing of desire but its expression (or lack) as sexuality.

The operation of Jarrell's allegory is therefore best considered as the willful suspension—we note the oxymoron—of a particularly human desire, idling in the search

for quietude beyond subjectivity. That this proposition is itself vexing and tautological, the willfulness of no will, nevertheless enables the functional reading of Jarrell's allegory as those "mechanics" I've presented here. Embracing the accidents of being otherwise, Jarrell's allegory motivates changes in form away from Heidegger's poverty-in-world as weltarm (uniquely attributed to animals and non-sentient beings) and toward a surfeit of signifying possibilities. Formalist negativity in Jarrell requires readers to question the motivations and processes of being, rather than privileging ontological necessities.

When experiencing totalizing moments of metamorphic desire, Jarrell's personae appear at their most human. Jarrell's human subjects are themselves functional of change, and no longer its mere objects; no longer situated as progressive or retrogressive in tendency along a given telos; no longer in thrall to the sovereignty of the human idea; no longer limited by a disturbing mimetic post hoc ergo propter hoc. In Jarrell's poetry, trees, animals, and machines converge upon governing humanist assumptions as occult counter-forces. At such taut and tenuous moments, manifold versions of form populate the signifying field pleasurably and in a remarkable absence of antagonism. Recognizing being reflexively, as the shared subject of becoming differently, mimetic alternatives in Jarrell enliven the transitive subject we know ourselves to be. To be able to write as well as to read poetry at all requires being human; the mechanics of Randall Jarrell's allegory nevertheless urge us to imagine ourselves changing. We read his poetry and become.

【Notes】

① Jarrell's debt to Ovid has been long-established. For a formative reading of Jarrell's "transformation devices" (168) as a modernist rewriting of Ovid, see M. Bernetta Quinn, *The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1955) Chap. 5. Like Ovid, Jarrell's allegory possesses a mechanics that at once delimits the human category and presents contours for exceeding it.

② See *Randall Jarrell on W. H. Auden*, ed. Stephen Burt and Hannah Brooks-Motl (New York: Columbia UP, 2005). Jarrell, after Ranier Maria Rilke, ascribes material and textual changes to modernist poetry without wishing to ascribe moral certainty to them. Auden and Jarrell diverged with respect to the relationship between being and liturgical necessity; that is, the extent to which the vagaries of representation, much as desires of the body, require ritual regulation. Jarrell, however, overstates Auden's "impossible moral demands [which] kept him from satisfying more ordinary, moderate, possible demands; he had, perhaps, preached so loudly, made such extraordinary sweeping gestures, in order in the commotion to hide himself even from himself" (Burt and Brooks-Motl 78).

③ The incitement of humanity beyond present domestication, as well as the reinscription of animality as humanity's vital consequence, demonstrates Jarrell's debt to Nietzsche. Attracted by the latter's formism, Jarrell is nevertheless suspicious of Nietzschean mastery and applauds Moore's refusal to subordinate animal subjectivity to dark, human becoming-in-time. In both Moore and Jarrell, emerging subjectivities of human animality fail to banish entirely those human desires that make pastoral projections possible. Accordingly, both poets challenge the Nietzschean lineage of animal-kings recast as overmen (ubermensch), with the latter category co-opting vital animality in the interests of sustaining human order and control. See Christa Davis Acampora and Ralph R. Acampora

eds., *A Nietzschean Bestiary: Becoming Animal Beyond Docile and Brutal* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), particularly the "Introduction" and chapters by Gerd Schank and Vanessa Lemm.

④ Of Jarrell's attraction to Ovid, poet A. V. Christie (*Nine Skies* [1995]; *Housing* [2005]) writes: "I guess God might reduce things for [Jarrell] whereas the lure of Ovid and myth and tale is that there's a wide and rich array of effects and details before you're eventually duped/disaffected by the same set of human plots. He's—like the jay—dazzled by the glitter of the many/shiny/things—and then with great disaffection finds it's the same old story" (correspondence with the author, 4 June 2005).

⑤ See Jerome Mazzaro, *Postmodern American Poetry* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1980) 99. Emphasis added.

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